

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT SPECIAL MEETING OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE, LIMERICK, ON MONDAY, 6TH NOVEMBER, 2017, AT 2PM.

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR:

Councillor S. Keary, Mayor.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Browne, Butler, Collins (J), Collins (M), Costelloe, Crowley, Donegan, Foley, Galvin, Gilligan, Gleeson, Hogan, Hourigan, Hurley, Keller, Leddin, Loftus, Lynch, McCreesh, McMahon, Mitchell, O'Brien, Cmhlr. Ó Ceallaigh, O'Dea, O'Donnell, O'Donoghue, O'Hanlon, Pond, Prendiville, Ryan, Scanlan, Secas, Sheahan (J), Sheahan (K), Sheahan (M), Sheehy, Teefy, Teskey.

An Apology for his inability to attend the Meeting was received from Councillor Daly.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive (Mr. C. Murray), Deputy Chief Executive and Director, Economic Development (Mr. P. Daly), A/Director, Support Services – Finance, Corporate, Human Resources and ICT (Mr. S. Coughlan), Director, Regional Services (Ms. C. Curley), A/Director, Social Development (Ms. C. Kirby), Director, Physical Development (Mr. K. Lehane), A/Director, Service Operations and Business Improvement (Mr. J. Delaney), Administrative Officer, Corporate Services (Ms. T. Knox), Meetings Administrator (Mr. C. O'Connor).

Vote of Sympathy

A Vote of Sympathy was passed following recent tragedies in New York and Texas and a minute's silence was observed as a mark of respect.

1. Social Development Directorate

Report on Housing Action Plan

The Mayor stated that this item had been included on the agenda for the September Meeting and, as Members were aware, it had been decided that the issue required more time for discussion and accordingly it was agreed to hold a Special Meeting to discuss the Housing Action Plan.

The Meetings Administrator, in response to query from Councillor Galvin as to why Questions submitted by him were not included on the Agenda, said the Questions had been sent to staff in the Social Development Directorate for direct response back to him.

The A/Director, Social Development, gave an overview of the Council's Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness which had been presented in full at the previous Meeting.

Members thanked the Director for the update and the following points were made by them in the ensuing discussion:

- Infrastructure in smaller towns and villages needed to be addressed and back-up facilities were needed for storm outages.
- Different housing issues and priorities in the County, as opposed to the City, in terms of pressures and demands.
- Concern expressed in relation to current housing programme and a query was raised as to whether it was sufficient to meet demand.
- Clarification requested on plans to construct approx. 2,700 houses at Mungret.
- Number and role of Approved Housing Bodies and the need to keep the Members fully briefed where any Approved Housing Bodies were involved in the provision of housing.
- Proposed plans for Greenpark.
- Solutions required to bring vacant houses back into use.
- How many voids were brought back into use in the last three years.
- Twin Oaks property – had it been working since it opened.
- Members queried where Phoenix Lodge and the Childers Road family hubs were located.
- How was the Council planning to attract developers.
- Members welcomed the Rapid Build Programme.
- The creation of additional jobs in Limerick was creating an additional housing need. Affordability and the demand for large-scale renting needed to be addressed.
- The need to focus on student accommodation and to liaise with the various colleges was raised.

- Housing issues should be addressed locally, at the relevant Municipal District.
- Need to fill vacant properties in areas of low population to increase the numbers in local schools.
- Agreed that Approved Housing Bodies needed to lease properties.
- What progress was being made on the Guinness Site.
- What was the timeframe for the delivery of the new capital projects. When would the 13 ASH (Assessment of Sites for Social Housing) sites be delivered.
- Approved Housing Bodies had a huge role to play.
- Progress requested on 18 Cóis Timpeall, Newcastle West.
- It was noted that several houses in County areas needed to be compulsorily acquired due to dereliction.
- Accessibility to towns/villages from housing developments was a critical issue in rural areas.
- Was the Council in discussion with NAMA and could the Council obtain a list of NAMA-owned sites.
- Georgian Quarter, City Centre – it was noted that a large proportion of property in this area was empty. Could this be addressed by the Council.
- Mungret and Greenpark housing developments – it was noted that social housing would be 10% below the average cost. Percentage figures would need to be increased to make houses more affordable.
- Members raised the need to look at the reintroduction of an apprenticeship programme for trades and crafts in the Council.
- Homes were needed in rural area also.
- A downsizing scheme was needed for elderly people living in large houses.
- Concern was expressed regarding the City Centre vacancy rates.
- Affordability should be based on income and not on market rents.
- Concern regarding the sustainability of HAP and RAS and what was in place for people who did not qualify for housing supports.

- Progress requested on Burke Avenue and Speakers Corner.
- Would people without a home currently accommodated in hotels and bed and breakfasts be housed before Christmas.
- Welcomed reduction in development levies for residential development.
- How would the projects in the Strategic Development and Management Plan (SDMP) be funded, what planning processes would be used and what would the role of Councillors be.
- Were there proposals in place for Mountcollins, Abbeyfeale.
- What was the update on the Hospital housing project.

In response to issues raised by the Members, the Chief Executive and A/Director, Social Development, clarified the following:

- LIHAF (Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund) would enable the Council to stimulate development. There was a shortage of supply, both private and public. The approach taken in the development of Mungret with the provision of infrastructure, schools and playground in advance of housing was a welcome approach to housing development. Negotiations were ongoing in relation to Greenpark and CFRAM and flooding issues would be addressed as part of the planning process.
- There was potential to develop 2,700 homes in the longterm in Mungret, including 800 on Council-owned land. The LIHAF funding agreement was for 200 units on Council-owned land by 2021. Plans to provide 200 homes on privately owned land by 2021 were under consideration by An Bord Pleanála.
- The Strategic Development and Management Plan (SDMP) for Limerick City, submitted to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in September 2017, set out the position on 21 sites across the City deemed suitable for housing and other mixed uses. The SDMP for the remaining sites across Limerick would be submitted to the Department in Quarter 4, 2017.
- The timeline for the 13 ASH sites identified in the SDMP would be decided when approval to proceed with the sites was given by the Department.
- Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) were part of the solution and the Council would endeavour to inform local Public Representatives of projects involving AHBs.

- Since 2015, 154 voids in Council ownership were brought back into use. 22 houses were being refurbished at the moment for homelessness and there would be a focus in 2018 on refurbishing the remaining voids, subject to funding.
- The Council was 3 years into the implementation of the Limerick Regeneration Framework Plan and was on target to complete 549 new build housing units by 2020, 122 units were complete and 111 were under construction.
- The Council was conscious of the need to build on trades and crafts across the sector and was providing for additional apprenticeships in 2018.
- In relation to the Twin Oaks Family Hub, located on the Dublin Road, families had settled in well and one family had already been relocated to a permanent house by Mid-West Simon which was managing the facility.
- The Childers Road site was located beside Glasgow Park overlooking Childers Road.
- Phoenix Lodge was located near Sarsfield Barracks.
- The Council had a target to commence Expressions of Interest to dispose the Guinness Site and the Parnell Street Site for mixed tenure and/or mixed use in Quarter 4, 2017, when it would be publicly advertised. More sites would follow as identified in the Strategic Development and Management Plan.
- Part 8 for Bourke Avenue would be for consideration at the December Meeting of the Metropolitan District.
- Speakers Corner – funding was in place for the refurbishment of this building. Works due to commence before the end of 2017.
- 18 Cóis Timpeall, Newcastle West – 18 unit allocation by Co-Operative Housing.
- It was noted that provision of housing was only one aspect of the Homelessness solution and all people being accommodated by the homelessness programme would be supported by Approved Housing Body for other needs.
- It was noted that the Council was committed to the Rapid Build Programme.
- The Council would like to see the private sector engage more in relation to the provision of housing. In this regard, reference was made, in particular, to the Georgian Quarter of the City. It was noted that the majority of properties in this area were in private ownership.
- A new national affordable housing scheme was being developed at a national level.

- The Council was consistently working with Third Level Institutions in relation to accommodation needs of students.
- The Council had not yet used its Compulsory Purchase Order powers on vacant properties but the new Urban and Village Renewal Department would concentrate on vacant properties, would assist landlords where possible and use its powers when required.
- The Council did not have a list of NAMA-owned sites – it was not available as public information.
- Council-owned land was being reviewed in terms of housing construction but it was stressed that an over-concentration of social housing needed to be avoided.
- A capital appraisal had been submitted for Mountcollins for 10 houses.
- It was confirmed that most of the people without a home, currently in bed and breakfasts and hotel rooms, would be accommodated before Christmas in either a family hub or a house.
- In relation to the future housing developments, normal planning processes would apply, i.e. Part 8 process for sites developed by the Council and normal planning process for sites developed by private developers. Council projects would be funded by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Approved Housing Bodies had access to both public and private finance.

The Chief Executive concluded by acknowledging the level of debate on the issue and the importance of delivery on the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. He also acknowledged the commitment of staff.

2. Overdraft Accommodation

The Meetings Administrator stated that the approval of the Council was requested to bank overdraft accommodation in the sum of €15m for the 12 month period to 31st December, 2018.

The A/Head of Finance stated that it was hoped that recourse to the use of the overdraft facility would not be needed during the year.

Proposed by Councillor Sheahan (J);
 Seconded by Councillor Collins (M);
 And Resolved:

“That, the approval of the Council be and is hereby given to bank overdraft accommodation in the sum of €15m for the 12 month period to 31st December, 2018, subject to the sanction of the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government and in accordance with Section 106 (2) of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended.”

This concluded the Meeting.

Signed:

Mayor

Date:
