



Department for  
**Communities**

[www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)

# Department for Communities: Non-Executive Board Members Competition

## **Candidate Information Booklet**

Completed applications must be returned to DfC Governance Unit no later than 12 noon on Monday 10 August 2026

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If you require further information about the appointment process or progress of your application, please contact Governance Unit as below:

Ruth McNeill Tel: 028 9081 9417  
[publicappointments@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:publicappointments@communities-ni.gov.uk)

### **Equality of Opportunity and Diversity**

The Department for Communities (DfC) is committed to the principles of appointment based on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process.

The Department is also committed to equality of opportunity and welcomes applications from all suitably experienced people irrespective of religious belief, gender, disability, ethnic origin, political opinion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or whether or not they have dependants.

An e-version application pack is available from [publicappointments@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:publicappointments@communities-ni.gov.uk).

This material will be made available on request in other formats such as Braille, large print, audio etc. All reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of applicants with a disability.

### **Privacy Notice**

DfC will only process the personal data you provide us for the purpose of recruiting Non-Executive Board Members. For more information, please see our Privacy Notice at

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/privacy-notice-public-appointments-communities>

## Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	Department for Communities	4
<b>Section 1</b>	Department for Communities Background	5
<b>Section 2</b>	Department for Communities Governance Arrangements	7
<b>Section 3</b>	Terms and Conditions for Non-Executive Board Members	9
<b>Section 4</b>	Selection and Application Process	10
<b>Section 5</b>	Integrity and Conflicts of Interest	14
<b>ANNEXES</b>		
<b>Annex 1</b>	Department for Communities – Arm’s Length Bodies	15
<b>Annex 2</b>	The Seven Principles of Public Life	16

## Foreword

The Department for Communities is delighted to invite applications for two Non-Executive Members on its Management Board.

The Department plays a vital role in supporting, protecting and enabling people, households and communities across Northern Ireland. Our work spans a wide range of impactful areas; promoting sustainable and affordable housing, supporting jobseekers and employers, strengthening community cohesion, delivering social welfare services, and advancing equality of opportunity.

The Department operates in a dynamic environment with ongoing transformation underway, and it remains firmly committed to delivering high-quality services that make a meaningful difference to people's lives.



Grainia Long, DfC Permanent Secretary

Non-Executive Board Members provide a valuable and influential contribution by offering independent insight, constructive challenge, and strategic guidance. These roles are central to ensuring strong governance and supporting the Board, and its sub-committees, in shaping the Department's future direction with confidence and ambition, and delivering on Ministerial priorities and Programme for Government Commitments.

The Department is particularly keen to attract individuals who can bring diverse experience, fresh and independent perspectives, and a passion for public service. This is an exciting opportunity to play a key role in supporting the delivery of effective and inclusive services for communities across Northern Ireland.

If you feel you meet the requirements for the role, you are strongly encouraged to apply and be part of this important work. Your skills and experience could help drive positive outcomes that benefit communities now and into the future.

Please remember to complete the documentation fully and return it by the required closing date.

I look forward to hearing from you.

**Grainia Long**  
**DfC Permanent Secretary**

## Section 1 – Department for Communities (DfC) Background

### 1. Information on DfC

The Department is seeking two new Non-Executive Members to join its Board. The individuals will also join sub-committees of the Board, namely the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (potentially as the Chair or Deputy Chair), the People and Resources Committee or the Policy and Strategy Committee.

This is a unique time to make a significant contribution, as a Non-Executive Board Member to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and the public sector as it deals with a range of budgetary and resourcing challenges, whilst supporting the aims and objectives of the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly. As the largest of nine Departments in the NICS, DfC has a critical role in helping to deliver against a number of outcomes identified in the Programme for Government (PfG) and objectives detailed within the New Decade New Approach agreement.

### 2. The Role of DfC

DfC delivers a wide range of services to the public – both directly and through its Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) – which almost every person living in Northern Ireland will encounter at some point.

The Department is headed by a Permanent Secretary and is structured into six Groups, each headed by a Deputy Secretary:

- Communities, Place and Local Government
- Corporate Services
- Engaged Communities
- Housing and Sustainability
- Operational Delivery
- Work & Health

In supporting and advising the Minister, the Department's main functions include:

- the promotion of healthy housing and the provision of decent, affordable, sustainable homes and housing support services
- a social welfare system including focused support to the most disadvantaged areas, including delivery of a benefits service to the Department for Work and Pensions in GB.
- providing training and support to jobseekers and employers
- bringing divided communities together by creating urban centres which are sustainable, welcoming and accessible to live, work and relax in peace
- supporting local Government to deliver effective public services
- maximising public benefits from the culture, arts and leisure sectors
- tackling disadvantage and promoting equality of opportunity by reducing poverty, promoting and protecting the interests of children, older people, people with disabilities, and other socially excluded groups; addressing inequality and disadvantage

### 3. Resources

For 2025-26, DfC's budget was approximately £11.5bn. The 2026-27 budget is not yet finalised but will see a significant reduction.

The Department employs approximately 11,400 staff (full time equivalent), which accounts for around 40% of all NICS employees.

#### **4. Arm's Length Bodies**

A key feature of DfC is that it is responsible for a diverse range of functions and a diverse range of ALBs. ALBs and other Advisory Bodies are listed at **Annex 1**.

#### **5. Context and Challenges**

The Department will shortly be launching its 2026-27 Business Plan with a clear focus on delivery, outcomes and what it can achieve for every citizen in Northern Ireland. This, however, is set against a backdrop of a constrained financial and challenging resource environment across the public sector. This will require innovative solutions, collaborative working with key partners and stakeholders, as well as an ability to be agile as future challenges arise.

The success of the 2025-26 DfC Business Plan proved that the Department can deliver on its objectives covering housing, urban regeneration, welfare support, employment opportunities, and culture and heritage. The Departmental Management Board (DMB), including its Non-Executive Members, will have a key role in the oversight and delivery of the Business Plan.

Further information about DfC can be found at <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/>

## Section 2 – DfC Governance Arrangements

### 6. Overview of Governance Arrangements

The DfC Corporate Governance Framework describes the governance structures that have been established. It sets out the roles and responsibilities of those charged with governance responsibilities and provides details of the key internal control, risk management and corporate governance support arrangements which apply to the delivery of the Minister for Communities' agenda. A copy of the Framework is available at:

<http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/dfc-corporate-governance-framework>

The Department operates under the direction and control of the Minister for Communities. The Minister is responsible and accountable to the Assembly for the policies, programmes and actions of the Department. The Permanent Secretary is the Minister's principal adviser as well as the administrative head of the Department and the Departmental Accounting Officer. The Accounting Officer is responsible and accountable for the effective management and organisation of the Department, the efficient and effective use of its resources and the stewardship of its assets.

The Permanent Secretary is assisted by DMB, with the Board supported by a number of sub-committees including an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

### 7. Departmental Management Board (DMB)

DMB is a core element of DfC's corporate governance framework, agreeing the other elements and, through its scrutiny role, overseeing the policies, plans and effectiveness of those other elements. The Board meets every six weeks and members are required to adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life which are set out at Annex 2.

The Board currently comprises:

- the Permanent Secretary (chair);
- Communities, Place and Local Government Deputy Secretary
- Corporate Services Deputy Secretary
- Engaged Communities Deputy Secretary
- Housing and Sustainability Deputy Secretary
- Operational Delivery Deputy Secretary
- Work & Health; and
- Two Non-Executive Board Members. This competition is seeking to increase the number from two to three.

#### Role of Non-Executive Board Members

The primary role of Non-Executive Board Members is to contribute to the good governance of DfC. They should be prepared to offer constructive challenge to the Board with a view to ensuring that all aspects of strategy and delivery are scrutinised for effectiveness and efficiency.

In addition, they will also:

- provide a fresh, objective perspective and new ideas;
- seek to add rigor to Board processes;
- bring their specific expertise and experience to Board discussions;
- serve on the Departmental Audit & Risk Assurance Committee as potentially either the Chair or Deputy Chair; and
- serve as a Member on a further Board sub-committee, either the Policy & Strategy Committee or the People & Resources Committee

While the Minister leads policy direction, implementation is operational delivered by the Permanent Secretary and the Senior Civil Service Team. This encompasses the work of the Board, including Non-Executive Members, in providing collective leadership for DfC including:

- Setting the vision and/or mission and ensuring all activities, either directly or indirectly, contribute towards it;
- Setting DfC's risk appetite and ensuring controls are in place to manage risk;
- Ensuring DfC has the capability to deliver and to plan to meet current and future needs;
- Agreeing the operational Business Plan, including strategic aims and objectives; and,
- Ensuring clear, consistent, comparable performance information is used to drive improvements.

the process for review of the accounts prior to submission for audit, levels of error identified, and management's letter of representation to external auditors;

- the planned activity and results of both internal and external audit (including Northern Ireland Audit Office reports and Value for Money studies);
- adequacy of management response to issues identified by audit activity, including external audit's Report to Those Charged with Governance (Report on Audit Results);
- assurances relating to the management of risk and corporate governance requirements for DfC; and
- fraud policies, raising concern policies, conflict of interest and gifts and hospitality policies, and arrangements for special investigations.

## **8. Departmental Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (DARAC)**

DARAC is a committee of the Board, independent of DfC's executive structure and with no executive powers. Its role is to support the Board on issues of risk control and governance. It does this through reviewing the comprehensiveness of assurances in meeting the Board and Accounting Officer's needs and reviewing the reliability and integrity of those assurances.

### Role of Non-Executive Members on DARAC

The Committee is chaired by a Non-Executive Board Member with the Committee reviewing assurances and advising DMB and the Accounting Officer on issues including:

- the strategic processes for risk, control and governance and the Governance Statement;
- the accounting policies, accounts, and Annual Report of DfC, including

## Section 3 - Terms and Conditions for Non-Executive Members

### 15. Status

Non-Executive Members of Departmental Audit Committees and Boards are not public appointments, nor do they constitute employment, but they are subject to civil service rules on conduct and political activity.

### 16. Tenure

It is anticipated that the appointments will be effective from 5 October 2026.

Appointments will be for an initial period of up to three years, which may be extended in further defined periods by agreement. The maximum total term of appointment is six years. You can only hold one NEBM position across NICS Departmental Boards at a time.

As well as membership of DARAC and DMB, membership of other associated Departmental committees, boards and working groups as appropriate will be required. Annual assessments of the performance of the appointees will be conducted by the Permanent Secretary.

### 17. Fees

The fees payable in relation to these responsibilities will be £500 per day (or equivalent), plus expenses. One day's payment will normally cover attendance at a Committee or Board meeting, including preparation time for meetings and actions arising. All remuneration and expenses are subject to deduction of income tax and national insurance. The time commitment is typically 20-25 days annually.

Travel and subsistence expenses are payable at NICS rates.

### 18. Location / Travel

Meetings are currently held at DfC Departmental Headquarters in Causeway Exchange, Belfast. However, on occasions, meetings may take place at other departmental offices or locations throughout Northern Ireland.

The successful candidates must have access to a form of transport as well as technology which will enable them to fulfil their duties. A laptop will be provided upon appointment.

## Section 4 - Selection and Application Process

### 19. Selection Criteria

For the purposes of the competition, candidates will be asked to provide evidence of how they meet four essential criteria specific to DfC. These are as follows:

- 1. Leadership:** Recent experience, within the last five years, of successful non-executive membership, or leadership, of a large and complex organisation (budget or turnover of £100m, and staffing complement of over 100) including experience of strategic oversight of organisational performance.
- 2. Governance & Risk:** Experience of developing and delivering effective corporate governance and risk management arrangements, including in respect of IT and cyber security risks, in an organisation;
- 3. Public Services:** An understanding of the design and delivery of public services, and the challenges of delivering services through Arm's Length Bodies, including the governance, accountability, audit and risk management aspects, and experience of dealing with such challenges; and
- 4. Innovation & Transformation:** Experience of navigating complex organisational environments\*, using innovative approaches to address significant challenges, whilst driving the transformation of services and resources to maximise efficiency and effectiveness (\*complex organisation = budget or turnover of £100m, and staffing complement of over 100).

### 20. How to Apply

In order for us to progress your application please submit the following completed documentation:

- 1. A Curriculum Vitae** which will contain information including your professional qualifications and employment history. Please ensure your name is recorded on this document.

- 2. A completed Application Form** (Sections A, B, C and D). This includes a Personal Statement (maximum 2 A4 pages) – setting out your suitability for the role and how you meet the criteria for the Non-Executive Board Member role.

Please take full advantage of the opportunity to provide practical evidence and examples of how and why you consider you are suitable for the post. These examples, providing detail on your skills, experience and expertise will be assessed by the selection panel to determine your suitability for these positions.

The application form also asks you to provide any details of conflicts of interest, previous conduct / probity issues and details of any convictions.

[All applications should contain both of these documents.](#)

Hard copy or electronic versions are acceptable. However, you are encouraged to return your application via e-mail to: Email [publicappointments@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:publicappointments@communities-ni.gov.uk)

If you are unable to e-mail your application and wish to post or hand deliver it, the office address is below. Please contact the Department via e-mail or telephone before doing so.

**Governance Unit  
Department for Communities  
Level 5  
Causeway Exchange  
1-7 Bedford Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7EG**

**Telephone: 028 9081 9415  
or 028 9081 9417**

**Text Relay: 18001 02890 819417**

If you have any queries regarding the appointment process or any other aspect of this competition, please contact Ruth McNeill via the above contact details.

When submitting applications, please note the following points:

- applicants must complete their application in at least font size 12 or, if handwriting, in legible handwriting using black ink;
- applications will not be examined until after the closing deadline;
- the panel will not make any assumptions about your role and can only assess you on the information provided;
- you can use an example(s) from your working life, where appropriate, or from your personal life, including any voluntary or community work you are or have been involved in;
- it is your unique role that the panel are interested in, not that of your team or division; and,
- it is your responsibility to ensure that your application is complete. Candidates who submit incomplete applications are unlikely to progress from the initial sift to the following stage.

## 21. Timeframe for Submitting an Application

**The deadline for receipt of all applications is 12 noon on Monday 10 August 2026.**

For those applications sent via e-mail, the date and time at which the application was received as recorded by the DfC IT system will be used to determine whether an application is received before or after the closing date/time.

For those applications received by post or hand, it is the responsibility of the applicant, taking into account their chosen method of delivery, to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for their application to arrive with DfC, on or before the deadline. **Late applications will not be accepted.**

## 22. Sifting and Shortlisting of Applications

Once your application has been received, it will be acknowledged within 3 working days. The selection panel will meet to consider applications **on 3 September 2026**, and will carry out a sift exercise, against a rating scale, to assess how the skills, knowledge, experience and other qualities presented in your application form meet the selection criteria. Applications which do not meet all the essential criteria will be sifted out.

Only those applications that meet the criteria will be progressed to the next stage. If a high number of applications are received, only the top scoring applicants will progress to the next stage, based on the quality of the evidence provided. All candidates sifted out will be provided with feedback based on the selection panel's agreed assessment of their application, if requested, as well as having the option of asking for a review of the selection panel's decision.

## 23. Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS)

The aim of the GIS is to provide applicants with a disability the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage. Applicants with a disability who meet all of the essential criteria at the sift stage will automatically be offered an interview. Their application will not be subjected to any short-listing which may take place.

## 24. Interviews

Those candidates who progress to the next stage of the competition will be invited to an interview with the selection panel consisting of:

- Grainia Long, Permanent Secretary, DfC (Chair);
- John Greer, Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services Group, DfC; and,
- Linsey Farrell, Deputy Secretary, Housing, Operational Delivery Group, DfC

The Interview will focus on the skills and attributes which you can bring to the Non-Executive Board Member position.

You will also be asked about:

- your understanding of the standards of behaviour required of public servants;
- if you have any business or personal interests that might be relevant to the work of the appointing department and which could lead to a real or perceived conflict of interest were you to be appointed;
- if there is anything in your professional or personal history, which if brought into the public domain, may cause embarrassment or disrepute to the organisation.

The panel will explore any such issues in order to judge if the public would have confidence in your appointment.

Interviews will take place on **21 September 2026** in Causeway Exchange, Bedford Street, Belfast. Due to limited availability of selection panel members, shortlisted candidates should ensure that they are available to attend on this date as alternative dates cannot be accommodated.

## **25. Merit Principle and Order of Merit**

NICS departments are committed to encouraging a diverse range of applicants for these positions and to the principle of appointment on merit following an open and transparent process. Only those individuals judged to best meet the requirements of the post will be recommended at each stage of the competition.

Applications are welcomed from all backgrounds regardless of religious belief, gender, disability, ethnic origin, political opinion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or whether or not you have dependants.

The selection panel will assess candidates against skills and experience required for the positions. Those candidates who meet the required standard(s) and pass mark

will be deemed suitable for appointment. Those deemed suitable for appointment will be ranked in order of merit with the highest scoring applicant first. The order of merit will be considered valid for three years.

## **26. Appointment & Induction**

The candidates who are successfully appointed, will have their appointment confirmed formally in writing. Those candidates not selected for appointment, will also be advised in writing of the outcome.

Upon appointment, you will receive a comprehensive training induction programme.

Individuals may only hold one departmental Non-Executive Board Member post. The panel may also create a reserve list to cover any DfC Non-Executive Board Member vacancies that arise within three years of the date of the first appointment from this competition. Any reserve list from this competition may be considered for other Non-Executive Board Member vacancies within other NICS departments, depending on the skills required.

## **27. Disability Requirements**

Details of any disability recorded on your monitoring form are used only to ensure that equal opportunity measures are effective. They do not form any part of the selection process. If you have indicated on your application that you have a disability and are invited to attend an interview you may be asked if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to your disability, to enable you to attend. If you wish to discuss these requirements please feel free to contact the Department at any stage.

Every effort will be made to provide whatever reasonable support is needed to help those appointed to be able to carry out their duties.

## **28. Criminal Record Check**

Successful applicants will be subject to a criminal records check before any appointment is confirmed.

## **29. Publicising Appointment**

A press release will be published to announce the appointment of the new Non-Executive Members. Some of the information that you have provided in your application will be made public in the press announcement, which will also include: your name; a brief summary of the skills and knowledge you bring to the role; and, the length of the appointment term

## **30. Double Paying**

Applicants who already work in the public sector need to be aware that:

- they may be ineligible for consideration for this appointment if in DfC's view there is a conflict of interest, the perception of a conflict or a potential conflict, between the appointment and their existing commitments; and,
- they will be asked to confirm that they have permission from their employer to take up an appointment if one is offered and the employer will be asked to confirm this.
- there is a general guiding principle that an individual should not be paid twice from the public purse for the same period of time. As a result applicants who already work in the public sector may not be entitled to claim remuneration including expenses for this position if the duties are undertaken during a period of time for which they are already paid by the public sector. If in doubt contact your employer for advice.

In the interests of minimising the potential for double paying to occur the Department reserves the right to contact your employer regarding your candidature.

## **31. Former civil servant**

Any former civil servant applying for this position must comply with the relevant approvals from section 6.1 Annex 4 of the NICS HR Handbook – Standards of Conduct, i.e. for SCS to seek approval for any appointment up to two years following leaving the service, and following one year for G6 and below. This should be ascertained in advance of any application being submitted.

## **32. Nationality Requirements**

Although these appointments are not applicable to UK nationals only, there is a mandatory requirement to ensure that those appointed do not contravene immigration legislation:

- Republic of Ireland (RoI) citizens may be appointed to any post.
- Commonwealth citizens who have immigration status allowing them to work in the UK may be appointed to any post.
- There is an onus on non-UK and non-RoI citizens to provide proof of their right to work in the UK and an onus on the appointer to check that.

It is the responsibility of the individual to provide evidence that they have the appropriate permission if being offered a post. The Department will check the individual's passport, share code or other documents, if necessary, to confirm if they can legally work in the UK.

## **33. Complaints**

If you wish to make a complaint about any aspect of this appointments process, you should in the first instance contact DfC Head of Governance who will manage your complaint.

Please address any enquiries in relation to this appointments process to:

FAO DfC Head of Governance  
Email [corporate@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:corporate@communities-ni.gov.uk)

## Section 5

### 34. Integrity & Conflicts of Interest

The Department will ensure that individuals appointed are committed to the principles and values of public service. These principles are: **Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership** and are described more fully at **Annex 2. Any private or personal interests that a potential appointee may have and that may be relevant to the work of the Department concerned must be declared.**

DfC will take account of actual, or perceived, conflicts of interest. Therefore, applicants must disclose in their application form information or personal circumstances which, if they were to be appointed, could lead to a conflict of interest or be perceived as such. Conflicts of interest may not be a barrier to appointment but both real and perceived conflicts must be discussed with all candidates by the Selection Panel. This is to ensure that the public can have confidence in Non Executive Member independence and impartiality, and the integrity of potential appointees.

Please refer to the NIAO Good Practice Guide on Conflicts of Interest for further information on this subject. This document is included in the application pack.

## Annex 1

# Department for Communities

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

- **Armagh Observatory & Planetarium**
- **Arts Council of NI**
- **Charity Commission for Northern Ireland**
- **Commissioner for Older People NI**
- **Foras na Gaeilge (North South Language Body)**
- **Libraries NI**
- **Local Government Staff Commission for NI**
- **National Museums NI**
- **NI Commissioner for Children and Young People**
- **Northern Ireland Housing Executive**
- **NI Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee**
- **NI Museums Council**
- **Sport NI**
- **Ulster-Scots Agency (North South Language Body)**
- **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 Bodies/Offices**

- **Vaughan's Charitable Trust**

## Annex 2

### **The Seven Principles of Public Life**

All candidates for public appointments are expected to demonstrate a commitment to, and an understanding of, the value and importance of the principles of public service. The seven principles of public life are:

#### **Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

#### **Integrity**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

#### **Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

#### **Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

#### **Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

#### **Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful

#### **Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

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