

Northern Ireland Housing Executive Board appointments

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt. Hon Julian Smith MP, today announced that he has appointed Councillors Allan Bresland, Catherine Elattar and Michael Ruane and Alderman Amanda Grehan to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) Board. In the absence of Northern Ireland Ministers, these appointments were made possible by the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018.

These appointments will take effect from today (1 January 2020) until the date of the next Council elections and will ensure that the NIHE Board can continue to deliver vital public services within its remit for the benefit of the Northern Ireland community.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)

The NIHE is a Non-Departmental Public Body of the NI Department for Communities and was established by the Housing Executive Act (Northern Ireland) 1971. Under this Act, the NIHE took over the housing responsibilities of 65 separate authorities and became Northern Ireland's overall housing authority. It is currently landlord to approximately 86,500 dwellings and is one of Northern Ireland's largest public sector organisations with a budget of over £740m and a staff of approximately 2,700. It also makes a substantial contribution to better health, education and wellbeing through housing.

Provision for the NIHE Board is set out in the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. The principal role of the Board is to set the strategic direction for the Housing Executive and to provide stewardship of all public resources entrusted to it to implement the policies and priorities of the Minister and the Executive. The Board oversees the performance and outputs of the executive team, which is responsible for the day-to-day conduct of the business within the Housing Executive. The Board also sets the attitude and disposition of the organisation towards compliance with applicable laws and best practice.

Terms of appointment

Current remuneration for the position of a Board Member is £6,892 per annum plus expenses, with an expected time commitment of 1 day per month.

CPANI Code of Practice

This appointment process has been regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointment NI (CPANI) and the appointments have been made in accordance with the CPANI Code of Practice.

Political Activity

All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, CPANI requires the political activity of appointees to be published which is included in the biographies below.

Biography of Appointees

Cllr Ruane has served as a local councillor for Sinn Fein for 19 years, previously with the Newry and Mourne Council and currently with the Newry, Mourne and Down Council. Mr Ruane has served on a number of committees within the councils, including the Audit Committee and brings relevant governance skills to the Board. He has relevant stakeholder engagement skills and experience. He holds no other public appointments.

Alderman Grehan has been a Local Councillor for the Alliance party for five years and was Deputy Mayor of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council in 2018-19. She was also chairperson of its Governance and Audit Committee in 2017-18, where she has gained relevant governance and risk management experience. Alderman Grehan was also vice-chair of the Corporate Services Committee in 2016-17. She has also been the manager of her local MLA's constituency office for 12 years, and brings communication skills and resource management experience to the Board. She holds no other public appointments.

Cllr Elattar has been a Sinn Fein local Councillor since 2011 when she was elected to Magherafelt District Council. She has previously held the position of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council. She was elected to the new Mid Ulster District Council in May 2014 and is a member of the Development Committee and the Policy Resources Committee. Previously employed in community education, Councillor Elattar is now a midwife, working for the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. She previously served on the NIHE Board from 1 June 2015 to 1 May 2019, and holds no other public appointments.

Cllr Bresland has served as a DUP councillor for over 28 years and is currently a member of the Derry and Strabane Council. Mr Bresland has served on a number of committees within the councils, including the Planning Committee and Environmental and Regeneration Committee, skills and experience of which he brings to the Board. He is a former member of the NI Assembly, having served as a member of the Standards and Privileges Committee. He holds no other public appointments.

Statutory Requirements

Provision for the NIHE Board is set out in the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. In October 2018, the Secretary of State for NI introduced legislation in Parliament; the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018 received Royal Assent on 1 November. This legislation provides for the appointment to a number of public offices by the Secretary of State. The NI (Ministerial Appointment Functions) Regulations 2019 came into force on 18 February 2019. This Instrument provided for further critical appointments, including that of the NIHE Board.