

2nd January 2019

To the Mayor and Each Member of Limerick City and County Council

Chairperson's Report for the **Home and Social Development Strategic Policy Committee Meeting of the 10th December 2018.**

A Chomhairleoir, a chara,

Summary Report/Main Issues:

Item 3: Presentation on National Smart Ageing Housing Programme

Ms. Áine Phelan of the national Smart Ageing Housing Programme made a presentation to the Committee on the challenges and opportunities regarding the provision of housing. The members thanked Ms. Phelan for the presentation. A general discussion took place. The key issues raised included:

- Various housing options need to be provided for people as they age
- The possibility of introducing a scheme to allow property owners to downsize and become tenants of the Council or Approved Housing Bodies, in housing schemes which have been constructed for older people
- Other state agencies e.g. HSE, Bus Eireann etc need to also buy in to the policy and provide appropriate services
- The process must be handled sensitively. People must not feel under duress to move from their family home.

Item 4: Discussion on Downsizing Policy

Mr. Jim Prior enquired if a downsizing policy exists either for property owners or for Limerick City and County Council tenants. In reply, Ms. Sarah Newell Executive Planner advised that consideration had previously been given to a downsizing scheme for private property owners, but Limerick City and County Council does not have a policy at present. Ms. Aoife Duke Director of Service advised that downsizing requests from Council tenants are currently facilitated through the transfer process. A general discussion took place, among the key issues raised included:

- The need to develop a policy for both private property owners and Council tenants. This policy needs to be communicated effectively
- The necessity for sensitive handling was again emphasized

In reply, Aoife Duke Director of Service advised that the issue could be discussed as part of a future workshop.

Item 5: Presentation by Tracy Lynch of Tait House on SEAI

Ms. Tracy Lynch of Tait House made a presentation to the committee on energy efficiency works which can be carried out by Tait House with funding sourced from the SEAI.

The members expressed a general welcome for the presentation and congratulated Tait House for the work, which they have already carried out on previous schemes. Among the issues raised were:

- The possibility of having a more streamlined scheme, which in particular supports elderly people to upgrade their heating systems, without having to install heat pumps or carry out other works. In reply, Tracy Lynch advised that Tait are limited to the rules set out by SEAI, which have been formed to help Ireland meet its emissions targets.
- Concern was expressed regarding the ability of some people to fund the 20% of the works which they are required to fund under the scheme

Item 6: Update on the Single Differential Rent Scheme

Ms. Sarah Newell Executive Planner circulated an update to the committee advising of the steps, which will be carried out to design and implement the new single differential rent scheme. It is anticipated that the new scheme will be published and implemented by June of 2019.

A number of members raised the issue of the ongoing unfairness of the current situation with regard to the separate rent schemes for both the city and county.

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

- **Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor J. Scanlan** (referred from the November 2018 meeting of Limerick City and County Council)

I will move at the next Meeting that an equitable structure of rental payments be introduced that will apply to all tenants of the Joint Authority from 1st January 2019, onwards.

A discussion took place regarding the motion, a number of members supported, and a number of members opposed the motion. The Director made reference to the work programme and timelines attached to the introduction of a Single Differential Rent Scheme, currently underway, as outlined in the information presented by Ms. Sarah Newell. Cllr Gilligan proposed the following counter motion:

I propose that all rents be retained at present levels until changed by the minister

This motion was seconded by Cllr Costelloe.

The Chair instructed that a vote be taken on Cllr. Gilligan's counter motion, the result of the voting was as follows:

In favour: 5 Against: 3 Abstention: 1

The Chair declared the motion was adopted.

The Chair accepted the following notice of motion from Cllr. Keary:

I will move that Limerick City and County Council will lower all Local Authority house rents in the old County area to ninety-two euro a week similar to band two of Limerick City.

This motion was seconded by Cllr. Scanlan.

Clarification was sought on the level of caps in place at present. The Director confirmed that there are two rent caps in a limited number of areas in the City, one set at €60 and the other €90. It was confirmed that in all other areas of the City, rent caps did not apply. Budget 2019 was adopted on the basis of the income that will be generated from the current scheme, with a new scheme being designed to calculate rents based on fairness, sustainability, supporting lower income households and avoiding welfare traps, as per principles agreed at the Workshop held in October 2018.

In the absence of a counter motion the Chair ruled that the motion was adopted.

While certain recommendations were made neither can be brought forward. A report on the reasons for this will be brought before the next Home and Social Development Strategic Policy Committee Meeting.

Is mise le meas,

Cllr. William O'Donnell.

Chairperson

Home and Social Development Strategic Policy Committee

