

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 February 2022** in the Council Chamber, Dooradoyle and by MS Teams.

In Attendance: An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Michael Murphy

SPC Members Present: Cllr. Sharon Benson, Cllr. Sean Hartigan, Cllr. Stephen Keary, Cllr. Fergus Kilcoyne, Cllr. Joe Leddin, Cllr. John Costelloe, Mr. P.J O'Grady, Cllr. Mike Donegan, Cllr. Eddie Ryan, Mr. Patrick English, Ms. Siobhán Reidy, Cllr. Tom Ruddle, Cllr. Seán Hartigan, Cllr. Adam Teskey, Cllr. Conor Sheehan, Cllr. Brigid Teefy, Ms. Tracy McElligott, Cllr. Catherine Slattery, Ms. Una Burns, Cllr. Sarah Kiely

In Attendance: Ms. Caroline Curley, Director of Service, Housing
Mr. Rory Culhane, Clerical Officer, Housing
Ms. Jeannine Butler, Clerical Officer, Housing
Ms. Elaine O'Connor, Administrative Officer, Regeneration
Ms. Jennifer Ahern, Staff Officer, Housing
Ms. Jurate Andrijauskiene, A/Assistant Staff Officer, Housing
Mr. Conor Culloo, Senior Engineer, Housing
Mr. Eóin Lehane, Clerical Officer, Housing
Ms. Miriam Donnelly, Administrative Officer, Housing
Mr. Brendan Troy, Senior Executive Officer, Regeneration
Ms. Patricia Phillips, Administrative Officer, Housing
Ms. Jennifer Brett, Administrative Officer, Housing
Ms. Noelle Deedigan, Clerical Officer, Housing
Ms. Niamh O'Brien, Staff Officer, Housing
Ms. Ann-Marie O'Reilly, Threshold
Ms. Edel Conlon, Threshold
Ms. Ciara O'Connor, NUIG Student (Threshold)

Apologies: Cllr. James Collins, Mr. Mike McNamara, Ms. Dee Ryan, Ms. Anne Cronin

Welcome by Chairperson – Cllr. Michael Murphy

Cllr. Michael Murphy opened the meeting and welcomed all members to the February SPC meeting.

Item 1: Confirm minutes from meeting held on 15th December 2021

Proposed: Cllr. Joe Leddin

Seconded: Cllr. Stephen Keary

Item 2: Matters arising from the Minutes

- Cllr. Stephen Keary queried the status of Ballywilliam Close, Rathkeale. Ms. Caroline Curley advised that necessary surveys are currently being carried out and will provide an update to Cllr. Keary through the Adare Rathkeale Municipal District meetings.

Item 3: Limerick City and County Council Disability Strategy Plan

Ms. Curley gave a presentation of the Disability Strategy Plan to SPC members.

Ms. Curley noted that this was a multi organisational plan, which included LCCC, the HSE, AHB's and disability organisations. She sought the support of the SPC to the Plan. The committee gave their support to the Plan.

A discussion took place and the main points were:

- Cllr. Leddin asked does LCCC have a benchmark in terms of a percentage of tenancies that would be allocated on a regular basis to someone with a disability and asked are there any percentage of infills that are designed specifically for someone with a disability. Cllr. Leddin queried the AHBs role in this context.
- Ms. Curley clarified plan would ideally be for all housing. Ms. Curley advised no benchmark for allocations but 15% of new design should cater for a person/s with a disability. Ms. Curley will speak to Cllr. Leddin separately on NOVAS housing scheme.
- Cllr. Stephen Keary flagged that the amount of grant aid afforded for house adaptations is not enough to fulfil the requirement and asked could this be looked into as part of the process. Cllr. Keary proposed a scheme where LCCC would allow an existing LA tenant to extend their properties where needed due to social or health issues and the tenant would be given a discount/write off on their rent.
- Ms. Curley will look into getting more funding for DPGs.
- Ms. Patricia Phillips advised that the allocations and assessments team work closely with Grants team and if a family who cannot obtain a grant were in an unsuitable property, the allocations and assessments team would look at transferring them to a more suitable house through collaboration with AHBs and Disability Services.
- Mr. Conor Culloo advised that any adaptations to LA houses can be reviewed on an individual basis but anything that is proposed must be consistent.
- Cllr. Benson flagged delays to DPG grants currently due to OT waiting times and this is where the HSE need to come in. Cllr. Benson welcomed the inter-agency approach on the plan.
- Ms. Curley outlined organisations sitting on the Housing Disability Steering Group to SPC members.
- Ms. Phillips advised members that HSS are giving all applicants that apply for housing the opportunity to apply through medical grounds which will give a better insight into what accommodation is suitable for applicants.
- Cllr. Eddie Ryan flagged a concern in relation to tenants taking out a loan to do work on an LA house.

Proposal to write to the Minister for Housing to ask him implement a scheme which would allow an existing Local Authority tenant to extend property where needed due to social or health issues whereby the tenant would then be given a discount/write off on their rent.

Proposed: Cllr. Stephen Keary

Seconded: Cllr. Michael Murphy

Item 4: Presentation from Threshold

Ann Marie O'Reilly (Policy Officer - Threshold) and Edel Conlon (Service Manager, Southern Region – Threshold) gave a presentation on the work the organisation does in the Limerick area.

A discussion took place and the main points were:

- Cllr. Keary flagged a concern around where the additional monies needed to fund increase in HAP proposed by Threshold would come from and a concern regarding the legislation surrounding HAP. Cllr. Keary also flagged the potential issues around conducting an "NCT" on a property, the landlord could give the tenants notice based on the works needed to be done. Ms. O'Reilly noted concerns and advised that Threshold would require the landlord to demonstrate that the unit meets the standard prior to the letting of the property.
- Ms. O'Reilly and Ms. Conlon advised members that if a person/s were facing a rent review which would push the rent beyond affordability, Threshold could check the validity of the last rent review for that property and if it a valid review, Threshold would put the person/s in touch with organisations such as SVP.
- Ms. Conlon advised members that Threshold have an Interim Tenancy Sustainment protocol for people on rent supplements. This was to increase a person/s rent supplement if there was a valid increase on rent.
- Cllr. Ryan advised that he would support an increase in HAP payments, as it is important.
- Ms. Una Burns noted the huge financial burden on the state when it comes to emergency accommodation and supports an increase in HAP payments.
- Cllr. Seán Hartigan noted the lack of rental properties in Limerick and the rising costs of rents. He also flagged lack of inspections by LCCC and that some people are living in substandard houses.
- Cllr. Joe Leddin flagged that HAP is only a temporary measure, the concentration should maybe move away from funding HAP and more emphasis put on building houses by the Local Authorities, regulation of RPZs and rent freezes.
- Cllr. Sharon Benson asked could rents be separated between Limerick City and County as this could give a better reflection of average rents.
- Mr. O'Grady flagged that the correct average rent in Limerick needs to be looked into.
- Cllr. Keary asked what would LCCCs rent be, what would the equivalent be for a LA tenant. Ms. Phillips advised rent is based on differential rent which is based on income. Ms. Curley advised that HAP is considered social housing and if a person/s financial situation changes, they are to advise LCCC.

Item 5: AOB

- An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Murphy complimented Mr. Patrick English on the GAA President's award that he received.
- Ms. McElligott flagged a concern around lighting in certain areas of Limerick and if they could be identified possibly at a future SPC. Ms. McElligott also flagged a concern that the Private Rightsizing units had bare walls and floors and the applicants were not informed. Ms. Curley advised that going forward we could improve the literature given to applicants regarding what to expect.
- Mr. O'Grady asked about the status of houses in Main Street, Patrickswell and asked have LCCC CPO'd those units. Ms. Phillips to revert to PJ at the next meeting.
- Cllr. Keary noted that LCCC should be doing everything in our power to conduct an audit on all vacant properties in Limerick.
- Cllr. Fergus Kilcoyne advised that the Patrickswell units have been CPO'd by LCCC. Cllr. Kilcoyne advised that he brought up the issue of lighting in Mungret Park in Limerick in a Council meeting. He flagged the answer he received was that the funding needed would be substantial.

END OF MEETING

The Chair thanked everyone for joining the SPC, the contributions made and Threshold for their presentation. The next SPC is the 20th April.