

Working together for positive change



Ms Lucia Wilson, Committee Clerk
The Public Accounts Committee
Room 371 Parliament Buildings
BELFAST, BT4 3XX

16 June 2015

Dear Ms Wilson

PAC Hearing – 18 February 2015

Choice Housing Ireland Ltd (“Choice”) is a relatively new housing association which has been formed as a result of the merger of Trinity Housing Ltd, Oaklee Homes Group Ltd and Ulidia Housing Association Ltd. It has acquired the assets, liabilities and undertakings of those three former housing associations, each of which has ceased to exist.

Upon receipt of Hansard reporting the PAC hearing of 18 February 2015 Choice decided to carry out its own in-depth investigation of the evidence provided to the PAC insofar as the evidence to the PAC related to or touched upon the corporate governance of Trinity Housing Limited. Choice engaged an independent investigator, namely Alan J Reilly, MA Cantab, Solicitor who was a partner in Carson McDowell, Solicitors between May 1978 and April 2011. Mr Reilly’s report was completed in draft on 27 May 2015 and presented to me, as Chairman of the Board, and to the members of the Board of Directors of Choice. The report is currently going through a process of validation with particular regard to the oral evidence received by Mr Reilly from certain persons named in the report.

The draft report contains information which at first sight might seem to be in conflict with evidence presented by Mr Arthur Canning, former Chief Executive of Trinity Housing Ltd. I have therefore sought an explanation from Mr Canning in this regard, which I have accepted, and I attach his letter explaining the circumstances and offering his apology for any misunderstanding which may have arisen in regard to the questions asked and answers given at the PAC hearing. I would add my own apology on behalf of Choice.

I wish to advise that following receipt and unanimous acceptance by the Choice Board of Mr Reilly’s report the decision was taken to refer all governance issues arising from the Report to our Nominations and Governance Committee with a view to devising improvements in governance not only for the benefit of Choice, but in co-operation with DSD, for the benefit of the social housing sector throughout Northern Ireland.

As I believe Mr Reilly’s report to be of interest and use to the PAC I will forward it to you once it has been finalised.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy Quin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Timothy Quin
Chairman



Registered address: 37 – 41 May Street, Belfast BT1 4DN
Choice Housing Ireland Limited Registered under the Industrial and
Provident Societies Act (NI) 1969 No IP000408
Registered under The Housing (NI) Order 1981 No R56
Charity Commission No NIC 100095

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Mr Timothy Quin
Choice Housing Ireland Ltd
37-41 May Street
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16 June 2015

Dear Timothy

Further to our recent conversation, I understand that there may be a misunderstanding with regards to one of the questions I answered when attending the PAC hearing. The ambiguity surrounds the timeline and my knowledge of the proposed design and build development in Newtownards. I wish to clarify this misunderstanding.

I have always acknowledged that I was aware from 2007 that the Association was considering a possible development in Newtownards, that had it come to fruition, could be offered to the Association on a design and build basis. At this point I was not aware of any of the scheme details of this proposal other than it was with reference to land being sold by Ards Borough Council. Under a design and build proposal it is the developer who works up the scheme to make a formal offer. Critically I had no information as to how the developer proposed to access the site.

At the PAC I was asked about the proposed development and when the Association was looking at that piece of land and in the context of the questioning I replied 2009. I interpreted this question to mean when did I know about the proposal which included the additional properties which the developer had purchased for access and which included a property formerly owned by a member of my family. I was aware that the reason for my attendance at PAC surrounded concern about my knowledge of this matter and I was simply trying to clarify this point. It is possible I misunderstood the question and if that is the case, I apologise.

To summarise, in 2007 I knew of a general proposal for a development in Newtownards which was to be offered to the Association as a design and build scheme.

In 2009 I was aware of the proposed access arrangements to the proposed design and build scheme.

To date no actual formal offer has been made by the developer.

I trust this explains any perceived anomaly and clarifies any confusion.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arthur D Canning". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Arthur D Canning
CEO Operations



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