

MINUTES OF MEETING OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL HOME AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SPC

A meeting of Limerick City and County Council, Home and Social Development Strategic Policy Committee was held on **Monday, 26th February 2018.**

- In Attendance** An Cathaoirleach Cllr. W. O'Donnell.
- Present:** Cllr. Costelloe, Cllr. Donegan, Cllr. Foley, Cllr. Gilligan, Cllr. Pond, Cllr. Leddin (Part), Cllr. Scanlan, Cllr. Sheehy, Cllr. Keary, Cmhlr. Ó Ceallaigh
- Sectoral Interests:** Mr. Mike McNamara, Mr. PJ O'Grady,
- In Attendance:** Mr. Seamus Hanrahan, Senior Architect, Social Development
Ms. Sinead Hourigan, Social Development
Ms. Sarah Newell, Social Development
Ms. Pauline Keane, Social Development
Mr. Rory Culhane, Social Development
Mr. Dave Hennessy, Community Support Services
Mr. Dara McGuigan, Community Support Services
Mr. Joe Delaney, Design and Delivery (Part)
- Apologies:** Ms. Tracey McElligot
Mr. Jimmy Prior
Ms. Carmel Kirby, A/Director of Service, Social Development
- Item 1: To approve the Minutes of the Home and Social Development Strategic Policy Committee meeting held Monday 11th December 2017.**

The Minutes were proposed by Cllr. Scanlan and seconded by Cllr. Donegan.

Item 2: Matters Arising from the Minutes

Mr. M. McNamara requested that the minutes be amended to record his attendance.

**Item 3: National Development Plan 2018-2027
Overview of Housing Issues**

Ms. Sarah Newell, Executive Planner, gave a presentation on the National Development Plan 2018-2027 outlining the focus for investment over the next 10 years including (1) the projects that will benefit Limerick, (2) Urban Regeneration and Development, (3) Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund/Affordable Sites, (3) New Regeneration and Development Fund, (4) National Regeneration and Development Agency, (5) Rebuilding Ireland Programme and (6) Limerick's targets under Rebuilding Ireland.

A discussion took place with issues raised relating to the following:

One off rural housing and the perceived restriction on rural growth. Ms. Newell advised that the Draft National Planning Framework (NPF) had explicitly said there must be a demonstrable 'economic need' but this had been revised in the final NPF to include both 'economic and social need'.

Rural Regeneration and the smaller tier settlements in County Limerick where there is significant demand in terms of housing need but which do not have the required infrastructure to activate. The Oola/Hospital waste water treatment plant was given as an example in relation to capacity issues restricting growth. Ms Newell advised of a dedicated Government fund, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, in the National Development Plan with an allocation of €1 billion and that funding will be allocated on the basis of a competitive bid based approach. Ms. Newell stated that formal notification on this Fund is awaited from the Government. In addition, a fund of €6.8 billion over the period 2018-2027 has been identified in the National Development Plan for Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources with Irish Water.

Cllr. J. Scanlan proposed that a joint meeting of the Planning and Housing SPCs was desirable given the overlap of responsibilities.

Mr. Seamus Hanrahan advised of two Government Programmes which address the under-occupied properties and that the Council was actively engaged in both the Buy and Renew and the Repair and Lease programmes. Limerick City and County Council (LCCC) has purchased a number of properties in poor condition. The Repair and Lease scheme has been made more attractive reducing the term to 5 years from 10 years. He confirmed 71 units had been acquired with a portion under the Buy and Renew programme which were in bad condition and generally detracting from their environs. The refurbishment timeframes following acquisition are 5-6 months given the state of disrepair. LCCC are expected to purchase more in the future.

The number of vacant houses and the audit on vacant properties was discussed and the need to focus on areas where there is a high need. The identification of rural areas for Buy and Renew was discussed.

Cllr. J. Costelloe enquired about the progress with Cosgrave Park, St. Anne's Court and the CHAS Flats. Mr. Seamus Hanrahan advised that the Cosgrave Park construction budget is

currently being assessed by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG). St. Anne's Court is owned by the St. Vincent de Paul and is undergoing the acquisition process. CHAS Flats is at Part 8 public display and will be presented to the Metropolitan meeting shortly for a decision.

Cllr. M. Donegan expressed his concern that the Council does not have a specific plan for rural Limerick similar to the specific plans for Limerick City such as the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan (LRFIP) and Limerick 2030 and if funding is available, a deliverable plan should be put in place. He also agreed that there should be a joint meeting of the Planning and Housing SPCs.

Cllr. Leddin congratulated all involved in the Lord Edward Street and Hyde Road projects (Park View Row) and noted the positive public response.

Further discussion on the audit on vacant properties took place with suggestions that local communities and Education Institutions be engaged to assist with the audit. Mr. S. Hanrahan advised that an Urban and Village Renewal Team had been put in place with empty homes officers appointed for each Municipal district to identify vacant/derelict properties and their owners. It was agreed that a presentation from this team would be requested for the next SPC meeting.

Cllr. Sheehy suggested that students should be engaged to carry out a survey which would enhance and strengthen the team's resources to complete the task. Mr. S. Hanrahan advised there was a national website on vacant/derelict sites, available at www.vacanthomes.ie that encourages the general public to submit data on vacant homes.

The derelict sites levy was discussed and Mr. Hanrahan agreed that the fines could be more substantial and that the vacant sites levy was being increased from 3% to 7%.

Item 4: Housing Summit – January 2018 Overview of Key Issues

Mr. Seamus Hanrahan gave an update on the second Housing Summit. Items covered included:

- Level of funding available over a 5 year spending programme. This is the first year of a multi-annual programme and the range in capital spend ranges €1.6 billion to €2.2 billion over the next 5 years (2018-2022) with a move to $\frac{2}{3}$ construction and $\frac{1}{3}$ acquisition/leasing;
- Buy and Renew is an attractive scheme with more benefits in addition to meeting housing need;
- Changes to Leasing Schemes to make them more attractive (i.e., enhanced long-term 25 year lease);
- Affordable Housing and mechanisms to deliver; and
- Announcement for 2nd scheme of LIHAF to pump-prime sites for housing development

Item 5: Housing Delivery Overview 2017

Mr. Seamus Hanrahan gave a presentation outlining the main projects in the Housing Programme which include Approved Housing Bodies' involvement. The following is a summary of progress:

- Projects in Part 8 Planning process/have received Part 8 Planning – 123 units
- Construction (Approved in 2017) – 124 units
- Acquisitions and Leasing 2017 – 155 units
- Construction 2017 – 112 units

- Projects currently under construction include the following:
 - Churchfield – 42 units;
 - Cuan Mhuire, Bruree – 6 units;
 - Carebright Community, Bruff – an example of accommodation not in the traditional provision of social housing including a Dementia unit;
 - Moyross Community Enterprise Centre;
 - Coonagh Knocklisheen road.

Cllr. Keary requested an update on the housing project in Adare and the sale of Council land. He also raised the issue of Affordable Sites and if there was any market research carried out to determine what is reasonable.

Mr. S. Hanrahan advised in relation to Adare that there are 30 units being built, 5 serviced sites designated and expressions of interest relating to the sale of the remainder of the site were complete with the best and final bid process to follow. He also advised the line of the new sewer had to be upgraded to connect back in a manner which would open up as much of a land bank (and adjacent land banks) as possible. An update on the process will be included on the Agenda for the next meeting.

Cllr. Pond raised the issue of services in Montpelier and the need for one consolidated treatment plant for all. Mr. S. Hanrahan advised the Council are in discussions with Irish Water on this issue.

Item 6: Presentation by Community Support Services on Housing Standards

Mr. Dara McGuigan, Administrative Officer, gave a presentation on the standards for rented houses and the number of inspections carried out. Items covered included:

- Legislative Framework;
- Requirements of both landlords and tenants;
- Standards/Regulations;
- Process relating to Inspections;
- Enforcement;
- Inspections 2016 and 2017; and
- Main reasons for Non-Compliance.

He stated the majority of inspections in 2016 were on HAP properties and explained what 'fail' means in terms of non-compliance with the standards. He stated that while a substantial number of properties were non-compliant, they were for minor reasons.

Item 7: Notices of Motion referred to the Home and Social Development SPC

In the absence of Cllr. Prendiville, the Notice of Motion submitted by him referred from the December 2017 meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick was deferred to the next meeting of the SPC and An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. W. O'Donnell proposed to take the Notice of Motion submitted by Cmhlr. Ó Ceallaigh at this time as it related to standards for rental accommodation as follows:

'I move at the next Meeting that this Council utterly condemn the letting of substandard accommodation, both publicly and privately, and commit to ensuring that its own housing stock is up to standard, as well as ensuring that appropriate action is taken against landlords letting substandard accommodation.'

A discussion took place with issues raised relating to the following:

- Need to look at the Council's own stock and ensure equity and balance with the Council's own stock and HAP/RAS;
- Non-compliance rates;
- The need to ensure people are getting a good service and all properties both public and private are up to standard; and
- Non-compliance with fire standards and the resolution process.

Mr. D. McGuigan advised the scope of the unit deals with private rented accommodation. AHB's fall under the Regulations also and there were ongoing rolling inspections. He confirmed there are higher level requirements for multi units and the Council is rigorous in recording all details and if an issue relating to Fire standards is reported, it is referred to the Fire Department as appropriate. He also advised that RAS/HAP/Lease are governed by the Residential Tenancies Board.

Cllr. Scanlan wished to be associated with the Notice of Motion.

The Notice of Motion was seconded by Cllr. Costello and An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. W. O'Donnell recommended the Notice of Motion be referred back for inclusion on the Agenda for approval at the next full sitting of Limerick City and County Council.

The meeting concluded.

Date of next meeting: Monday 30th April 2018 at 11.30am, County Hall, Dooradoyle.