



**Minutes of the 438<sup>th</sup> NESC Council Meeting, 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020 @ 2pm (via WebEx)**

The meeting took place virtually via webex from the Department of the Taoiseach, Room 301.

**Attendance:** In room 301: Elizabeth Canavan (Chair), Online: Brid O'Brien, Dave Hegarty (DBEI), David Moloney & Fionn Jenkinson (DPER), Denis Duggan, Edgar Morgenroth, Eleanor Denny, Geraint Ellis, Graham Doyle, Ian Talbot, James Doorley, John Enright, Karen Ciesielski, Kate Ruddock, Kevin Callinan, Matthew McCann (DoF) Michelle Norris, Paul Donnelly, Philip Hamell, Rónán Hession (DEASP), Sean Healy, Sinead O'Flanagan, TJ Flanagan, and Tom Parlon.

**Secretariat:** In room 301: Larry O'Connell, Cathal Fitzgerald, Online: Anne-Marie McGauran, Damian Thomas, Helen Johnston, Jeanne Moore, Noel Cahill, Edna Jordan, and Sinéad Nic Coitir NESC

**Apologies:** Oonagh Duggan, Patricia King, Maeve McElwee, Orlaigh Quinn (Dave Hegarty attending), Derek Moran (Matthew McCann attending), John McKeon (Rónán Hession attending), and Robert Watt (David Moloney and Fionn Jenkinson attending).

**1. Minutes of the Meeting June 2020**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

- 2. Work Programme 2020-2021:** Larry O'Connell introduced the work programme. Comments included: the importance of an overarching, visionary and synergistic perspective; wider understanding about the nature of work and the need to consider unpaid work; the need for consultation on any work on eldercare and links to commitments in the Programme for Government; and the need to consider carefully the sequencing of work, while acknowledging that the work programme is subject to change on foot of requests.
- 3. The Future of the Social Welfare System: Participation and Protection (Report 150):** Helen Johnston noted that the report had been agreed by written procedure and submitted to Government for approval; that a media release was planned; that an event in early 2021 was under consideration; and, that the working papers are being edited and updated and will be placed on the website.
- 4. Housing Policy-Actions to Deliver Change:** Cathal Fitzgerald summarised the report, which was widely welcomed. Comments included the importance of a carrot and stick approach; barriers facing local authorities and approved housing bodies; costs in the cost-rental model; the "on-off" balance sheet issue; the terms of reference of the LDA and the provision of social housing; competencies and the motivations of the agencies involved; and employment opportunities, including apprenticeships in construction. It was agreed that the report would be signed off by written procedure.
- 5. Grounding the Recovery in Sustainable Development:** Jeanne Moore introduced the paper, which was welcomed by members. Comments focused on the continuing uncertainty of Covid-19; balance and tensions between economic, societal and environmental aspects; positive and negative aspects of changes, such as remote working; deep-seated behaviours and persuasive arguments for change; local level focus on building resilience in towns and cities; and the Statement as a contribution to the overarching vision and recovery. It was agreed that the Statement would be finalised by written procedure.
- 6. Capturing the Potential of Digital:** Anne-Marie McGauran introduced this paper which was welcomed by members. Comments focused on the association between digital inequalities and socio-economic inequalities; access to good quality broadband, digital devices and digital literacy; the advantages of delivering some public services on-line and by e-government while also noting this can be exclusionary for some citizens; safe and secure spaces for working on-line and safety while on-line. It was agreed that there were many compounding factors, and that the work should be progressed.

**The next meeting will take place on Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020.**