

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 15th February 2023** 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. Sarah Kiely, Cllr. Fergus Kilcoyne, Cllr. Mike Donegan, Cllr. Catherine Slattery, Cllr. Sharon Benson, Cllr. Joe Leddin, Cllr. Conor Sheehan, Cllr. Adam Teskey, Cllr. Brigid Teefy, Ms. Una Burns, Ms. Dee Ryan, Ms Siobhan Heaney.

In Attendance:

- Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer
- Ms. Sarah Newell, Senior Executive Officer
- Mr. Brendan Kidney, Senior Engineer, Housing
- Mr. Brian Bourke, Executive Engineer, Housing
- Mr. Joe Delaney, Director of Service, Regeneration
- Ms. Martina Frawley, Administrative Officer, Housing
- Ms. Patricia Philips, A/ Head of Unit for Housing Welfare & Traveller Accommodation
- Ms. Jennifer Ahern, A/ Senior Staff Officer, Housing
- Ms. Jurate Andrijauskiene, Staff Officer, Housing
- Mr. Rory Culhane, 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. Triona O'Connor, Homeless Operations Programme Manager, Housing
- Mr. Brian Dillon, National Director of Cena

In Attendance: Cllr. Jerome Scanlan, Cllr. Joe Pond, Cllr. Elena Secas, Cllr. Abul Kalam Azad Talukder, Cllr. Dan McSweeney, Cllr. John Sheahan, Cllr. Francis Foley, Cllr. Bridie Collins, Cllr. Gerald Mitchell, Cllr. Olivia O'Sullivan, Cllr. PJ Carey.

Apologies: Ms. Caroline Curley, Ms. Helen Creed, Ms Noelle Deedigan, Ms. Jennifer Brett, Cllr. Daniel Butler, Mr. Mike McNamara, Ms. Bridget Doyle, Mr. Brendan Troy, Ms. Elaine O'Connor, Cllr. Eddie Ryan, Cllr. Sean Hartigan, Mr. P.J O'Grady, Mr. Patrick English, Cllr. James Collins, Ms Anne Cronin, Cllr. Frankie Daly, Cllr. Elisa O'Donovan, Cllr. Liam Galvin, Cllr. Michael Collins, Cllr Emmett O'Brien, Cllr John O'Donoghue, Cllr. Eddie Ryan, Cllr. Martin Ryan, Cllr. John Egan, Cllr. Sasa Novak Ui Chonchuir, Cllr. Kieran O'Hanlon, Ms. Tracy McElligott.

Welcome by Chairperson – Cllr. Stephen Keary

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary opened the meeting and welcomed all members to the February SPC meeting.

Item 1: Confirm minutes from meeting held on 14th December 2022

Proposed: Cllr. Adam Teskey

Seconded: Cllr. Michael Murphy

Item 2: Matters arising from the Minutes

No matters arising from previous minutes.

Item 3: CENA Presentation

Mr. Brian Dillon, National Director of CENA presented an overview of CENA and the work they do to the group.

A discussion took place where committee members enquired about a pilot programme at Boher, a site CENA are considering acquiring in Limerick City, the acquisition process by CENA and management of tenancies. In response Mr. Dillon set out CENA's position.

Ms. Patricia Phillips, A/ Head of Unit for Housing Welfare & Traveller Accommodation informed members that individual cases cannot be discussed and highlighted that Limerick City and County Council continue to work closely with CENA on Traveller accommodation and nominations.

Item 4 & Item 6: Report from Working Group on Vacancy

Mr. Brendan Kidney, Senior Engineer, LA Housing Construction & Maintenance presented the report from the working group on vacancy.

A discussion on the report took place, elected members suggested that there should be a balanced representation of elected members from the City and County on the working group on vacancy.

It was clarified to the members that the working group on vacancy was established following the June 2022 meeting of the Home and Social Development SPC where it was agreed to set up a working group to examine the issue of length of time taken from when a Council dwelling becomes vacant to when it is re-tenanted.

Members raised concerns on vacant and derelict properties and the commencement of refurbishment works to such properties. In response Mr. Kidney provided an update to the committee.

Cllr. Stephen Keary advised that a special SPC meeting could be organised if members required more time to feedback on the report. Cllr. Keary asked if the members were happy for the Report from Working Group on Vacancy be submitted to full Council.

On the proposal of Cllr. Conor Sheehan seconded by Ms. Dee Ryan it was agreed that the Report from the working group on vacancy be submitted to full Council for adoption.

It was further agreed that the report from the working group on vacancy would be circulated to all Council members in advance of the March meeting and that they be invited to make submissions on same. A report on submissions would be made available at the March meeting.

Proposed: Cllr. Conor Sheehan

Seconded: Cllr. Tom Collopy

Item 5: Scheme of Priority for Affordable Purchase Arrangements

Ms. Martina Frawley, Administrative Officer, Housing Strategy and Non-LA Housing Construction presented the draft Scheme of Priority for Affordable Dwelling Purchase Arrangements.

A discussion took place where members asked about the potential number of applications the Council expects to receive for Affordable Dwellings and what's forecast for the 2023 or the next 12 months. Ms. Frawley provided indicative figures based on the experience of other Local Authorities. Ms. Frawley informed the group that 10 units of the 25 Affordable units approved in Phase 1 Bru na Guadan are scheduled for completion this year and will be advertised for sale in the coming months. Ms. Frawley added that two Affordable Homes Fund Applications for 11 units in Croom and 42 units in Newcastle West are currently being prepared for submission to the Department and it's hoped that both these schemes will commence construction in 2023 and be advertised to the public.

Members enquired if the criteria applied to all Affordable sites, Ms. Newell confirmed that the scheme of priority chosen can be reviewed in the future and amended in accordance with the Affordable Housing Regulations if it is considered necessary and appropriate and that amending a scheme of priority is allowed for in the Affordable Housing Act 2021.

Cllr. Jerome Scanlan enquired about the 42 units for Newcastle West, Affordable income limits and the Council purchasing Affordable dwellings. Ms. Newell explained that the Council don't buy the Affordable units and clarified that the Council's role is to administer the Affordable subsidy.

Ms. Ryan asked about affordable housing under the 20% obligation required as part of the planning process. Ms. Newell clarified that this is a different scheme and explained the Affordable Housing campaign.

Cllr. Keary enquired about Developer risk and commitment and whether the Council can take the estate in charge once the houses are sold. In response Ms. Newell advised that there are developers who have planning permission and who may not have been able to activate it and that the affordable subsidy has come into being over the last few months and it's an opportunity to make the sale of houses more attractive. Ms. Newell explained the full transparent sequence of steps to de-risk for the developer. Ms. Newell advised that every scheme is different and there may have to be a management company set up by the developer in some developments.

Cllr. Bridie Collins highlighted that Nuala O'Connell, Senior Planner, Planning, Environment & Place Making presented a policy on taking in charge of estates and any new builds should fall under this policy.

Cllr. Keary asked if for example 20 of the 42 houses in Newcastle West were sold under the Affordable scheme would the remainder of the houses be used for social housing. Cllr. Scanlan asked if we could determine demand through an expression of interest.

Ms. Dee Ryan asked what's expected in Affordable home delivery over the next 2 years and added that Limerick Chamber of Commerce supporting housing development and policy within Limerick can work with the SPC and provide a briefing that might be appropriate. Cllr. McSweeney stated that a briefing by Limerick Chamber would be welcomed at any time.

Cllr. McSweeney also noted that the Local Authority is lacking in terms of targets and maybe we should not be reliant on the private market. Ms. Newell replied that the Council have their own sites they are activating including Sonny's Corner, Curragower Site and Toppins Field. Regular updates will

be provided on Affordable Housing every quarter in tandem with the Quarterly Housing Delivery report to elected members at their district meetings.

Cllr. Benson proposed that the Council write to the Minister to request more resources for the Affordable Housing Team.

On the proposal of Cllr. Sharon Benson seconded by Cllr. Tom Collopy it was agreed that the Council write to the Minister for Housing to request more resources for the Affordable Housing Team.

On the proposal of Cllr. Michael Murphy seconded by Cllr. Conor Sheehan it was agreed that the draft Scheme of Priority for Affordable Dwelling Purchase Arrangements be submitted to full Council for adoption.

Item 7: Housing for Migrants

Request for update from PPN Linkage Group from the Council on their plans to deal with the potential of homeless migrants and what plans are in place to combat increasing fears that migrants entering the country will be sleeping rough on Limerick streets.

Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer, Housing Support Services, updated the group and added that the response would be circulated after the SPC.

Item 8: Updates

Report to SPC from Housing Disability Strategic Group

For noting.

Housing One Rep Policy

Ms Martina Frawley, Administrative Officer, Housing provided an update to the group confirming that the Policy was adopted by Council on the 23rd January, 2023 and a review will take place after 6 months i.e. August, 2023.

Cllr. Sarah Kiely understood that this was to be used only for housing and was recently asked to fill out one of these GDPR forms, this slowed down the process, the team in Customer Service and all employees need to be briefed on what it is for. Ms. Newell replied that we can organise a briefing on scenarios and can expand on this with the data protection officer.

Cllr. Collins understood that this policy also applied to planning applications and the Council need a DocuSign to free up time. Ms. Frawley replied that the Council is currently investigating an online submission solution.

Cllr. Conor Sheehan asked could provision be made for someone to provide verbal consent as we are dealing with elderly constituents. Ms. Frawley replied that the Council can look into this.

Circular 09/2022: Guidance documents for Housing Authorities on recent changes to the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme 2016.

Ms. Kathy O'Grady, Senior Staff Officer presented an update to the group.

Cllr. Benson asked if the percentage of the reducing charge had been amended. Ms. O'Grady confirmed that it had not changed but may do so in the future.

Item 9: AOB

Local Authority Home Loan

Cllr. Collins will move that Limerick City and County Council engage with applicants who were refused a Local Authority Home Loan in recent years so they have the opportunity to re-apply as income limits have recently been increased by government and they may now be eligible.

Proposer: Ms. Dee Ryan

Seconded: Cllr. Michael Murphy

A discussion took place and Ms. O' Grady informed the Committee that the Council has a list of persons who were unsuccessful in securing a Local Authority Home Loan and advised that some applicants were refused on other grounds.

Cllr. Keary requested that applicants who were refused because of income limit should be contacted. Ms. O'Grady advised that such applicants in the previous 12-18 month period can be contacted.

Modular Housing

Cllr. Collopy proposed a discussion on modular housing at a future SPC which was welcomed by Cllr. Keary and Cllr. Kilcoyne. Ms. Newell confirmed that Mr. Mick Forde-Bradley was looking into modern methods of construction and that a workshop would be arranged for all elected members over the next few weeks.

April SPC meeting date Wednesday, 12th April 2023.

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

END OF MEETING