

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 22nd February 2024** in the Council Chamber, Dooradoyle and via MS Teams.

In Attendance: An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Kearny

SPC Members Present: Cllr. Tom Ruddle, Cllr. Fergus Kilcoyne, Cllr. Catherine Slattery, Cllr. Sharon Benson, Cllr. Conor Sheehan, Cllr. Brigid Teefy, Cllr. James Collins, Cllr. Eddie Ryan, Cllr. Sean Hartigan, Cllr. Mike Donegan, Cllr. Tom Collopy, Cllr. Joe Leddin, Mr. Patrick English, Ms. Una Burns, Ms. Siobhan Reidy

In Attendance:

Ms. Caroline Curley, Director of Service
Ms. Sarah Newell, Senior Executive Officer
Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer
Mr. Brendan Kidney, Senior Engineer, Housing
Ms. Helen Creed, Administrative Officer, Housing
Ms. Patricia Philips, A/ Head of Unit for Housing Welfare & Traveller Accommodation
Mr. Jamie Butler, Executive Engineer, Housing Welfare and Traveller Accommodation
Mr. Declan White, A/ Senior Executive Officer, Regeneration
Ms. Anna Donegan, Senior Executive Architect, Housing
Ms. Triona O'Connor, Homeless Operations Programme Manager, Housing
Mr. James Hayes, Administrative Officer, Housing
Mr. Joe McDonald, Senior Staff Officer, Housing
Ms. Jennifer Browne, Staff Officer, Housing,
Ms. Niamh O'Brien, Staff Officer, Housing
Mr. Rory Culhane, Staff Officer, Housing
Ms. Jurate Andrijauskienė, Staff Officer, Housing
Ms. Aisling Meaney, Assistant Staff Officer, Housing
Ms. Jeannine Butler, Assistant Staff Officer, Housing
Ms. Amanda Glasper, Clerical Officer, Housing
Mr. Liam Dooley, Clerical Officer, Housing
Ms. Eileen Liston, Clerical Officer Housing
Mr. Noel Lindsey, Clerical Officer, Housing

Apologies: Mr. Mike McNamara, Ms. Tracy McElligott, Ms. Dee Ryan, Mr. PJ O'Grady, Ms. Anne Cronin

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 7th December 2023.

Proposed: Cllr. Tom Collopy

Seconded: Cllr. James Collins

Item 2: Matters arising from the Minutes

No matters arising from previous minutes.

Item 3: Clúid Housing

Mr. David Murphy, New Business Manager with Clúid Housing presented Clúid Housing projects delivered in Limerick and highlighted projects in the pipeline. Mr. Murphy was accompanied by Jamie O'Driscoll, New Business Development Officer with Clúid Housing

A discussion took place. Cllr. Catherine Slattery enquired about Private Rightsizing in Newtown Meadows and Speakers Corner. Mr. Murphy confirmed that a number of units will be made available for eligible persons in both schemes. Cllr. Catherine Slattery asked about the tenure mix and Ms. Caroline Curley, Director of Service, Housing advised that it is intended to have a 50% Cost Rental, 30% Social and 20% Private mix tenure.

Cllr. Joe Leddin asked when the units in Newenham Street, Limerick would be occupied. Mr. Murphy advised that Clúid were not involved in that project. Ms. Una Burns, Social Inclusion sectoral representative confirmed that Novas are involved in the project and that legal issues have delayed the unit becoming occupied.

Cllr. Tom Ruddle asked if there were any plans to have further Private Rightsizing units available in Newcastle West. Cllr. Ruddle highlighted the advantages of Private Rightsizing Schemes. Cllr. Ruddle asked how much cost rental tenants would have to pay and if it applied to second hand homes. Ms. Caroline Curley confirmed that all cost rental rents must be a minimum 25% below the market rents in the area where the scheme is located. Ms. Curley advised that the financial model is complex, that cost rental may work better in the City and highlighted that cost rental is in its infancy and we will learn from experiences in The Mills, Castletroy.

Cllr. Conor Sheehan enquired about allowing pets in apartments for Private Rightsizing units. Mr. Murphy advised that Clúid has a pet policy which restricts having pets in apartments except for accredited assistance dogs. Mr. Murphy stated that some schemes will allow certain pets where there is own door access and subject to discussion with them.

Item 4: Traveller Accommodation Programme

Ms. Patricia Phillips A/ Head of Unit for Housing Welfare & Traveller Accommodation, and Mr. Jamie Butler, Executive Engineer, Housing Welfare & Traveller Accommodation gave a presentation on the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

The presentation highlighted progress to-date under the current plan and Ms. Phillips confirmed that the Council have commenced the preparation of the next 5-year Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) 2025-2029 which is due for adoption by 31st December 2024.

A discussion took place.

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary asked how concrete was used for the Clonlong Group Housing Development. Ms. Phillips highlighted that Traveller Accommodation is very complex and that emergency planning was sought in this instance due to exceptional circumstances. Ms. Phillips stated that Traveller Accommodation is not generic housing and that we have learnt from previous experiences.

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary enquired about planning permission for the site at Coonagh and highlighted that it's in a flood plain. Ms. Phillips confirmed that the location is an existing site.

Cllr. Conor Sheehan thanked Ms. Phillips and Mr. Butler for their presentation. Cllr. Sheehan commended Ms. Phillips on her work and acknowledged that Traveller Accommodation is complex and is not easy. Cllr. Sheehan highlighted that as a local authority we have a very good track record in this area.

Cllr. Sheehan asked what the intentions are for the halting site in Rhebogue and stated that's it's unfit for purpose and that only 1 or 2 families remain at this site. Ms. Phillips highlighted that there were 7 houses in this location and there were issues of anti-social behaviour affecting the neighbouring St. Patricks GAA club. Ms. Phillips stated that works relating to blocking up a gate were undertaken to prevent anti-social behaviour and illegal parking of vans. Ms. Phillips confirmed that there are only 2 houses which remain occupied and there are no issues. Ms. Phillips informed the members that land is being handing over to St. Patricks GAA club.

Cllr. Sheehan stated that proper facilities and a horse programme is required in Knocklisheen and Moyross. Ms. Phillips stated that horse issues are not solely connected to the Travelling community and that the Council continue to work with Traveller Groups to encourage responsible horse ownership.

Cllr. Catherine Slattery enquired about the halting site in Clondrinagh and occupants encroaching on adjacent lands. Ms. Phillips confirmed that there are no new families at this location, and they are working with the families living there.

Cllr. Slattery stated that field adjacent to traveller accommodation on the Old Cork Road is full of rubbish and that illegal dumping is ongoing at this location for years. Cllr. Slattery also stated that a colleague had raised the issue of horses on the road. Cllr. Slattery suggested that Limerick City and County Council relocate the tenant in the house and purchase the land adjacent to it. Ms. Phillips advised that this is a generic house and that illegal dumping falls under the remit of the Environment unit and that in tandem with the Community Sustainment unit and Housing they continue to monitor the area and address issues.

Cllr. Joe Leddin highlighted that there are several caravans illegal parked again at Alandale and that there is a burnt-out car at this location similar to the same issues experienced in Coonagh. Cllr. Leddin asked why the families won't go into serviced sites. Ms. Phillips stated that they have engaged with the families and made offers of accommodation. Ms. Phillips stated that the Traveller Accommodation Unit works very closely with Planning Enforcement and that the matter will have to go through the Court System.

Cllr. Tom Collopy enquired (a) if rent was payable by families occupying unofficial sites, (b) if the caravan loan repayments are additional to rent paid and (c) how are maintenance issues addressed. Ms. Phillips confirmed that there is minimal rent payable on official sites, which would include a bin service. Ms. Phillips confirmed that the loan repayments are small on a weekly basis and well within families means. Ms. Phillips stated that maintenance issues are addressed as necessary.

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary enquired if there is a budget apportioned to Limerick City and County Council. Ms. Phillips advised that Limerick City and County Council apply to the Department to fund capital projects.

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary asked what the plan is for a house in Lismakeery, Askeaton. Ms. Phillips informed Cllr. Keary that it's proposed to build an extension to the 3-bed end of terrace house.

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary enquired about Hill View Halting site. Ms. Phillips confirmed that this site will be redeveloped. Cllr. Keary asked about the illegal parking of caravans on Council's land and highlighted that there are potential health issues with no utilities. Ms. Phillips advised that Planning Enforcement deal with same. Ms. Curley stated that the matter must go through the legal process.

Cllr. Stephen Keary enquired about the 55 first offers of housing that were declined and what is the status of these families now. Ms. Phillips stated that some families continue to live with family or share a house. Ms. Phillips advised that applicants could refuse 2 reasonable offers of housing over 12 months and that the criteria is the same for generic housing offers.

Item 5: Update on amendments to Tenant Purchase Scheme

Mr. Joe McDonald, Senior Staff Officer presented on amendments made to the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme 2016 and a discussion took place.

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary asked what the 'Constant Attendance Allowance' was. Mr. McDonald advised it is an increase to disablement benefit which you get if you lost your physical or mental ability because of work.

Cllr. Sharon Benson sought clarification on Disability Allowance and Invalidity Pension calculations. Mr. McDonald confirmed that Disability Allowance and Invalidity Pension are now also considered primary sources of income.

Mr. McDonald added that the period an applicant will be required to be in receipt of social housing support to be considered eligible under the scheme was changed from 1 year to 10 years. Mr. McDonald confirmed that time spent in HAP or RAS tenancies can be counted towards the 10 years period as long as there is no break in social housing support.

Cllr. Tom Collopy asked what the income was required before the current €11,000. Mr. McDonald confirmed the amount was reduced from €15,000 to €12,500 on 1st February 2022.

Item 6: SPC Programme of Work 2024

Ms. Caroline Curley, Director of Service outlined the following SPC Programme of Work 2024 as follows:

1. Sales Schemes as recommended by the Working Group on Vacancy and agreed by Council in 2023:
 - Consideration to be given to examination of dwellings compulsorily acquired under the Derelict Sites Act with a view to offering a portion to first time buyers on the housing list
 - Update following presentation on the 7th December 2023 on:
Consideration be given to the introduction of pilot scheme for the sale of Council houses in need of refurbishment at low cost to people on housing list
2. Visit to view modular housing
3. Modular Units Grants - Research into feasibility
4. Traveller Accommodation Programme

Ms. Curley asked the members if they had any additional items they wished to include in the work programme.

Cllr. Tom Collopy highlighted that Modular Houses needs to be introduced in Limerick and noted that a visit to view modular housing is on the SPC Programme of Work for 2024. An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary advised that modular homes have a maximum lifespan of 60 years and are built to an A2 energy standard and asked if a visit could be arranged before June 2024.

Cllr. Sharon Benson asked if a working group could be formed to explore maintenance costs that a tenant is responsible for i.e. gutter cleaning and if a programme could be considered where a tenant could pay a few euro extra per year and the Council would arrange same. Cllr. Benson stated this would benefit the tenant and the Council.

Ms. Curley, Director of Service stated that it could be looked at, but it would be towards the end of 2024.

Item 7: For Noting

For noting report to SPC from Housing Disability Strategic Group.

Item 8: AOB

Cllr. Stephen Keary asked how many families are currently being accommodated in hotels. Ms. Curley advised there are 193 single homeless individuals and 69 families (85 adults and 111 children) accessing emergency accommodation. Cllr. Keary asked how much we are spending per week on emergency accommodation. Ms. Curley confirmed that it's substantial.

Cllr. Keary asked how many houses are currently vacant and that the Council should progress the refurb of vacant houses as soon as possible. Ms. Curley advised that there are 180 houses currently waiting to be refurbished and the Council must abide by procurement rules. Ms. Curley highlighted the importance of sustaining our current stock and that there will be additional staff resources in 2024.

Cllr. Tom Collopy asked how we get families out of emergency accommodation. Ms. Phillips stated that no-one wants to see a family in temporary accommodation but added that in some

circumstances people have made themselves homeless on purpose having regard to the order of priority in the Council's allocation scheme. Ms. Phillips added that vulnerable people are looked after. Ms. Phillips stated that an unprecedented number of families were displaced by Notice to Quits being given.

Cllr. Stephen Keary enquired about two houses bought in Askeaton by the Council and subsequently sold to developers. Ms. Curley advised that that properties were disposed of by the Rural, Community and Culture Development Directorate and not the Housing Directorate. Ms. Curley stated that the properties were refurbished under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) and the Council are here to implement Government Policy.

April SPC meeting date Thursday, 11th April 2024.

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

END OF MEETING