

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT SPECIAL MEETING OF THE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF NEWCASTLE WEST HELD IN ÁRAS WILLIAM SMITH OBRIEN, NEWCASTLE WEST, CO. LIMERICK, ON WEDNESDAY, 21ST NOVEMBER, 2018, AT 10AM.

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR: Councillor J. Sheahan, Cathaoirleach.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Browne, Foley, Collins, Scanlan and Galvin.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Director, Social Development (Mr. G. Daly), Director, Housing Development (Ms. A. Duke), Senior Architect, Social Development (Mr. S. Hanrahan), Executive Planner, Social Development (Ms. S. Newell) Meetings Administrator, Newcastle West (Ms. M. Corbett), Clerical Officer, Newcastle West (Ms. A. O’Riordan).

1. Housing Development Directorate

- (a) To receive update on housing developments for towns and villages within the Municipal District of Newcastle West.

- (b) To receive update on proposals to return vacant Council properties to occupancy within quicker timeframes.

At the outset, the Cathaoirleach welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

The Senior Architect, Social Development, commenced the presentation by giving an overview of housing developments and social housing availability within the Newcastle West Municipal District. He noted the overall strategy for housing development along with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government targets for delivery. He noted that the District has 11.6% of the Council housing stock and stated that there are 834 applicants on the housing waiting list for the District. He also noted the activity within the District for the provision of housing under the headings of build, buy, lease, public land activation and Approved Housing Bodies activity.

The Members welcomed the presentation and requested a monthly progress report on housing development to include the number of vacant/void houses within the District, the number of houses where works are complete along with the number of houses purchased and leased as well as the number of houses allocated. The holding of workshops at District level with the Elected Members on housing matters was also proposed.

The Members also queried the length of time taken to upgrade houses for letting and the need to place more emphasis on developing smaller estates of 5 – 10 houses within town and villages outside of the main urban centres of Newcastle West and Abbeyfeale. Discussion also took place on casual vacancies, which require minor upgrades and are not part of the void scheme. The use of local builders and trades people along with the tender process for minor works was also raised.

The Members referred to the Department response for a proposed development in Mountcollins and the need to have housing policy re-examined for rural areas as many housing applicants would prefer to stay within their local communities but are forced to the larger urban areas due to lack of social housing within small towns and villages. It was also noted that some housing applicants are refusing offers of Council housing.

The SEAI Deep Retrofit Scheme was noted and it was queried why the Council had not applied for funding under this initiative. The request to have a dedicated allocations team at local level and the number of staff working on housing development and maintenance was raised. Anti-social behaviour within estates and the need for more engagement and support for communities was also highlighted.

In response, the Senior Architect, stated that the Council are purchasing vacant houses within smaller towns and villages and refurbishing them in order to make properties available within these areas. He also noted that the Council has spent €3m on the retrofitting of older properties.

The Director, Housing Development, noted the €15m loan, which was approved during the Budget process for planned maintenance works. She also referred to the conditional survey on Council property, as this would target works under the planned maintenance programme. Choice based letting was also discussed along with the estate management team who assist tenants as well as dealing with anti-social behaviour within estates. It was noted that additional Tenancy Enforcement Officers would be available in 2019.

The Director, Social Development, stated that the Social Directorate was working closely with the Housing Development Directorate, with regard to Urban and Village renewal. He also noted that more engagement would take place with Irish Water regarding having adequate wastewater facilities in place within the smaller towns and villages in order to allow for housing developments.

This concluded the Meeting.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Dated: _____