

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 9th October 2025 in the Council Chamber, Dooradoyle and via MS Teams.

In Attendance: An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary

SPC Members Present: Cllr. Catherine Slattery, Cllr. Sarah Beasley, Cllr. Azad Talukder, Cllr. Francis Foley, Cllr. Noreen Stokes, Cllr. Elisa O'Donovan, Cllr. Sharon Benson, Cllr. Adam Teskey, Cllr. Maria O'Donoghue, Cllr. Sarah Kiely, Cllr. Tom Ruddle, Cllr. Ger Ward, Cllr. Tommy O'Sullivan, Cllr. Joe Leddin, Ms. Una Byrnes.

In Attendance:

Ms. Sarah Newell, Acting Director of Service, Housing Directorate
Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer, Housing Support Services
Mr. Brendan Kidney, Senior Engineer, LA Housing Construction and Maintenance
Ms. Patricia Phillips, A/Head of Unit for Housing Welfare & Traveller Accommodation
Ms. Kathy O'Grady, Administrative Officer, Strategy and non LA housing Construction
Mr. James Hayes, Administrative Officer, Strategy and non LA housing Construction
Mr. Neal Boyle, Senior Executive Engineer, LA Housing Construction and Maintenance
Mr. Joe McDonald, Administrative Officer, Housing Support Services
Ms. Gillian McNamara, Administrative Officer,
Mr. Rory Culhane, Staff Officer, Strategy and non LA Housing Construction
Ms. Elizabeth Rea, Administrative Officer, Housing Support Services
Ms. Noelle Ryan, Senior Staff Officer, Housing Support Services
Ms. Amanda Glasper, Clerical Officer, Strategy and non LA Housing Construction
Ms. Karen HcHugh, CEO, Safe Home Ireland
Cllr. Dan McSweeney
Cllr. Shane Hickey, O'Mara
Cllr. Joe Pond
Mr. David Hurley, Digital Content Hub & Academy

Apologies: Mayor John Moran

Welcome by Chairperson – Cllr. Stephen Keary

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary opened the meeting and welcomed members to the October SPC meeting and advised sectoral members to nominate a substitute if they are unable to attend meetings.

Item 1: Confirm minutes from meeting held on 26th June 2025

Proposed: Cllr. Adam Teskey

Seconded: Cllr. Elisa O'Donovan

Item 2: Matters arising from the Minutes

Cllr. Sarah Kiely and Cllr. Stephen Keary asked for clarification regarding SMART Housing in relation

to the last meeting.

Ms. Sarah Newell, Acting Director of Service gave an update on SMART Housing to members. Cllr. Sarah Kiely asked if a business case had been made to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and also queried if the expenditure from the allocation from the Mayors budget had been spent?

Ms. Sarah Newell in reply stated that the KPMG preliminary business case is completed and has been submitted to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in May of this year. Ms Newell outlined that there is a revenue and capital budget for the Smart Housing Programme. Ms Newell outlined that the revenue budget allocation for 2025 has been fully expended and the capital budget is underspent due to some delays in advancing the programme.

Item 3: Safe Home Ireland

Ms. Karen McHugh, CEO, Safe Home Ireland, gave a presentation on Safe Home Ireland. Ms McHugh gave a brief overview on the charity and explained that Safe Home Ireland supports older Irish born people to return home to live in Ireland. Ms Mc McHugh outlined that they are asking all local authorities including Limerick City and County Council to consider the allocation of one housing unit per year to a Safe Home Ireland Housing Applicant approved on the Local Authority housing waiting list.

The Presentation was well received by members.

Cllr. O'Donovan queried if applicants must be Irish born or could they be second generation Irish? Ms. McHugh clarified that applicants must be born in Ireland.

Ms Mary Hayes outlined that she would arrange a meeting with Housing Allocations and Assessments teams with Safe Home Ireland with a view to review to amend the allocations scheme so that this group could be identified as a priority group. Ms. Sarah Newell A/Director of Service added that Safe Home Ireland can be added to the work programme in the new year to revise the Allocations Scheme and to bring back to a future SPC and refer on to Full Council.

Proposed: Cllr. Stephen Keary

Seconded: Cllr. Elisa O'Donovan

Item 4: Update on Second Hand Acquisition funding

Ms. Kathy O'Grady, Administrative Officer, gave an update on Second Hand Acquisition funding.

Ms. Sarah Newell clarified that Limerick City & County Council (LCCC) had a meeting with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) this week and stressed the need to fund refurbishments as part of the programme.

Ms Newell outlined that the extra allocation of funding was being used to purchase vacant houses and that the Housing Team were trying to match these properties with those that have received Notice to Quits. Cllr. Benson proposed to write to the DHLGH to ask if funding for refurbishments can be included for Tenant in Situ acquisitions. Ms Newell outlined that when further funding and guidance is announced for 2026 that this item will be brought back to the SPC members to agree on how to spend that allocation.

Proposed: Cllr. Sharon Benson

Seconded: Cllr. Elisa O'Donovan

Item 5: Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors S. Kiely and D. McSweeney (to be referred to the Home and Social Development Strategic Policy Committee)

"We will move at the next meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick that we examine the rollout of a Home Improvement Grant Scheme for Social Housing Tenants of Limerick City and County Council in advance of Budget 2026"

Response to this motion was given in the presentation of the Proposed Home Improvement Scheme by Mr Neal Boyle.

Item 6: Presentation on Proposed Home Improvement Scheme

Mr. Neal Boyle gave a presentation on the Proposed Home Improvement Scheme. He outlined that the grant scheme will be available to Limerick City and County Council tenants towards the cost of maintenance and upgrades of their rented properties.

Cllr. Ruddle asked if applicants would need to pay up front first and recoup the grant afterwards Mr. Neal in reply, stated it's possible but that they would need to review the process before the scheme is launched.

Cllr. McSweeney also stated that a lot of tenants would not have the funds to fund the work up front and may need to get loans. He advised that the Housing Aid schemes were a good template that could be replicated for this scheme. Cllr McSweeney suggested that the grant scheme should be a 75% grant for the first year to ensure a large uptake of the scheme.

Mr. Brendan Kidney updated members that they are preparing the proposed home improvement scheme budget for inclusion in the 2026 budget and will revert to the members with more details on the scheme after Budget 2026 has been approved.

Item 7: Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor S. Beasley (to be referred to the Home and Social Development Strategic Policy Committee)

"I will move at the next Meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick that Limerick City and County Council remove the 2-year waiting time for getting on the housing transfer list for those in exceptional circumstances or where the circumstances of the family have taken a drastic change"

Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer gave the response to members. The response outlined in order to qualify for a transfer a tenant will need to ensure compliance with the following requirements:-

- Lived in property for at least 2 years
- A history of no rent arrears
- No history of anti-social behaviour

- Home has been kept in good condition

As outlined above tenants are not ordinarily eligible to make a transfer application where they have been a tenant for less than 2 years, however in exceptional circumstances Limerick City and County Council may consider a transfer application for tenancies under 2 years. In these exceptional cases the tenant will need to provide documentary evidence/supporting information detailing the reason they cannot live in the property and wish to apply for a transfer.

Proposed: Cllr. Sarah Beasley

Seconded: Elisa O'Donovan

Item 8: Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors J. Pond and C. Slattery

"We will move at the next meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick that should a downsizing property becomes available that the property is used for downsizing again and not put back into the social housing stock."

Ms. Kathy O'Grady, Administrative Officer gave a response to members to the above. It was agreed in the immediate term to deliver rightsizing in perpetuity on Local Authority owned stock. Ms. Sarah Newell outlined that the team will provide updates going forward of rightsizing lettings made when voids relating to older persons accommodation appear. It was also agreed that the team will reengage with the SPC members when a National Rightsizing scheme is announced.

Ms. Newell outlined that the Council is now requested to consider this policy change and allow rightsizing on Local Authority owned stock that are designated by way of Order for rightsizing purposes.

Cllr. Slattery added that she would welcome the above proposal.

Proposed Cllr. Tom Ruddle

Seconded Cllr. Noreen Stokes

Item 9: Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor S. Hickey-O'Mara (to be referred to Home and Social Development Strategic Policy Committee)

"I will move at the next Meeting of Limerick City and County Council that this Council formally declares a Student Housing Emergency in Limerick and commits to convening a Student Housing Taskforce in partnership with local Students' Unions, local third-level institutions, approved housing bodies, and relevant Council departments, with the aim of: (i) Acknowledging the acute shortage of affordable and suitable accommodation for students attending third-level institutions in Limerick; (ii) Identifying Council-owned or privately owned land suitable for student housing; (iii) Exploring opportunities for cost-rental, or cooperative models of development; (iv) Removing planning or zoning barriers where appropriate for the construction of student housing".

Cllr Hickey O' Mara gave an overview on his Notice of Motion to the members. The members discussed and supported this motion. Ms Newell outlined that the affordable team will work with third level institutions in identifying council owned land for student accommodation.

Mr. James Hayes, Administrative Officer gave a response to members. Limerick City and County Council's Housing Directorate will seek to progress work on development of student housing initiatives to address the student housing shortage in conjunction with other partners such as 3rd level institutions. The first step will be to establish an Expression of Interest process to seek operators to consider developing student and other housing tenures on Council owned land. We will aim to publish this before the end of 2025 and advise the SPC members of that outcome.

Item 10: Introduction of Charges for Homeless Private Emergency Accommodation Services

Ms. Mary Hayes gave an overview and Mr. Joe McDonald gave a presentation on the changes for Homeless Private Emergency Accommodation Services. Mr McDonald outlined that Limerick City and County Council intends to commence charging clients who are placed in homeless private emergency accommodation. He outlined the rationale for introducing these charges and highlighted the benefits to clients in introducing these charges and stated that there would be a detailed assessment done on each family and poverty proofed before any charges are implemented.

The members welcomed the informative presentation. Cllr. O'Donovan queried as to when the charges would be introduced. Mr McDonald, in reply stated that the charges are hoped to be rolled out in 2026.

Next SPC meeting date Thursday, 4th December 2025

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

END OF MEETING