



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

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5 March 2015

Dear Andrew,

**Public Accounts Committee Evidence Session – Request for additional information**

I wish to thank your predecessor, Mr Will Haire, as well as Mr Jim Wilkinson, Mr Donald Heaney and Mr Mark Graham for attending the Public Accounts Committee meeting on Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> February. The meeting was extremely beneficial in providing the opportunity to discuss concerns and issues arising from the Audit Office reports on Housing Associations.

A number of points were raised during the session and I write to request some additional information.

1. Mr Donald Heaney agreed to write to the Committee with a note of the names of the four Housing Associations which still have only limited assurance following the Department's latest inspections.
2. The Committee would like to request a copy of the Department / Housing Executive's agreement with TrinityOaklee Housing Association for the repayment of the Advance Land Purchase (ALP) grant paid out for the site at Downpatrick Road, Crossgar.
3. The Committee would like a breakdown of any "valid deductions" that Trinity are permitted to deduct from the settlement figure. Could the Department confirm whether these valid deductions include any legal expenses and if so whether any of these legal expenses were incurred in fighting the Department's recovery of the grant?
4. Mr Mark Graham agreed to provide the Committee with details of the average price per unit of a social housing site at the time of the purchase of the Crossgar site in 2007.

5. The Committee asked for, of the 72 social housing projects actually delivered by ALP:
  - How many units had been projected at the time the ALP grant was paid
  - How many units have been or are now expected to be delivered
  - How many units are currently occupied
6. The Committee would like a copy of Trinity's Planning Consultant's report and valuation on the Crossgar site.
7. Mr Mark Graham agreed to provide more detail of the procedures in place to safeguard against overpayments on land in ALPs – the "Total Cost Indicator" (TCI).
8. The Committee would like to know the TCI for a unit in the Crossgar area for each year since 2007
9. Does the Northern Ireland Housing Executive have pre-determined ceilings for Total Cost per unit by region?
10. Could the Committee have a full set of TCI by region in Northern Ireland by year (since 2007)?
11. We understand the valuation report for the purchase of the Crossgar site is dated 28 May 2007. Can you provide an explanation of how is it that, in an e-mail of 15 March from DSD to Trinity, there is reference to a valuation of £900,000 for the site?
12. If there was a valuation of £900,000 in February 2007 on the Crossgar site, how was it that the developer was able to purchase the site for £700,000 earlier that month? Would this be something that the Department/NIHE should have queried at the time?
13. The Committee would like to see all documentation showing how the Housing Executive considered the likelihood of planning permission being received on the Crossgar site?
14. Could the Department explain why in June 2014 they considered planning restrictions on the Crossgar site to be "minimal" bearing in mind that these same restrictions resulted in planning permission for the increased number of units being denied just a few months later. The committee would like details of how many sites an active interest had been registered in with NIHE (but not yet developed) by:
  - Trinity Housing Association at July 2007 (or as close as possible to that date);
  - Trinity Housing Association immediately prior to the merger with Oaklee
  - Oaklee Trinity at present
15. The Committee understands that Helm employed Forensic Accountants to look at the Great George's Street deal, can the Committee have a copy of all relevant documentation in respect of this?
16. Could the Committee have sight of copies of all relevant correspondence and documentation between Helm and the PSNI regarding the Great George's Street transaction?
17. Who were the original owners of the Great George's Street site?

18. Who were all the parties to the Great George's Street transaction and has the Department investigated any links between them?
19. What direct role has the Department taken in investigating the Great George's Street transaction both before and after the PSNI investigation?
20. Has the Department been in contact with HMRC to follow up the possibility that the Great George's Street transaction may have been carried out in the way it was in order to evade tax?
21. The Committee would like to be provided with details of the members of Helm management who signed the agreement for the purchase of the Great George's Street site.
22. Who were the Senior Management Team in Helm at the time of the Great George's Street transaction?
23. Please provide the Committee with all documentation showing the Housing Executive's consideration of the likelihood of planning permission being received for the Great George's Street site?
24. The Committee would like to be provided with details of the firm that provided Helm with the valuation of the Great George's Street site and how they were appointed.

I would request a response on the above points by close of play on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March. If this deadline causes difficulties, please contact the Clerk to the PAC to discuss.

Yours sincerely,



**Michaela Boyle**  
**Chairperson**  
**Public Accounts Committee**