

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 **the 16th of December** by Cisco WebEx.

In Attendance: An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Michael Murphy

SPC Members Present: Cllr. Sharon Benson, Cllr. James Collins
Cllr. Sean Hartigan, Cllr. Stephen Keary, Cllr. Sarah Kiely, Cllr. Fergus Kilcoyne
Cllr. Joe Leddin, Cllr. Tom Ruddle, Cllr. Conor Sheehan, Cllr. Brigid Teefy, Cllr. John Costelloe,
Cllr. Catherine Slattery, Mr. P.J O’Grady, Ms. Dee Ryan, Cllr Eddie Ryan, Ms. Tracey McElligott, Ms. Una Byrnes, Ms. Anne Cronin

In Attendance: Ms. Aoife Duke, Director of Service, Housing Development
Mr. Rory Culhane, A/Assistant Staff Officer, Housing Development
Ms. Jeannine Butler, Clerical Officer, Housing Development
Mr. Eóin Lehane, Clerical Officer, Housing Development
Mr. Seamus Hanrahan, A/Director of Service, Capital Investment
Ms. Astrid Coughlan, Assistant Planner, Housing Development
Mr. Sean McGlynn, A/Senior Executive Officer, Design & Delivery
Ms. Suzie Clifford, Administrative Officer, Housing Development
Ms. Elaine O’Connor, Administrative Officer, Regeneration
Ms. Clíona Corry, Senior Executive Architect, Regeneration
Ms. Jennifer Ahern, A/Staff Officer, Housing Development
Ms. Deirdre Hourigan, Assistant Staff Officer, Housing Development

Apologies: Cllr. Adam Teskey, Cllr. Michael Donegan, Mr. Michael McNamara

Welcome by Chairperson – Cllr. Michael Murphy

Chair opened the meeting and welcomed 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.

Proposed: Cllr. Joe Leddin

Seconded: Cllr. Brigid Teefy

Item 2: Matters arising from the Minutes

No matters arising from previous meeting.

Item 3: Turnkey Framework and Approval Process

Ms Duke gave background and outlined the approval process. Ms. Duke explained that we had brought through Turnkey Framework to the October SPC and had agreed a strategy whereby we would introduce a tenure mix at the start of the process.

There is a Turnkey campaign were LCCC have appealed to private developers who have planning permission on sites or who are about to apply for planning permission, that they come to us with the possibility of us taking more than a Part V or even the total development. A framework was agreed in which we could discuss numbers with developers and a settlement strategy where we settled on a max number of social houses depending on location of development.

Ms. Duke thanked SPC members for their input and for adopting the policy statement. Ms. Duke went on to note that we are having discussions with developers around the tenure mix which is – 50% affordable, 30% social and 20% private. An element of the private mix will be private downsizing preferably in their locality.

Ms. Duke gave an update and outlined that any Turnkeys that LCCC are considering will go through Management Team. On Monday 14th December a number of proposed Turnkeys were brought thought Management Team and Ms. Duke went through the location of development, number of units that are being proposed, what the tenure mix will be and MT debate and discuss. Ms. Duke noted that if MT agree, an update will be given to the Councillors for that area. It is at this point that we seek approval for funding in principle through the Department.

Ms. Duke noted that there are two options with Turnkeys – LCCC can take full ownership of development or the developer has the option to collaborate up with an Approved Housing Body who may specialise in a particular type of housing (disabled, elderly etc...).

The next step is that the developer has a contract to provide this housing to us within a set timeframe. Close to the completion time, allocations work based on the list for the area to allocate those units.

Ms. Duke noted that the purpose of this update was to advise that the Turnkey process will have a more 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. Cllr. Leddin felt Housing Development should have a role in doing that in the core Georgian areas of the city. Ms. Duke noted the work that the Social Development Directorate are doing with derelict properties – they are serving CPOs and Derelict Site Notices on developments particularly in the City Centre. Ms. Duke said that there has been movement on those properties in terms of the owners refurbishing them. 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. Duke also noted that we are launching our Leasing campaign to prompt owners of properties who could convert their properties in to smaller units particularly in the Metropolitan area in Q1 of 2021. Our pipeline coming through is delivering about 45% one - two bed units and it's the conversion of these properties that will up that delivery of the one- two beds
- 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. Ms. Duke went on to say that between 2018 – 2021 the Rebuilding Ireland targets for Limerick delivery are 1,365 and an estimation would be that 300 – 400 would be one – two bed. Ms. Duke noted that 76% of demand is for one – two bed units and we need to find an additional delivery source like the second hand market mentioned previously.
- 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 can a developer sell directly to an AHB. Ms. Duke noted that they 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 – there are five city sites that LCCC have approval In principle on to provide affordable housing. We should see the delivery of up to 740 units over these sites. LCCC are master planning the sites now and we will have further detail of the output of those sites in 2021 with expected delivery between 2022 – 2023. 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. Ms. Duke noted the percentage mix is being used as a template where the numbers go above and beyond

the settlement strategy figures. For example, when developers approach us LCCC is saying that they would like a proportion for private sale and we would take a portion of the development, split it across the tenure mix and partner up with an AHB to deliver all the different elements as appropriate for particular areas.

- 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. The decision around who qualifies for those houses is based on scheme of affordable priorities which has come through the SPC and been adopted by full Council. The Turnkey will be allocated to local people off the Housing Waiting List and a share of people who qualify under the Incremental Purchase Scheme. 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 that based on Cllr. Keary's suggestion. Ms. Duke will come back to Cllr. Keary on the index element but will have an update on this and process in February.
- 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 she will check and revert 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 Councilors. Ms. Duke agreed with request.

Item 4: Age Friendly Work Programme

Ms. Duke gave update to all members on Age Friendly Ireland activities.

It was noted that LCCC has a disability steering group where we assess the housing needs of the service users with disabilities and where they are then entitled to housing. LCCC also keeps track of all needs so that our pipeline can reflect their particular requirements.

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

Ireland is the first country in the world to achieve full age friendly programmes across the 31 Local Authorities. Ms. Duke wanted to highlight how the Age Friendly programme ties in with the housing programme we are delivering.

The structure of Age Friendly Ireland spans across a number of government departments and various stakeholders throughout the country.

Ms. Duke noted there is an older person's council to represent the voices of older people – our representative on the council is Anne Rizzo. Housing delivery options would be discussed at this council.

Ms. Duke outlines the structures and projects that exist around the Age Friendly programme – we are primarily involved in the Age Friendly housing programme. Ms. Sarah Newell is the technical advisor to Age Friendly Ireland in LCCC. Ms. Duke notes the many supports in place for Age Friendly Housing delivery and mentioned Colivet Court as one of our Age Friendly initiatives and this is the type of model that LCCC are keen to continue to develop.

LCCC are keen to ensure that we adopt universal design principles to allow people to age in place and we are exploring other options, such as the Accessory Dwelling Unit which is item 5 on the agenda today.

Ms. Duke outlined the examples of the work that Age Friendly Ireland are involved with.

Item 5: Accessory Dwelling Unit Policy Update

Ms. Duke gave overview of Accessory Dwelling Unit Policy – it is closely linked to the Age Friendly Ireland initiative and the idea came from the Newcastle West district.

Ms. Duke and Ms. Newell are in the process of meeting with Department officials to bring forward a policy that will allow someone to add a unit onto the side or rear of their house. This will allow either the elderly person living in the house to have a family member living in the unit to the rear or side of house and vice versa.

The idea is that the person who lives in the Accessory Dwelling Unit is on the Housing Waiting List.

Ms. Duke notes that we are currently discussing terms and conditions of policy. Limerick and Dublin have been selected for a pilot programme. Ms. Duke gives thanks to Ms. Newell who put together the framework for the policy and noted there is approval in principle for funding to allow the pilot programme to take place in 2021.

When the final terms and conditions of programme are agreed, Ms. Duke will revert to the SPC to outline the policy – it will be a limited pilot for year one. The success of pilot scheme will be assessed and it will be rolled out as programme throughout the Local Authorities.

The Chairperson, Mr. Murphy, also thanked Ms. Newell with her work in achieved in securing the pilot for Limerick.

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. Cllr. Collins asked is this being revisited. 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. Ms. Duke advised that this is a pilot and there will be a limited range for the first year. 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 that will feed in to the justification of taking particular units in certain locations. Ms. Duke noted that we will feedback in the Feb SPC with the numbers. Ms. Duke mentioned that we have to consider, in the cases where we have people who choose to downsize, the cost that will be incurred from works on their old property.
- Cllr. Ryan asked if this scheme will be a grant aid. Ms. Duke advised that we are still negotiating the terms and conditions in terms of whether it is a grant or a loan etc... It depends on cost of Accessory Dwelling Unit. Ms. Duke noted it is not designed to be a downsizing scheme. Cllr. Ryan asked if the person leaves their original property and moves in to the Accessory Dwelling Unit they may not qualify for housing or for a means test and does that matter. Ms. Duke noted that we had discussions around this with the Department as we want to provide this as a real solution for someone on the Housing Waiting List and it is an element that we will build in to the programme.

Item 6: Housing Update:

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

Ms. Duke is conscious that due to Covid-19 that members are not meeting the rest of the Housing Development Team but when we go back to physical meetings, more of the team will be introduced to members and updates will be provide by the Team.

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.

It allows a tenant for more than a year to purchase their house at a significant discount depending on their level of income and is dependent on certain terms and conditions.

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.

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.

This is a grant scheme that is provided to LCCC for the four Regeneration areas of Limerick. It totals to €4,000,000.00 annually.

The 2021 programme has launched and is live on our website. Application forms are available for people to download and apply for projects.

The closing date is Monday 11th January and Ms. Duke advised members that if they are aware of particular organisations who would like to apply for SIF funding this year to let them know the closing date is the 11th January.

Ms. Duke noted that any organisations that received the grant funding are required to maintain detailed financial and statistical records in terms of providing evidence to LCCC. Any claims that come in are based on vouched expenses and evidence of payments.

Ms. Duke also noted that governance training has been provided to the SIF organisations that receive the larger grant funding. It is being provided through Paul Partnership across four sessions.

The independent assessment process happens for the 2021 applications and is scheduled for Feb 2021 – the aim this year is to get decisions out in a timely fashion.

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

- Cllr. Benson noted that she had organisations on to her in relation to the timing of the closing date close after Christmas and in particular with Covid-19. Ms. Duke said that there should not be an issue with extending deadline.

- Ms. Byrnes also echoed Cllr. Benson's sentiment – that she would appreciate if the deadline was extended due to collation of documents. Ms. Duke said that she will get the notification to extend deadline out as soon as possible.
- Ms. Cronin asked what is LCCC's plans for the organisations when SIF is finished in 2023. Ms. Cronin also asked what LCCC has achieved in the Regeneration areas in 2020 in regards to Housing Delivery and different projects. Ms. Cronin asked would there be an opportunity to hear more about these at some stage. Ms. Duke noted that we are in year six of a ten year programme, it is an almost €300m programme and stated that there is a huge investment in housing delivery as €253m is allocated to the physical programme for Regeneration. Ms. Duke noted they are currently at different stages of completion. Funding is approved in principle but anytime we carry out a particular activity in the areas, LCCC go to the Department and get the actual funding for the project under the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan and this is done on a project by project basis. €40m of the €300m is allocated to the SIF. Ms. Duke advised that Minister Darragh O'Brien visited the previous week and Ms. Duke spoke about the possibility of continuing the programme based on impacts we are making in the areas. We are looking at what projects are getting funded and how much is being funding for particular projects. Where a small contribution is being made to projects provide by the larger organisations, then it may be more sustainable to have state bodies step in. Ms. Duke noted that there is an argument to be made around the grassroots organisations that are providing projects on an annual basis, we need to be continue to support those. We are making the case to continue this programme beyond 2023 as far as the Department will support us.
- 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 and we would like to be able to say to the stakeholder that we can fund up to 2023 and then we can support on a phased basis as long as the Department will allow after that period. Ms. Duke said ideally, we would like to phase out our involvement from now to 2023 so that we would have more money to support the local activities and events.
- Ms. Cronin asked for Mortgage to Rent figures for the Feb 2021 as data has been provided by the Housing Agency for people in mortgage arrears and notes that Mortgage to Rent was brought in to help people in mortgage arrears. Ms. Cronin would like to see what the Mortgage to Rent figures look like in Limerick and whether there are barriers to the scheme and if there are, are LCCC looking into the eligibility criteria. Ms. Duke noted that she will come back with a report to the next SPC and the list of criteria and barriers. Ms. Duke advised there is no problem with feeding back members ideas for issues for review.
- Cllr. Slattery asked the question, will there be any way that elderly private homeowners could downsize. Ms. Duke advised that this was adopted at a previous SPC in relation to private downsizing but the challenges of the availability of suitable housing stock remains for now. Ms. Duke advised however, that we will be increasing our stock through the Turnkey framework. We hope to 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.