

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 11th April 2024 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. Sharon Benson, Cllr. Joe Leddin, Cllr. Conor Sheehan, Cllr. Brigid Teefy, Cllr. Sean Hartigan, Cllr. Adam Teskey, Cllr. Mike Donegan, Cllr. Sarah Kiely, Cllr. Tom Collopy, Ms. Una Burns, Ms. Martina Brennan, Mr. Mike McNamara, Mr. P.J O'Grady, Ms. Siobhan Reidy.

In Attendance:

Ms. Caroline Curley, Director of Service
Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer, Housing Support Services
Ms. Sarah Newell, Senior Executive Officer, Housing Strategy
Mr. Brendan Kidney, Senior Engineer, Housing Construction & Maintenance
Ms. Gillian McNamara, Administrative Officer, Housing Strategy
Ms. Miriam Donnelly, Administrative Officer, Housing Construction
Mr. Sean Nash, Executive Engineer, Housing Construction
Mr. Eamon Franklin, Staff Officer, Housing Construction
Ms. Amanda Glasper, Clerical Officer, Housing Strategy
Mr. Brian Bourke, Executive Engineer, Housing Maintenance
Mr. Joe Delaney, Director of Service, Regeneration
Ms. Jennifer Browne, Staff Officer, Housing Strategy
Ms. Jurate Andrijauskienė, Staff Officer, Housing Strategy
Mr. Rory Culhane, Staff Officer, Housing Strategy
Ms. Jeannine Butler, A/ Assistant Staff Officer, Housing Strategy
Mr. Liam Dooley, Clerical Officer, Housing Strategy
Ms. Eileen Liston, Clerical Officer Housing Strategy
Mr. Joe McDonald, Senior Staff Officer, Housing Support Services
Mr. Noel Lindsay, Clerical Officer, Housing Strategy

Apologies: Cllr. Fergus Kilcoyne, Cllr. Catherine Slattery, Cllr. James Collins, Cllr. Eddie Ryan, Mr. Patrick English, Ms Anne Cronin.

Welcome by Chairperson – Cllr. Stephen Keary

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary opened the meeting and welcomed all members to the April SPC meeting and welcomed Martina Brennan, Sectorial Representative on the replacing of Tracy McElligott.

Item 1: Confirm minutes from meeting held on 22nd February 2024

Proposed: Cllr. Tom Collopy **Seconded:** Cllr. Sharon Benson

Item 2: Matters arising from the Minutes

No matters arising from previous minutes.

Item 3: Housing – Digital Transformations

Ms. Miriam Donnelly, Administrative Officer, Housing gave a presentation on “Digital Transformations”

The presentation was well received by the committee.

A discussion took place. Cllr. Sean Hartigan welcomed any I.T. system that improves efficiency and asked, will it be used for planned or response maintenance when the issue arises and surveying all council houses for issues and is there a cost for implementing this system and where does the money come from.

Ms. Miriam Donnelly replied that there is a licensing cost, there is also an element of training for any new system. Ms Donnelly reiterated that it's clear that that systems have to be very user friendly.

Mr. Brendan Kidney, Senior Engineer added, a stock survey of all the Council's stock is being undertaken which will identify the various issues. It will record an expected lifetime frame on approximately 6,000 LCCC houses and it will take approximately two years to complete. In the long term it will make things more efficient.

Cllr. Sarah Kiely added the I.T. system is a welcome addition and asked about windows and doors upgrades and how will it schedule what happens and will priority be given to people in older properties, is there a grading system going to be applied for the backlog and are regeneration areas going to be dealt with.

Mr. Kidney replied regarding the information at present on iHouse, this survey should help it. Limerick City and County Council (LCCC) have looked at other counties and it has been very effective. Older housing estates will be looked at first and Regeneration properties will also be included and in the stock survey.

Cllr. Sharon Benson asked, is this an application for engineers to carry out a physical inspection and input the details. In reply Ms. Donnelly answered, yes correct and details are recorded in real time.

Cllr. Conor Sheahan welcomed the new system and asked, are LCCC going to come back to the SPC members regularly to report on the performance especially in terms of the aging property stock and how long it's taking to action and see where the short comes may be in terms or going back to the department.

Mr. Kidney responded that he could come back to the October SPC to provide an update on how things are going. The system is been rolled out nationally and rollout commenced in the last few months. He indicated how a survey of gas boilers in the city had commenced and this already was showing the state of the issues arising and what challenges are ahead.

Cllr. Stephen Keary added that the BER rating should also be carried out as part of the initial survey of those houses and queried the cost planning for the future.

Mr. Kidney answered that LCCC are in the process of tendering the stock condition survey at the moment.

Item 4: Defective Concrete Block Schemes

Mr Sean Nash, Executive Engineer, Housing gave a presentation on “Defective Concrete Block Schemes”.

The presentation was well received by the committee.

A discussion took place. Cllr. Keary asked, 1) if a house is condemned and is going to be demolished, when the contractor is appointed, will there be stage payments to the owner 2) Regarding the valuation, are the Department the final assessors, as in what is validation process, what is it based on, is it the reports accordingly 3) Does the Homeowner have to wait until fully approved before it engages with a contractor 4) Regarding full demolition, does the house have to be re-built in the same footprint.

Mr. Nash responded as follows: 1) yes stage payments are built into the scheme, when work is done a claim can be submitted. 2) It would be a mixture, of reports and the Housing Agency would send out their own technical staff. If the initial application demonstrates there is enough damage done to the property, it would be accepted into the scheme, and the Housing Agency would be arranging coring and testing at a later date. Possibly 6-month time frame from coring and results coming back at this stage. 3) yes, would be advised to wait until approval. 4) Yes, the house has to be built in the same outer look and layout.

Mr. PJ O’Grady, sectorial representative asked if total re-build is needed, is the onus on the owners to get contractor. In reply, Mr. Nash, stated the applicant would have to organise consulting engineer and their own contractor.

Cllr. Keary, enquired regarding associated costs outside of construction, is everything reimbursed and what about the cost of oversight. In reply, Mr. Nash further clarified that the applicant would have to pay upfront, and this is reclaimable. The works in relation to coring and other inspections is covered by the Housing Agency. Mr. Nash also added that the cost of oversight is included in the grant.

Cllr. Tom Collopy, asked re. physicality, if the inner wall is damaged, that it may not require replacing. Mr. Nash replied that they see from other counties the outer walls show damage first, then the inner walls start giving trouble, depends on what the Housing Agency decide. Samples are taken from inner walls and outer walls and rising walls to see what is taking most of the damage.

Cllr. Keary asked in the case of partial reconstruction, it may be difficult to access the costing and is there an allowance for contingency. Mr. Nash responded with that replacing a gable wall, it is based on the area of the wall itself, there are different rates and everything should be included by one rate.

Item 5: Housing Delivery Action Plan – Progress to Date

Ms. Sarah Newell, Senior Executive Officer, Housing Support Services gave a presentation on “Housing Delivery Action Plan”.

The presentation was well received by the committee.

A discussion took place. Cllr. Kiely wanted flagged 1) acquisitions, tenant in situ Notice to Quit (NTQ) programme and finding a bit of a gap and delay on confirmation 2) being referred to the Homeless Action Team within a week and the need to look at this as a Housing Authority 3) an update on the Land Development Authority (LDA), how many planning permissions, where are we in relation to the Metropolitan area and looking at LCCC developing Guinness site or with an Approved Housing Body (AHB).

Ms. Newell in reply 1) If a housing issue comes to any elected member, alert the Housing Strategy team immediately, the process comes into effect straightaway, there is a deadline date on NTQ's, but there is an administration inspection stage which takes 4 weeks, LCCC are trying to work with landlords if the date passes the NTQ expiry date. There is a large case load at present, 3-4 weeks for the process to offer a price to the landlord. 2) Ms. Newell replied, can look at that internally and touch base. 3). Regarding the LDA, is Ms Newell advised she is not aware of an AHB for the Guinness site. She further advised that LCCC are working with the LDA and will have update regarding Careys road site in the near future. She indicated that going to planning process next year for the overall Colbert Quarter masterplan was being examined.

Cllr. Joe Leddin queried whether the figures as presented included Affordable Housing numbers for Mungret site and indicated that he considered there to be major issues with LDA delivery.

Cllr. Leddin Formally proposed that LDA be invited to present at SPC to get detailed breakdown per site and timeframe.

Proposed: Cllr Joe Leddin

Seconded: Cllr. Tom Collopy

Cllr. Benson queried the most recent report on housing delivery and the indicated shortfall of 1100 Cllr. Benson, also wanted to express the frustration re. LDA. She enquired whether LDA figures are included in the figures.

Ms. Newell in reply indicated in terms of LDA that LCCC are counting 81 units in The Mills, Castletroy as cost rental and counting the Guinness site as 270 units cost rental in partnership with the LDA. She indicated that this may change depending on design team. Ms Newell went on to clarify, in terms of the approved pipeline figures in today's presentation that these are the figures as given in the quarterly updates to Districts. Todays figures also included projects in the pipeline and this explains the increase. She went on to state that there is a limited amount of land banks owned by the Council. We are looking to buy land., but majority of social housing is private land via turnkeys or with the AHB sector. Target 60% New build by LCCC and 40% New build with private land/private developers.

Cllr. Sheehan was in agreement with Cllr. Leddin in relation to the LDA. Ms. Newell in reply added that the issue between the LDA and the ESB was between them. LCCC have interaction on the Guinness site as LCCC own the land.

Cllr. Keary added that since the inception of the LDA no houses have been built in Limerick. Cllr. Keary asked re. Different houses in different locations around the county and stated he would have reservations in some of the areas as there is limited infrastructure and utilities in these areas. There is also a huge figure for Newcastle West which is at capacity. Have LCCC all the assessments done with Uisce Éireann that x number of houses can be built at these locations, is there sufficient water and sewer supply there and is there capacity for example in Croom.

Ms. Newell replied there is a connection agreement for Croom site for affordable housing. In terms of settlements with wastewater capacity LCCC have looked to buy existing connections, new builds will not work in certain settlements so there is a particular focus on buying existing houses.

Ms. Caroline Curley, Director of Service, added that LCCC are not responsible for Uisce Éireann. Regarding the Housing Delivery Action Plan, LCCC work with the targets as given by the DHLGH and it is based on applications for housing. The Plan was drawn up and was discussed and approved by members. She advised that circumstances change over time depending on infrastructure. LCCC can only plan what we know about and move forward.

Item 6: AOB

Ms. Curley reminded members about the Modular Housing Trip to Lucan on 19th April 2024 and to confirm attendance with Housing Strategy as soon as possible.

The meeting noted that Ms. Triona O'Connor, Administrative Officer, Homeless Action Team was departing the Council and members of the SPC wished to express their thanks to Ms. O'Connor, for her dedicated work in a challenging environment.

Ms. Curley wanted to add her thanks to Ms. Triona O'Connor for all her hard work and also updated the group on the departure of and thanked Ms. Helen Creed and Ms. Martina Frawley on their dedication and hard work. Ms. Curley also welcomed Ms. Gillian McNamara, Administrative Officer.

Next SPC meeting date Thursday, 30th May 2024

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

END OF MEETING