

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 **24th April 2025** in the Council Chamber, Dooradoyle and via MS Teams.

In Attendance: An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary

SPC Members Present: Cllr. Catherine Slattery, Cllr. Sharon Benson, Cllr. Adam Teskey, Cllr. Sarah Beasley, Cllr. Abul Kalam Azad Talukder, Cllr. Noreen Stokes, Cllr. Tommy O'Sullivan, Cllr. Maria Donoghue, Cllr. Elisa O'Donovan, Cllr. Sarah Kiely, Cllr. Joe Leddin, Cllr. Ger Ward, Mr. Sean Golden, Ms. Una Burns.

In Attendance:

Mr. Brian Kennedy, Director of Housing
Mr. Declan White, Director of Services, Regeneration, Sports and Recreation
Ms. Sarah Newell, Senior Executive Officer, Housing
Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer, Housing
Ms. Patricia Phillips, A/Senior Executive Officer, Housing
Mr. Brendan Kidney, Senior Engineer, Housing
Ms. Kathy O'Grady, Administrative Officer, Housing
Ms. Miriam Donnelly, Administrative Officer, Housing
Ms Elizabeth Rea, Administrative Officer, Housing
Mr. James Hayes, Administrative Officer, Housing
Mr. Ryan McCreanor, Social Care Worker, Housing Welfare and Traveller Accommodation
Ms. Niamh O'Brien, Staff Officer, Housing
Mr. Rory Culhane, Staff Officer, Housing
Ms. Aisling Meaney, Assistant Staff Officer, Housing
Mr. Liam Dooley, Clerical Officer, Housing
Ms. Amanda Glasper, Clerical Officer, Housing
Ms. Melissa Lynch, Clerical Officer, Housing
Cllr. Bridie Collins

Apologies: Cllr. Francis Foley, Cllr. Tom Ruddle, Cllr. Frankie Daly, Ms. Toyin Salmon, Mr. PJ O'Grady, Ms. Carol McNamara.

Welcome by Chairperson – Cllr. Stephen Keary

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in the chamber and online.

Item 1: Confirm minutes from meeting held on 13th March 2025

Proposed: Cllr. Joe Leddin

Seconded: Cllr. Noreen Stokes

Item 2: Matters arising from the Minutes

No matters arising from previous minutes.

Item 3: Presentation on Traveller Accommodation Programme

Ryan McCreanor, Social Worker, Housing Welfare and Traveller Accommodation presented on the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

The presentation was well received by the committee.

Cllr. Stephen Keary looked for an update on proposals for the Rathkeale area. Ms. Phillips explained they were working with the National Boys School and the residents on the Butchers Field project. This programme could potentially be completed by Q3 this year. Ms. Phillips stated the programme would be opened up to the schools and stated it is not just for the sports but would also cater to other recreations in the area.

Item 4: Changes to Limerick City and County Allocation Scheme 2021 – Rightsizing Scheme:

Sarah Newell, Senior Executive Officer, Housing presented on the changes to Limerick City and County Councils Allocation Scheme 2021 in relation to Private Rightsizing.

Cllr. Catherine Slattery fully supported the amendment and said it is vital for people in the community to keep this scheme operating.

Cllr. Sharon Benson thanked Ms. Newell for the presentation and queried why the new amendment did not require a private homeowner to sell their house to the Council.

Ms. Newell advised that the Department Circular Housing 11/2025 issued in April 2025 does not allow for private rightsizing and that amending the allocation scheme would allow for private rightsizing to continue in the interim. Ms Newell stated that commitments were made for schemes such as Woodlawn to have private rightsizing units and amending the allocation scheme will also keep those commitments to be kept.

Mr. Sean Golden questioned how many people availed of the Private Rightsizing scheme and if the units did not proceed as rightsizing units would it have an impact on tenure mix?

Ms. Newell mentioned that there were 7 schemes to date and approximately 20 properties have been allocated under those schemes. Ms Newell also stated that even though private rightsizers would be private tenants they are counted as social housing with regards to tenure mix. Ms Newell outlined that there are 240 households on private rightsizing register of interest list.

Cllr. Stephen Keary asked if we can ensure that the person who is selling the property can only sell to someone with a housing need.

Ms. Newell said that we can suggest that the seller sells to a First Time Buyer, but we would not be able to control this as they are selling on the private market.

Cllr. Sharon Benson advised that she is happy to support the changes on temporary basis.

Cllr. Maria Donoghue asked to confirm how anyone interested would access Private Rightsizing schemes. Ms. Newell explained that we have a register of interested applicants and when a scheme goes live all interested applicants will be notified. She also outlined that the Council would advertise current schemes across all our social media platforms and that the Elected Members would also be notified prior to launch dates.

On the proposal of Cllr. Noreen Stokes seconded by Cllr. Catherine Slattery it was agreed to bring the recommendation for Changes to Limerick City and County Allocation Scheme 2021 – Rightsizing Scheme to Full Council.

Proposed: Cllr. Noreen Stokes **Seconded:** Cllr. Catherine Slattery

Item 5: Autism Working Group update.

Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer, Housing gave an update on the working group and advised that she is working closely with Cllr. Sharon Benson on same. The decision was made that the Autism Working Group would be set up as a subgroup of the Housing Disability Steering Group.

Ms Hayes outlined that the next steps in the process are to finalise the scope of the proposed working group and carry out a stakeholder mapping exercise to ensure the right groups would be invited on to the group.

The next Housing Disability Steering Group Meeting is 15th of May and Ms Hayes will give an overview of the proposed scope at this meeting.

Item 6: Notice of Motion

Notice of Motion submitted by the Municipal District of Adare-Rathkeale - Councillors K. Sheahan (Proposer}, B. Collins, S. Keary, E. O'Brien, J. O'Donoghue, A. Teskey

We will move at the next Meeting if a recipient of carers allowance is living with elderly parents who are in receipt of the old age pension, their carers allowance adds to the rent of the social house they are living in. We believe that this should be addressed by the Elected Members and the extra charge on the rent account that is now incurred should be removed as we consider this to be unfair and unjust.

Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer, Housing responded mentioning that Adare/Rathkeale and Full Council were given a response at previous meetings. She outlined that a preliminary exercise had been carried out to determine the potential loss of rental income from Carer's Allowances which equates to approximately €1.8 million for social housing tenants. Any downward adjustment to the income criteria would have an inevitable impact on the level of services that the Council can provide.

It is expected that further guidance will be provided by the Minister on the harmonisation of local authority rents, including a set of standardised income disregards, while retaining the general principle of rents being related to household income. In the light of the foregoing, it was recommended that this motion be put on hold pending the outcome of the exercise currently being undertaken by the Minister, until national guidance is available.

The members outlined that it is unfair to include carers allowance as income in determining differential rent and felt as though the National Review would take too long and asked if clarity could be sought on a timeline for the review. Ms. Hayes said that she will write to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to query how long it may take to review.

Cllr. Adam Teskey queried if the Efficiencies Officer had been appointed, as they may be able to look at where money could be saved if this motion was passed. Mr. Brian Kennedy, Director of Service stated that he would look for an update on same.

On the proposal of Cllr. Adam Teskey seconded by Cllr. Elisa O' Donovan it was agreed to seek an update on where the rent review is at present and when the timeline would be for completion.

Proposed: Cllr. Adam Teskey **Seconded** Cllr. Elisa O' Donovan

Item 7: AOB

Cllr. Maria Donoghue queried who the contact person was to add an item to the agenda for future meetings.

Kathy O'Grady, Administrative Officer, Housing advised that members could contact her 2 weeks in advance of the SPC meeting to add items to the agenda.

Next meeting date Thursday, 26th June 2025

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

END OF MEETING