

## 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 19<sup>th</sup> October** in the Council Chamber, Dooradoyle and via MS Teams.

**In Attendance:** An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary

SPC Members Present: Cllr. Michael Murphy, Cllr. Tom Ruddle, Cllr. Tom Collopy, Cllr. Brigid Teefy, Cllr. Sarah Kiely, Cllr. Fergus Kilcoyne, Cllr. Mike Donegan, Cllr. Catherine Slattery, Cllr. Eddie Ryan, Cllr. Sharon Benson, Cllr. Joe Leddin, Cllr. Conor Sheehan, Cllr. Adam Teskey, Cllr. Sean Hartigan, Ms. Tracy McElligott, Ms. Dee Ryan, Ms. Una Burns, Mr. P.J O'Grady, Ms. Anne Cronin, Mr. Patrick English

**In Attendance:** Ms. Caroline Curley, Director of Housing  
Ms. Sarah Newell, Senior Executive Officer  
Mr. Conor Culloo, Senior Engineer, Housing  
Mr. Brian Bourke, Senior Executive Engineer, Housing  
Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer  
Ms. Patricia Phillips, Administrative Officer, Housing  
Ms. Tríona O'Connor, Administrative Officer, Housing  
Ms Elizabeth Rea, Senior Staff officer, Housing  
Ms. Helen Creed, Administrative Officer, Housing  
Mr. Seamus Hayes, Administrative Officer, Housing  
Ms. Jennifer Brett, Administrative Officer, Housing  
Ms. Aoife O'Brien Slater, Senior Staff Officer Housing  
Ms. Elaine O'Connor, Administrative Officer, Housing  
Ms. Jennifer Ahern, Staff Officer, Housing  
Ms. Jurate Andrijauskiene, Staff Officer, Housing  
Mr. Rory Culhane, Assistant Staff Officer, Housing  
Mr. Shane Feane, Assistant Staff Officer, Housing  
Mr. Eóin Lehane, Clerical Officer, Housing  
Ms. Jeannine Butler, Clerical Officer, Housing  
Ms. Amanda Glasper, Clerical Officer, Housing  
Ms. Amanda Conway, Clerical Officer, Housing  
Mr. Alan Jakes, Journalist, Limerick Post

**Apologies:** Cllr. James Collins, Mr. Mike McNamara, Ms Siobhan Reidy  
Ms. Miriam Donnelly, Ms. Noelle Deedigan, Mr. Joe Delaney, Mr. Brendan Troy

### **Welcome by Chairperson – Cllr. Stephen Keary**

Cllr. Stephen Keary opened the meeting and welcomed all members to the October SPC meeting.

### **Item 1: Confirm minutes from meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

**Proposed:** Cllr. Michael Murphy

**Seconded:** Cllr. Tom Ruddle

### **Item 2: Matters arising from the Minutes**

No matters arising from previous minutes.

### **Item 3: Draft Mid-West Homeless Action Plan**

Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer, Housing Support Services & Ms. Triona O'Connor, Homeless Operations Programme Manager presented the draft "Mid-West Homelessness Plan 2022-2025"

A discussion took place and the main points were:

Cllr. Sharon Benson highlighted targets from Housing First and Ms. Hayes advised that the Council continue to work with all key stakeholders to support and maintain tenancies and deliver targets as set down by the National Implementation Plan 2022 to 2026.

Cllr. Tom Ruddle enquired about the Council's strategies to prevent homelessness, homeless provisions in the County, addressing Notice to Quits (NTQ) and tenants unable to pay their rent. Ms. O'Connor advised that the Council have homeless solutions, mainly use of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, place-finder service and engaging with Landlords. Ms. O'Connor further advised that the homeless action team has a range of emergency accommodation options available in the County and where accommodation is unavailable at a particular time in an area service users can be supported in a neighbouring community. Ms. O'Connor stated that where tenants receive an NTQ they should contact the homeless action team immediately. Ms. Mary Hayes added that the Council actively work with tenants who experience a change in their financial circumstances and are unable to pay rent such as applying for the relevant supports and putting payment plans in place.

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary enquired about the Government's announcement on the temporary ban on evictions, the timeline and how it would be applied. Ms. Hayes advised that the Council are awaiting the Minister's official sign off and the detail.

Ms. Anne Cronin, Sectoral Representative Community/Voluntary asked for figures on how many persons exited homelessness in the last 12 months. Ms. O'Connor advised that the figures are available and can be provided after the meeting.

Ms. Una Burns, Sectoral Representative Community/Voluntary stated that HAP payments are not sufficient in particular for single persons in need of 1 or 2 bed units.

Cllr. Tom Collopy enquired about the ceiling caps for HAP payments and if works had been scoped for a particular property being let by the Council. Ms. Hayes confirmed that there are HAP caps and they can be circulated. Ms Curley asked Mr. Collopy to discuss the particular property with a housing official and advised that it would not be Council policy to let a house without required work being done.

**On the proposal of Cllr. Michael Murphy, seconded by Cllr Tom Ruddle it was agreed:**

**"that the draft Mid-West Homeless Plan 2022-2025 be recommended to Council for adoption".**

### **Item 4: Draft Homeless Policy Document**

Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer, Housing Support Services presented the draft "Homeless Policy Document"

A discussion took place and the main points were:

Cllr. Sharon Benson asked if the assessment and eligibility was removed. Ms. Hayes confirmed it was replaced with the definition of homelessness as per Section 2 Housing Act 1988.

Cllr. Benson highlighted the psychological impact of a child in emergency accommodation. Ms. O'Connor advised that families can be provided with accommodation in various family hub units which can be a mix of self-contained family units and shared communal units.

Cllr. Collopy enquired about the Council's helpline for emergency accommodation. Ms O'Connor advised that there is a specific free phone out of hours number and that the homeless action team has a direct line number that Councillors or member of the public can access.

**On the proposal of Cllr. Tom Ruddle, seconded by Cllr. Tom Collopy, it was agreed that "the draft Homeless Policy Document be recommended to Council for adoption".**

**Item 5: Development of New Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy - To note progress to date**

Mr. Seamus Hayes, Administrative Officer, Housing Support Services provided an update on progress to date on the "Development of Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy".

In introducing this item, Mr. Seamus Hayes, reminded members that the Council, as Housing Authority, had a statutory obligation in accordance with Section 35 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 to prepare and adopt an Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy. A full briefing by way of a PowerPoint presentation had been given at the June SPC meeting. In the intervening period, the following progress had been made:

- a. A first draft Strategy had been prepared and circulated widely, including a public consultation through MyPoint.
- b. As required by statute, a copy of the draft was forwarded to An Garda Siochana and the Health Service Executive for comment.
- c. The matter was placed as an item on the agenda for the Joint Policing Committee held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September.
- d. Following the foregoing, and having regard to submissions and suggestions made, a further draft of the Strategy had been prepared and circulated to members in advance of the meeting.
- e. The draft Strategy, copy of which is attached for information of members, has been amended to incorporate the views expressed and submissions made by the seven organisations/associations. Mr. Hayes advised that the intention is to place this strategy on the agenda for the full Council meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

A discussion took place and the main points were:

A discussion ensued on the matter and Mr. Hayes, Ms. Patricia Phillips and Ms. Mary Hayes responded to a number of questions on a variety of topics including:

1. Enforcement powers available to Council.

2. Number of cases dealt with by Community Sustainment Unit.
3. Vetting of prospective tenants.
4. Pre-tenancy discussions and training.
5. Follow-up visits to new tenants.
6. Powers in relation to HAP tenancies.

Mr. Hayes advised that the intention is to place this strategy on the agenda for the full Council meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

**On the proposal of Cllr. Michael Murphy seconded by Cllr. Tom Ruddle, it was agreed that “the new Anti Social Behaviour Strategy be recommended to Council for adoption.**

#### **Item 6: Feedback Housing One-Rep Policy**

Ms. Helen Creed, Administrative Officer, Housing Strategy and Non-LA Housing Construction presented feedback following area workshops with Councillors and internal consultation with the data protection office, digital strategy and customer services during September 2022 on the draft housing one rep policy.

A discussion took place and the main points were:

Cllr. Ruddle asked about written requests for nominations. Ms. Creed responded that Limerick City and County Council have to adhere to GDPR legislation and have reviewed Tipperary County Council’s policy which is successful and that a reworked draft would be presented at the December SPC.

Cllr. Michael Murphy asked if TD’s can also made representation as well as Councillors. Ms Creed informed the members that following the area workshops there was general support for one Councillor or one Oireachtas Member representation.

Ms. Creed informed the members of the next steps and that a reworked draft would be presented at the next SPC on the 14th December, 2022 and with the support of the members would go forward to full Council meeting on 23rd January, 2023.

#### **Item 7: Private Rightsizing at Mungret Gate**

Ms. Sarah Newell, Senior Executive Officer, Housing Strategy and Non-LA Housing Construction provided a presentation “Overview of Private Rightsizing Pilot at Mungret Gate” which outlined the scheme, the initiative, linkages with policy, key advantages, key learning on the process and specific recommendations.

A discussion took place and the main points were:

Cllr. Catherine Slattery complemented the success of the scheme and stated that more land should be identified and more downsizing schemes rolled out. Ms. Newell stated it’s the Council’s intention to roll out more downsizing schemes.

Cllr. Tom Ruddle enquired about valuing the applicant’s properties, how much they pay to downsize. Cllr Eddie Ryan stated that the scheme was excellent and enquired about the process.

Ms. Newell explained that the Council arrange for an independent valuation of the property and provided an example of the financial contribution payable by the applicant and as set out in Limerick City and County Council’s Allocation Scheme.

Cllr. Keary, asked what the Council do with the 25% financial contribution. Ms. Curley advised that the money goes into the internal capital receipts for housing use.

Cllr. Sheehan asked if the northside of Limerick could be considered for future schemes and that we should write to the Minister to revise acquisition caps. Cllr. Stephen Keary ask Cllr. Sheehan if this was a notice of motion and Cllr. Sheehan advised it was not.

Ms Newell advised that the Council would consider the northside for future schemes.

Cllr. Tom Collopy stated there are Council tenants willing to downsize and should be considered.

Ms. Patricia Phillips informed Cllr. Collopy that housing allocations can meet with any council household wishing to downsize.

Cllr. Sharon Benson highlighted that there is a significant demand for 1 and 2 bed properties and asked how many of the houses available for downsizing were occupied. Ms. Newell provided the figures from downsizing campaign 1 and campaign 2.

Ms. Tracy McElligott enquired about works to the applicant's property. Ms. Newell advised that the Council can't commence works until the property comes into the Council's ownership.

#### **Item 8: Reporting to SPC from HDSG (Housing Disability Strategic Group)**

Ms. Caroline Curley, Director advised that the "Housing and Disability Steering Report 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022" figures circulated were for noting.

#### **Item 9: Updates**

- a. *Letter dated 27th May 2022 sent to the Minister for State for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy, on seeking additional funding for Mid-West Regional Drugs and Alcohol Services and provide more transitional housing.*

Ms. Helen Creed, Administrative Officer, Housing Strategy and Non-LA Housing Construction informed the members that a reply was received by the Ministers office on the 9th September, 2022 and included in the "correspondence" for the September meeting of the Council in the normal manner.

- b. *Working group on vacancy*

Mr. Conor Culloo, Senior Engineer, Housing updated the Group on the meetings to-date held on 15<sup>th</sup> September, 27<sup>th</sup> September and 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2022.

- c. *Update - Scheme of Priority for Affordable Dwelling Purchase Arrangements*

Ms. Sarah Newell informed the members that 25 affordable homes for delivery in 2023 were approved under the Affordable Housing Fund in September 2022. Ms. Newell advised the members that an Affordable Housing workshop would be held in December 2022 to update all elected members on (a) the Affordable Delivery Programme and (b) Scheme of Priority for Affordable Dwelling Purchase Arrangements.

#### **Item 10: AOB**

Cllr. Sharon Benson referred to the practice of issuing solicitors' letters to tenants in arrears of rent stating that she was aware of cases where tenants who had agreed payment plans to address the arrears, and were adhering to such plans, had nevertheless received such letters thereby causing them distress. Mr. Hayes advised that he would be very surprised if that was the case and it was

agreed that Cllr. Benson would engage with him subsequent to the meeting with specific details so that he could investigate.

Cllr. Slattery asked is there are any plans to raise the income limit for social housing and if we could write to the Minister. Ms. Curley state that this was a matter for the DHLGH, that limits were currently being reviewed and we are awaiting an update. Cllr. Slattery added that we should write to the Minister for an update.

Cllr. Sharon Benson added that the Minister should consider increasing the caps in relation to Income thresholds for social housing.

**October SPC meeting date Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022.**

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary thanked everyone who attended the SPC.

**END OF MEETING**