

Trustee Report 2023 On Behalf of The New Lodge Housing Forum

The past year has witnessed a substantial increase in the demand for our services. Our main areas of work include:

- 1) Re-development and demolition of the upper long streets
- 2) To ensure the tower block strategy is implemented
- 3) To pursue a policy of demolition or refurbishment of the Duncairn Parade area
- 4) To continue to work with our community and our statutory partners to shape a meaningful project centred around community safety and anti-social behaviour
- 5) To extend resources to cover our growing number of clinics
- 6) To work with the foodbanks to ensure vulnerable people and those most in need are catered for
- 7) To hold further meetings with residents from different parts of the area and assist in formulating committees
- 8) To continue to work with the increased number of clinics we have organised
- 9) Finance

The re-development area has been vested at over 10-12 year period 287 houses will be demolished to be replaced with 123 quality homes. We are dealing with a small number of objections that some of the residents have raised. In practical terms we are instrumental in ensuring that empty dwellings are blocked up and primary repairs are carried out in the remaining houses.

The tower block strategy is proving difficult as we simply do not have the space to re-house the 406 families who live there. Major repairs and refurbishment schemes are planned to improve the living conditions of the families living there.

The Duncairn Parade area is in a state of poor repair and senior members of the Housing Ex have recently been on site to prepare the ground for final decisions to be made regarding both the private home owners and the housing ex tenants.

Sadly, there has been an increase in anti social activity. Two young lives have been lost to drug addiction. We are working with the PSNI, Safer Streets, CRJI, Housing Ex and other statutory bodies in an attempt to support families and individuals who have been

impacted by crime. We are also sign posting residents who are suffering on a daily basis as they cope with drugs and alcohol addiction.

Our clinics have grown in numbers and they include dealing with our tenants who reside in the Tower Blocks. A housing ex patch manager attends a monthly clinic in our office and gives the tenants the opportunity to air their grievances. We have a clinic for those who live in the re-development area this includes landlord tenants, housing ex tenants and those people who own their own homes. A senior housing ex rep attends the meeting in our office on a weekly basis given the tenants the opportunity to bring forward their issues. We meet with housing solutions which is a dept. of the housing exe they deal with the homeless people. Our meetings take place on the 1st Wednesday of the month in a local community hall. This fast tacks peoples queries and other practical assistance to those who have no place to live in the local area. we have organised 2 clinics both on a weekly and fortnightly basis dealing with welfare benefit issues these include providing assistance with issues including ESA, PIPS and Universal Credit. We have witnessed a particular increase in numbers as we deal with U.C claims as the government has set a deadline of 2025 for people who claim benefits to transfer to Universal Credit.

We continue to work with the Haven Food Bank as we assist those families and individuals who are finding it extremely difficult to actually put food on the table. The number of clients have increased since last year, we have also been involved in fund raising for the Haven Food Bank.

We have met with groups of residents in recent months who find it difficult in trying to move things forward in dealing with housing issues. We are both advising them and providing practical assistance in setting up formal committees in the areas they represent.

Our financial situation is stable with the Housing Exe providing funding for the housing workers salary. A local housing association provides us with vital financial resources which assists us in covering the everyday expenses of running our office.

We are fortunate to have a positive representative who is employed by Supporting Communities. He assists us with our funding applications including the worker's salary and the charity commission returns. He also arranges minutes and agendas for the

many meetings we have throughout the year. Our committee meetings take place every 6 weeks.

The coming year will witness a busy time for the committee and housing worker and we feel a real sense of achievement in the project we deliver in our area.

Signed: Liam Wiggins

Chairperson of the New Lodge Housing Forum