



Department for

**Communities**

An Roinn

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Department for

**Communities**

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# Department for Communities Business Plan 2020 - 2022



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# Foreword from the Permanent Secretary

I am pleased to introduce the Department's Business Plan for 2020/22. The plan sets out the key activities we will undertake to deliver against the strategic objectives and priorities contained within the Department's Strategy 2020-2025 – Building Inclusive Communities.

The activities within this plan are aligned to and will support the delivery of the Strategy's four cross-cutting themes of Anti-Poverty, Wellbeing & Inclusion, Sustainability & Inclusive Growth and Agility & Innovation. The Business Plan will also enable us to gauge & report progress on how we are meeting the objectives and priorities set out within the Department's Strategy.

The plan will serve as a guide for the Department and also support the delivery of the Executive's recovery and renewal plans for COVID-19, New Decade, New Approach commitments and the new Programme for Government.

The Department will play a leading role in economic, social, health and wellbeing recovery following the pandemic through the delivery of the business plan and strategy, working with other Ministers and the Assembly, other Government Departments, other public sector organisations including local councils and our Arms' Lengths Bodies,

the business world, churches, voluntary organisations and trade unions to build an inclusive society with opportunities for all.

In light of these uncertain times, the business plan must be agile and capable of adapting to reflect new priorities and responding to changing economic, political and social demands, opportunities and pressures. This reflects a new way of working but one that I am confident that our people across the organisation, with our strategic partners, are more than capable of meeting.

The people within this Department have proved resilient and adaptable in responding to the difficulties presented by COVID-19 to date, which impacted on both their personal and professional lives. These attributes will be essential as we emerge and recover from the pandemic. Working together, and through closer engagement with the communities we serve, we can develop solutions to the complex challenges we face and continue to support people, build communities and shape places.



**Tracy Meharg**  
**Accounting Officer**

# Executive Summary

The 2020-2022 Business Plan reflects the Department's key activities and milestones and how they align and support the strategic objectives and priorities within the DfC 5 Year Strategy – Building Inclusive Communities. The Plan is the vehicle through which the Department's Strategy will be delivered and monitored. All aspects of the draft Business Plan align to, and support the DfC Strategy. Each Strategic Objective is supported by at least one business planning activity, with the inclusion of milestones to monitor success. The business plan activities and supporting milestones can be viewed at [Annex A](#).

The Plan also details the Department's responsibilities and functions, information about its people, resources, and Arm's Length Bodies, as well as how the functions of the Department are governed.

Departmental Business Planning was interrupted by COVID – 19 although business areas maintained business planning at a local level to support recovery. The latest Plan therefore covers an extended period from 1st

October 2020 to 31st March 2022 and will be agile in nature to further support recovery and renewal phases allowing flexibility in response to changing priorities and budgets over the 18 month period.

The newly established Policy and Strategy Sub-Committee set up to support the Departmental Management Board will oversee the Department's delivery against its Programme for Government (PfG), "New Decade, New Approach" (NDNA) and Ministerial commitments and the operational management of their implementation via the DfC Business Plan.

A new online planning tool has been developed which will facilitate the transfer of ownership to business areas who will be responsible for providing updates against activities and milestones for which they have responsibility for and who can utilise this information to support local planning within service areas.

# Section 1 - Draft Programme for Government

## 1.1 Programme for Government (PfG)

The NI Executive has agreed a twin track approach to PfG consisting of the following two elements:

- a) An activity based recovery programme was developed to cover the remainder of 2020/21 as the basis for driving immediate recovery in the economic, health and societal sectors most severely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. This programme was overseen by a cross-Departmental Recovery Group, responsible for reporting to the Executive. Although the programme's primary focus is on recovery, it is also used to deliver immediate New Decade New Approach (NDNA) and other agreed Executive priorities during the remainder of 2020/21.
- b) The Executive has positioned a COVID-19 Recovery strategy at the centre of a three step strategic process involving a pathway out of restrictions, recovery and renewal, and Programme for Government. The aim moving forward and for the remainder of the mandate is to develop an initial cross-departmental plan which has an immediate focus on societal, economic and health recovery taking account of prevailing COVID-19 restrictions which will then be followed by PfG action plans to deliver desired change and improvement towards achieving long-term Programme for Government Outcomes.

The Department will undertake an exercise to ensure that key Departmental priorities and business plan activities feed into the PfG action plan. We will collaborate closely with other Government Departments and engage extensively with citizens and communities to ensure that co-design is a key element to the delivery of a PfG.

## Section 2 - Our Responsibilities

**2.1** The Department delivers a wide range of services to the public – both directly and through its Arm’s Length Bodies – which will support people, build communities and shape places. In supporting and advising the Minister, the Department’s main functions include:

- delivery of the social security system including child maintenance and pensions;
  - providing advice and support for those seeking employment and for those who are unable to work;
  - ensuring the availability of good quality and affordable housing;
  - regulation of the private rented sector, addressing homelessness and supporting independent living;
  - encouraging diversity and participation in society;
  - promoting social inclusion within the community to encompass:
    - Anti-Poverty;
    - Gender Equality;
    - Sexual orientation;
    - Disability;
    - Child poverty; and
    - Active ageing.
- promoting sports and leisure within our communities;
  - supporting local government to deliver services;
  - identifying and preserving records of historical, social and cultural importance to ensure they are available to the public and for future generations;
  - realising the value of our built heritage;
  - supporting creative industries, and promoting the arts, language and cultural sectors;
  - providing free access to books, information, IT and community programmes through our libraries;
  - maintaining museums; and
  - revitalising town and city centres.

## Section 3 - People, Resources and Governance

While this Business Plan covers the 18 month period from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022, the People and Resourcing information outlined below covers the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 only reflecting our current annual budget arrangements.

### 3.1 People and Resourcing

The Department's most valuable resource is its people with in excess of 8,300 staff (full time equivalent) currently employed across the Department.

The Department has been allocated a total budget of £1.155 billion, comprising of £891.5m Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) budget and net Capital DEL of £263.7 million. DEL expenditure is managed by the Northern Ireland Executive and allocated to departments for expenditure on local public services.

The Resource and Capital budgets have been allocated as follows:

| 2021-22 Opening Budget - Resource Allocation   | Total £'m    |
|--|--------------|
| Engaged Communities Group                      | 126.3        |
| Housing, Urban Regeneration & Local Government | 226.0        |
| Strategic Policy & Professional Strategy       | 195.4        |
| Work & Health Group                            | 205.8        |
| Supporting People Group                        | 138.0        |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                             | <b>891.5</b> |

| 2021-22 Opening Budget - Capital Allocation    | Gross Total £'m | Total Receipts £'m | Net Total £'m |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Engaged Communities Group                      | 41.2            | 0.0                | 41.2          |
| Housing, Urban Regeneration & Local Government | 282.2           | -75.5              | 206.7         |
| Strategic Policy & Professional Strategy       | 0.0             | 0.0                | 0.0           |
| Work & Health Group                            | 15.1            | -6.0               | 9.1           |
| Supporting People Group                        | 6.8             | -0.1               | 6.7           |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                             | <b>345.3</b>    | <b>-81.6</b>       | <b>263.7</b>  |



As well as the budget provided to it by the Executive, the Department is also responsible for managing approximately £7.5 billion of Annually Managed Expenditure (AME)

on behalf of HM Treasury. This covers expenditure on demand led services which are generally less predictable than DEL expenditure.

| 2021-22 Opening AME Budget | Total £'m     |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| AME Capital                | 2.2           |
| AME Res D/I                | 25.1          |
| AME Resource               | 7423.9        |
| <b>Grand Total</b>         | <b>7451.2</b> |

| 2021-22 Opening AME Budget      | Total £'m     |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Attendance Allowance            | 191.4         |
| Carers Allowance                | 193.5         |
| Disability Benefits (DLA & PIP) | 1386.7        |
| Employment & Support Allowance  | 854.1         |
| Housing Benefit                 | 436.6         |
| Income Support                  | 76.0          |
| Jobseekers Allowance            | 49.5          |
| State Pension                   | 2615.1        |
| Pension Credit                  | 239.6         |
| Universal Credit                | 636.3         |
| Other Statutory Benefits        | 738.9         |
| Other Departmental AME          | 33.4          |
| <b>Grand Total</b>              | <b>7451.2</b> |

## 3.2 Governance

The functions of the Department for Communities are exercised at all times subject to the direction and control of the Minister (Article 4 of the Departments (NI) Order 1999). The Permanent Secretary as administrative head of the Department is responsible for strategic direction and advice to the Minister on Departmental policy making and implementation activities.

The Permanent Secretary is also Accounting Officer for the Department. This role carries with it personal responsibility for ensuring regularity and propriety, value for money and ensuring that a sound system of internal controls and high standards of financial management are operated within the Department.

The Accounting Officer is assisted by a Departmental Management Board (DMB) which meets on a six-weekly basis.

The key aspects of the Board's role includes:

- setting the strategic direction for the Department
- advising on the allocation of financial and human resources to achieve strategic aims
- monitoring the overall financial position of the Department
- monitoring the achievement of performance objectives
- setting the Department's standards and values

- maintaining a transparent system of prudent and effective controls
- assessing and managing risk and establishing the Department's risk management framework
- leading and overseeing the process of change and encouraging innovation, to enhance the Department's capability to deliver.

The Permanent Secretary is supported by five Deputy Secretaries, who each manage Business Groups within the Department to deliver effective public services to the community, and do so in conjunction with relevant stakeholders.

The Department's Corporate Governance Framework specifies the organisation's governance structures and the roles and responsibilities of those charged with governance. This framework outlines the Department's system of internal controls, approach to risk management, governance and assurance arrangements which have been established to ensure proper and effective management of the Department's resources and the delivery of its programmes and priorities within available resources.

Governance arrangements include regular monitoring of the Departmental Business Plan, stringent financial management and control procedures, policies and procedures on managing risk, anti-fraud policies, whistleblowing arrangements and publication of the Department's Annual Report and Accounts.

DMB is supported in its role by a Departmental Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (DARAC). Its role is to support the Board on issues of risk, control and governance through provision of independent advice, information and assurance to the Board and Accounting Officer on the operation of the Department's system of internal control and the comprehensiveness, reliability and integrity of available assurance.

DMB is further supported in its role by two new Sub-Committees: the Policy and Strategy Sub-Committee; and the People Strategy Sub-Committee. Both Sub-Committees support the Board through focus on the DfC 5 Year Strategy; oversight of the Department's delivery against its Programme for Government (PfG), "New Decade, New Approach" (NDNA) and Ministerial commitments; the operational management of their implementation via the DfC Business Plan; and the ongoing development of the Department's policy making capacity.

The Policy and Strategy Sub-Committee (PSSC) oversees and provides assurance to the Board in relation to the delivery of the DfC Strategy, ensuring all Departmental policies are aligned to its strategic priorities. The Committee meets in advance of DMB meetings to scrutinise the quarterly progress of the strategic objectives and activities included in the DfC Business Plan and agree on the issues that should be escalated to DMB.

DMB supports the Permanent Secretary in her role as Accounting Officer in her oversight of the delivery of the Departmental Business Plan. DMB reviews progress against strategic objectives, activities, and emerging trends and issues as directed by the PSSC.

The Department will also implement its Equality Scheme to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. The Department is committed to complying with its statutory obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

## Section 4 - Our Strategic Objectives and Activities for 2020-2022

**4.1** While the five year strategy defines what we want to do, this Business Plan sets out how we are going to do it, setting out key activities and milestones to deliver against the strategic objectives and priorities until 31 March 2022.

These activities and milestones have significant interdependencies to delivering on the objectives and priorities which will help support people, build communities, and shape places. The Department's objectives, activities and supporting programme of work for 2020 to 2022 is attached at Annex A. The Business Plan has been developed with consideration for the outcomes and spirit of the Previous Programme for Government and NICS Outcomes Delivery Plans. As the new Programme for Government Framework is developed, approved and published, an exercise will be undertaken to map the key activities against PfG outcomes to ensure robust alignment.

**4.2** The activities and milestones outlined in the Business Plan also take account of the commitments outlined in the New Decade, New Approach Deal and of the COVID-19 recovery work being undertaken across the Department and the immediate focus on the delivery of critical and high priority services to ensure continued delivery to the citizen.

**4.3** DMB will receive quarterly progress updates throughout the 18 month period of the Plan with assurance

provided through the Policy and Strategy Sub-Committee review. A review of progress against the Strategic Objectives will be conducted bi-annually, and reported to DMB

**4.4** Our Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs), Councils and other Executive Departments perform many vital and significant functions and it is through the strategic alignment of objectives and working with these strategic partners that the Department will deliver much of its work.

### **Arm's Length Bodies:**

Armagh Observatory & Planetarium

Arts Council for Northern Ireland

Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

Commissioner for Older People  
Northern Ireland

Libraries Northern Ireland

Local Government Staff Commission  
for Northern Ireland

National Museums Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Commissioner for  
Children & Young People

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Northern Ireland Local Government  
Officers Superannuation Committee

Northern Ireland Museums Council

North South Language Body – Ulster  
Scots Agency

North South Language Body – Foras Na  
Gaeilge

Sport NI

Ulster Supported Employment Limited

**Advisory Committees:**

Charity Advisory Committee

Historic Buildings Council

Historic Monuments Council.

Ministerial Advisory Group for  
Architecture and the Built Environment

**Other:**

Discretionary Support Commissioner

Vaughan's Charitable Trust

# Annex A

A copy of Annex A ( a list of DfC Business Planning activities) is available by contacting:  
**[Pg&BusinessPlanning@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Pg&BusinessPlanning@communities-ni.gov.uk)**

For all NICS staff Annex A is available on the DfC intranet.

Available in alternative formats.

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