

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL HOME AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SPC

A Special meeting of Limerick City and County Council, Home and Social Development Strategic Policy Committee was held on the 28th of May 2026 in the Council Chamber, Merchants Quay and via MS Teams.

In Attendance: An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary

SPC Members Present: Cllr. Sharon Benson, Cllr. Catherine Slattery, Cllr. Sarah Beasley, Cllr. Sarah Kiely, Cllr. Tom Ruddle, Cllr. Maria Donoghue, Cllr. Frankie Daly, Cllr. Elisa O'Donovan, Mr. Michael Joyce, Ms. Eileen Irwin, Mr. Sean Golden

In Attendance:

Mr. John Moran, Mayor

Mr. Vincent Murray, Director of Service, Housing

Ms. Sarah Newell, Senior Executive Officer, Housing Strategy and Mixed-Tenure Partnership Unit

Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer, Housing Support Services

Ms. Kathy O'Grady, Administrative Officer, Housing Strategy and Mixed-Tenure Partnership Unit

Mr. David O'Grady, Administrative Officer, Housing Strategy and Mixed-Tenure Partnership Unit

Mr. Brendan Kidney, Senior Engineer, LA Housing Construction and Maintenance

Ms. Patricia Phillips, Head of Unit for Housing Welfare and Traveller Accommodation

Ms. Miriam Donnelly, Administrative Officer, LA Housing Construction & Maintenance

Mr. Darragh Quinn, Executive Architect, Housing Strategy and Mixed-Tenure Partnership Unit

Ms. Mairead Sayers, A/Project Manager, Housing Strategy and Mixed-Tenure Partnership Unit

Ms. Clare O'Callaghan, A/Project Manager, Housing Strategy and Mixed-Tenure Partnership Unit

Mr. Rory Culhane, Staff Officer, Housing Strategy and Mixed-Tenure Partnership Unit

Ms. Melissa Lynch, Clerical Officer, Housing Strategy and Mixed-Tenure Partnership Unit

Ms. Zara Daly, Clerical Officer, Housing Strategy and Mixed-Tenure Partnership Unit

Mr. Matthew Fenlon, Corporate and Customer Service

Mr. Alan Jacques, Limerick Post

Cllr. Dan McSweeney

Welcome by Chairperson – Cllr. Stephen Keary

An Cathaoirleach Cllr Stephen Keary opened the meeting and welcomed the members to the Special SPC meeting on SMART Housing.

SMART: Affordable Rental for Key Workers

Mr. Moran explained that SMART Housing was intended to deal with the cohort of those looking for rental and affordable homes.

The affordable rental housing, Mr. Moran explained, was not designed for profit but to provide rental security on a not-for-profit basis. In using land that Limerick City and County Council already own, this would take out the cost of land recovery intervention and the high costs in rent that would be required to cover the cost to large investment funds and landlords. Affordable rental housing provision based on the Vienna model would determine the cost of rental by the cost of build, maintenance and insurance over a 40-year period, ensuring that it is a not-for-profit scheme. Limerick City and County Council social housing falls within the 1st to 4th decile for income and affordability, with a disposable income of under €42,238. Within the 5th decile—broadly aligned with the state cost rental cohort – the maximum income being €59,000 net. In contrast, households typically between the 6th and 10th decile are locked out of the rental market due to a lack of supply.

Mr. Moran highlighted that higher-paying households compete within the same rental market, thereby crowding out those on lower incomes.

To address this imbalance, there is a need for targeted intervention across the income deciles to rebalance the system and improve overall rental affordability in Limerick. Mr. Moran stated that to deliver affordable rental, over 12,000 new homes are needed to meet the additional demand generated by the current HNDA 2022-2026.

Key Workers are defined as ‘an employee who provides a vital service for the local community and wider society, especially in areas of (including but not limited to); public safety, healthcare, education, transport, law and order and infrastructure’. This is on foot of a precedent scheme for affordable rental delivered by Clúid Housing at Boland Mills in Dublin.

Mr. Moran further emphasised, if Limerick were to take the 200+ units that the Land Development Agency are developing at the Former Gasworks site and at the length of time to get it ready for housing, Limerick would need 14 of those schemes every year to meet delivery targets. The housing challenge in Limerick is showing an imbalanced supply based on the surge of sharing arrangements. Rents have risen with an average cost of €2,100 per month for a 2-bed unit, that this is at the top end of the scale, which is distorting the value of a 2-bed, Mr. Moran stated. A Limerick Chamber survey found that only 15% of rentals were apartments, with 69% of those were room for rent. Mr. Moran believes that people will leave Limerick if a solution is not found, affecting the City’s economic competitiveness.

Mr. Moran discussed the Four Pillars of the Affordable Rental Delivery Programme.

- Speed: Faster delivery of much needed homes using Modern Methods of Construction.

- Value: it is a better use of public money as rents cover the costs and maintenance with non-profit margins.
- Sustainability: through A-rated performance by reduced construction waste.
- Proof Based: it has been used elsewhere in Europe successfully.

These MMC (Modern Methods of Construction) enables multi-unit apartments as permanent homes built to NSAI standards with a lifespan of 60 years, in line with current legislation. The Mayor recognised the versatility of these units in that they could be moved up to two times during their lifespan – if required.

Mr. Moran went on to discuss strategic locations that have been chosen, Mungret (the Pathfinder) and Whitecross Gardens. These locations are designed to be near jobs and public transport, on lands owned by Limerick City and County Council.

After the presentation, An Cathaoirleach opened a questions and answers session to the floor.

Cllr O'Donovan requested clarification on the term 'Pathfinder', how Limerick was receiving the funding to deliver this programme, and what is the current hold up in delivering the units. Mr. Moran explained that the term 'Pathfinder' was suggested in lieu of 'Pilot' as the expression tends towards useful insight gained during the lifetime of the project. In response to the second query, which several of the SPC member raised their concern on, Mr. Moran outlined the possible funding streams available to finance the construction of these units:

- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to help fund the Pathfinder project in Mungret.
- The Government would borrow the funds from the HFA/EIB and Limerick City and County Council would pay this back with rental income.
- Limerick City and County Council could consider setting up their own municipal housing agency.
- Mixed financing model where Limerick City & County Council borrow funds to manage a large portfolio and apply for government grant/subsidy funding.

Regarding the delays in the delivering the SMART homes project, Mr. Moran mentioned that the SMART Housing team were required to conduct a number of studies to ensure compliance with planning and funding regimes.

Cllr Benson questioned the fire safety regulations of the project and how we are marketing this project to people who would prefer a different housing solution. Mr Darragh Quinn, Executive Architect, stated that the proposed apartment units will be no different to traditional apartment blocks in that they must comply with safety regulations and NSAI Standards to be issued with the relevant certifications and meet the requirements of DHLGH.

Mr. Moran explained that if the units did not have the minimum durability of 60 years, they would not be approved by the DHLGH for planning stage approval. Mr. Moran went on to respond to the second query, noting that we are not diverting housing delivery in other area, instead we are

delivering a separate programme using public land which does not reduce housing opportunities for others in the area.

Cllr S. Kiely thanked the Mayor for the informative presentation delivered and raised a number of queries they hoped to gain answers to:

- How are the Key Workers to be assessed?
- What is the cost per unit for the modular homes?
- Would Limerick 2030 be the landlord?
- What are the issues the project is coming up against with planning permission?
- What is the density of the Mungret site?

Ms. Sarah Newell, Senior Executive Officer, responded that tried and tested measures would be used to assess Key Workers, such as 'first come, first eligible', or a lottery system. Ms. Newell followed on that the cost per unit is currently under a preliminary business case and the aggregate cost to deliver submitted with the QS was comparable to traditional build equivalent including the additional communal space (lounge/gym/activity). The key advantage with this programme is speed of delivery compared to traditional.

Cllr Donoghue questioned if the units are fixed or can they be adapted to house people with disabilities and can the occupants extend the lease on these units. Mr. Moran replied that the proposed units will comply with planning and building regulations and the Mungret site specifically is fully accessible on the ground floor. The Mayor noted that the tenants would only be issued a Notice to Quit (NTQ) on the grounds that they are not complying with their Residential Tenancy Agreement.

Cllr McSweeney requested permission to speak to the meeting as he is not a member of the Home and Social Development SPC and had a comment to add. Cllr McSweeney stated that the meeting in relation to the SMART Housing should have been opened to all Councillors to widen the scope of discussion. Cllr. Stephen Keary responded that as the project is a policy matter at this stage and it must be first discussed at the relevant SPC before going to the Corporate Policy Group for consideration. Cllr. Keary noted that following this, information would be circulated to the Councillors should the project be approved. Currently, SMART Homes is in proposal stage.

Cllr McSweeney expressed his frustration that the project was not discussed at the Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning SPC when the construction of MMC units falls under its remit. An Cathaoirleach Cllr. Keary replied that items added to the agenda of an SPC would be at the discretion of the SPC's Members and Chairperson of that SPC.

Next SPC meeting date Thursday, 25th June 2026

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

END OF MEETING