

16th December 2020

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 on the 16th December 2020**

A Chomhairleoir, a chara,

Summary Report/Main Issues

Chair opens up meeting and welcomes all SPC members to the virtual meeting of the SPC.

Item 1: Confirm minutes from meeting held on October 22nd 2020

Request from Cllr. Sharon Benson that the Minutes of the 22nd September be amended. Cllr. Benson wanted the minutes to more clearly state that while she was in agreement with the sentiment of proposal in relation to HAP Vetting, she has some concerns about it and wanted those concerns noted- namely the potential delay vetting may cause which could lead to a person losing a tenancy. It was agreed that the minutes and Chairperson's report would be amended to reflect this.

Cllr. Leddin sought clarification around the Area of Choice Form and the Housing Application Form as there is confusion around which form to use when an applicant would like to choose a specific area- matter to be brought to Community Support Services for update at next meeting.

Item 2: Matters arising from the Minutes:

No matters arising from previous meeting.

Item 3: Turnkey Framework and Approval Process:

Ms Duke gave background, outlined the approval process, and thanked SPC members for their input and for adopting the policy statement. Ms. Duke gave an update and outlined that any Turnkeys that LCCC are considering will go through Management Team. Ms. Duke noted that if MT agree, an update would be given to the Councillors for that area. Ms. Duke noted that the

purpose of this update was to advise that the Turnkey process would now include the formal internal process.

A discussion took place around this and the main points were:

- Cllr. Leddin thanked Ms Duke for the update. He asked had LCCC any indicative number of potential units that might come under the Turnkey development over the next year or two. Cllr. Leddin also asked were there any discussions going on in the context of owners of properties in the City Centre (and Cllr. Leddin noted that the same would be applicable for any in the towns and villages but main focus on City Centre) whereby the council is encouraging people to live back in the City Centre. Ms. Duke noted the work that the Social Development Directorate are doing with derelict properties. Ms. Sarah Newell is linking in with owners in relation to the creation of one and two bed apartments to allow owner to refurbish the property and lease it to LCCC. Ms. Duke advised that we do have a pipeline of a number of properties coming through due to the work being done in the City Centre.
- Ms. Cronin asked what does the 45% of one to two bed properties equate to in terms of units. Ms. Duke advised that she'll have that number for the next SPC and e-mail Ms. Cronin after the meeting but outlined overall target numbers being delivered under Rebuilding Ireland.
- Cllr. Collins asked if Ms. Duke would inform all councillors of proposed Turnkeys as it's important that everyone is aware what is happening. Ms. Duke agreed - will send spreadsheet of Turnkey details to all councillors.
- Cllr. Collins asked if a developer can sell directly to an AHB. Ms. Duke noted that any proposed purchase by an AHB must come through ourselves and we must submit the proposal through the Dept.
- Cllr. Collins also asked in terms of the percentage mix – is there a range that we work between and how do we calculate what is affordable. Ms. Duke advised that the only mechanism in which a Local Authority can provide affordable housing at the moment is through the Service Sites funding. Ms. Duke advised that the only way we could provide affordable housing now is to sell houses under the Incremental Purchase Scheme. This has been discussed with members in terms of certain developments we have and we would like with the support of the members to sell a portion of those developments under the Incremental Purchase Scheme. Ms. Duke also noted that AHB's are now approved to provide affordable rental and LCCC would like to work with AHB's to carve out a percentage of affordable rental in the Limerick area.

- Cllr. Ruddle asked about making houses affordable for people who can get a mortgage but cannot afford houses in excess of €150,000.00 for example. Ms. Duke recognizes the challenges of the 'squeezed middle' and at the moment the only mechanisms in place for this is the Tenant Purchase Scheme or the Incremental Purchase Scheme.
- Cllr. Keary asked about the scheme in Pallaskenry and where does it fit in with the process around tenure mix. Ms. Duke advised that the Pallaskenry site is a 16 unit Turnkey and what we have committed to putting forward five of those houses for incremental purchase – there will be an Expression of Interest process around this.
- Cllr. Keary believed it was a 50/50 split between private owners and tenants. Cllr. Keary also asked about the site value on the affordable sites and will it be indexed over time. Ms. Duke advised that there would be no problem amending Expressions of Interest process to reflect that if the members are happy to do so based on Cllr. Keary's suggestion. An update on the index element will be provide at the February meeting.
- Cllr. Costelloe asked about the site valuation, have the sites been earmarked. Cllr. Costelloe asked will there be a levy applied to private developers on completion. Ms. Duke understands that there will be an exemption on development levies for social housing, but committed to clarifying and reverting to Cllr. Costelloe.
- Cllr. Benson asked how the EOIs are going out to people. Ms. Duke advised that MyPoint, radio and social media would be used and we would be writing to people on the HWL as per Cllr. Benson's suggestion. Cllr. Benson requested a workshop on the new schemes being introduced for all Councillors. Ms. Duke agreed with request.

Item 4: Age Friendly Work Programme:

Ms. Duke gave update to all members on Age Friendly Ireland activities and outlined LCCCs involvement.

Catherine McGuigan (Meath County Council) runs a national programme for Age Friendly Ireland and has created the presentation outlining the activities – Anne Rizzo is LCCCs Age Friendly Representative.

Item 5: Accessory Dwelling Unit Policy Update:

Ms. Duke gave an overview of Accessory Dwelling Unit Policy.

A discussion took place around this and the main points were:

- Cllr. Collins noted an issue where in the past the elderly person was to move in to the Accessory Dwelling Unit and their family stayed in the original property and in this case many families did not want this to happen. Ms. Duke noted that the person who moves in to the Accessory Dwelling Unit is on the Housing Waiting List and this means that it is not limited to it being any one particular person. Cllr. Collins noted that if it was an option for the family to live in the original property and the older person to live in the Accessory Dwelling Unit, this may boost uptake. Ms. Duke will feed that back to the Department so that there could be more flexibility in the pilot.
- Cllr. Costelloe asked what the figures were for people who have applied for downsizing, particularly elderly. Ms. Duke noted that we are currently involved in an exercise to assess the numbers and will feedback to February SPC.
- Cllr. Ryan asked is this scheme will be a grant aid. Ms. Duke advised that we are still negotiating the terms and conditions in terms with the Department.

Item 6: Housing Update:

Ms. Duke informed members of SPC that the end of year figures for 2020 are currently being compiled and will continue in to January 2021. Figures will be available to be presented at the February SPC.

Item 7: Tenant Purchase Update:

Ms. Duke noted that there is a slight issue with the Tenant Purchase Scheme that is relevant in some areas - when we assess the discount a person is entitled to, LCCC look at the market value of the house but also the replacement value of the house. The discount is then calculated from the higher figure of the two. There are certain areas in the city where the discount on the replacement value does not take the house below the market value of the house.

Ms. Duke has brought this matter to the Minister for Housing, the Department and the Housing Agency – noting that we would like Local Authorities to be given the discretion to sell our own stock to our tenants based on a discount on the market value or the replacement value, whichever is lower.

Ms. Duke noted that we are looking to see this amendment introduced in 2021 and we will come back to the SPC with an update and will keep all members informed.

Item 8: AOB:

a) SIF Update:

Ms. Duke gave a final update on the Social Intervention Fund to members.

A discussion took place around this and the main points were:

- Cllr. Benson and Ms. Byrnes both raised a concern regarding the closing date for SIF 2021. Ms. Duke said that she will get the notification out to relevant parties to extend deadline out as soon as possible.
- Ms. Cronin also asked what LCCC has achieved in the Regeneration areas in 2020 in regards to Housing Delivery and different projects. Ms. Duke outlined project so far to Ms. Cronin and where it is at present.
- Ms. Cronin also asked, in the incidence where LCCC are providing a percentage of SIF funding to a group and where we approach a stakeholder for the funding, what happens if they do not have the capacity. Ms. Duke noted that those mainstreaming conversations will be happening in 2021.
- Ms. Cronin asked for Mortgage to Rent figures for the Feb 2021. Ms. Duke noted that she will come back with a report to the next SPC and the list of criteria and barriers. We will see a rollout of the private downsizing policy in 2021.
- Cllr. Costelloe asked could he have a report on the Orchard Site for the next SPC and St. Anne's Court as he is anxious that these get over the line. Ms. Duke agreed to have report on both for next SPC.
- Cllr. Sheehan asked for an update on the situation in King's Island regarding Irish Wheelchair Association site. Ms. Duke agreed and will have this for the next SPC.

The Chairperson, Mr. Murphy advised that the proposed Notice of Motion from Cllr. Keary from the SPC on the 22nd September in relation to writing to the Minister for Housing and asking his opinion of Garda Vetting of HAP tenants was passed through the Council meeting and a letter was sent through Corporate Services on the 14th of December. Mr. Murphy noted that as of yet there is no reply.

Cllr. Keary voiced his concern about the delay in getting the letter to the Department. Mr. Murphy advised that it had to be agreed at the Council meeting first.

END OF MEETING

The Chair thanked everyone for logging in and for their valuable contributions. He also thanked the members of the executive present and wished all members a very Happy Christmas.

Is mise le meas,

Cllr. Michael Murphy
Chairperson
Home and Social Development Strategic Policy Committee