

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 25th of June 2026 in the Council Chamber, Dooradoyle and via MS Teams.

In Attendance: An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary

SPC Members Present: Cllr. Sharon Benson, Cllr. Sarah Beasley, Cllr. Sarah Kiely, Cllr. Tom Ruddle, Cllr. Adam Teskey, Cllr. Azad Talukder, Cllr. Francis Foley, Cllr. Noreen Stokes, Cllr. Catherine Slattery, Cllr. Frankie Daly, Cllr. Elisa O'Donovan, Mr. Michael Joyce, Ms. Eileen Irwin

In Attendance:

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

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

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

Ms. Gillian McNamara, Administrative Officer, LA Housing Construction & Maintenance

Mr. Neal Boyle, Senior Executive Officer, LA Housing Construction and Maintenance

Mr. Diarmuid Conway, A/Executive Quantity Surveyor, Housing Strategy and Mixed-Tenure Partnership Unit

Ms. Aoife O'Brien Slater, Administrative Officer, Housing Support Services

Mr. Joe McDonald, Administrative Officer, Housing Support Services

Ms. Norma Purtill, Administrative Officer, Housing Support Services

Ms. Fiona Costelloe, Staff Officer, Housing Support Services

Ms. Jennifer Browne, Senior Staff Officer, Housing Strategy and Mixed-Tenure Partnership Unit

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

Ms. Niamh O'Brien, Staff Officer, Housing Strategy and Mixed-Tenure Partnership Unit

Ms. Amanda Glasper, Assistant Staff officer, Housing Strategy and Mixed-Tenure Partnership Unit

Ms. Orla Ryan, Assistant 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. Liam Dooley, Clerical Officer, Housing Strategy and Mixed-Tenure Partnership Unit

Mr. Alan Jacques, Limerick Post

Cllr. Dan McSweeney

Apologies: Cllr. Maria Donoghue, Ms. Una Byrnes

Welcome by Chairperson – Cllr. Stephen Keary

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary opened the meeting and welcomed the members to the June SPC meeting.

Item 1: Confirm minutes of the most recent meeting held on the 30th April 2026 and the Special SPC on Smart Housing held on the 28th May 2026

Proposed: Cllr. Elisa O'Donovan

Seconded: Cllr. Noreen Stokes

Item 2: Matters arising from the Minutes

No issues arising from the previous minutes.

Item 3: Review of the Homeless Action Team Plan

Mr. Joe McDonald, Administrative Officer, delivered a presentation on the review of the Homeless Action Team Plan. Mr. McDonald highlighted the legislation in which the team's work is grounded, outlined the aims of the current Homeless Action Plan and key progress to date.

Mr. McDonald explained that the Management Group includes representatives from Limerick City and County Council and Clare County Council and is responsible for producing the Homeless Action Plan. The Homeless Consultative Forum supports the group by supplying valuable information and insight. Ms Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer, reflected on particular issues impacting Limerick which will be crucial for the upcoming plan to address, including street homelessness, influx of entrants to the country and addiction treatment. Ms. Hayes noted that the team would be happy to receive input from SPC members regarding emergency accommodation solutions going forward.

Cllr. Elisa O'Donovan thanked Mr. McDonald for the informative presentation and expressed her concern on the negative financial impact that reliance on the private sector for emergency accommodation brings. Cllr. O'Donovan noted that significant funding was spent on hotel accommodation by the Local Authority in 2025 and hoped that an alternative housing solution could be found to prevent children residing in such circumstances long-term. Cllr. O'Donovan requested that collaborating with AHBs to provide city centre homeless accommodation and wraparound late-night services might be considered by the team.

Cllr. Sarah Kiely indicated her support for Cllr. O'Donovan's input and stated that she found certain AHBs are less efficient in addressing issues logged the by tenants. Cllr. Kiely questioned if a mapping exercise might be undertaken to evaluate which AHBs operate in Limerick and what areas they span to highlight which AHBs might be considered for future collaboration. Ms. Patricia Phillips, Head of

Unit for Housing Welfare and Traveller Accommodation, communicated that Housing Welfare meet with AHBs every three months and that the Allocations team are conscious of the importance of mixed tenure developments. Ms. Phillips recognised that considerable effort is undertaken by Housing Support Services to ensure enhanced tenancy sustainment through the management of anti-social behaviour.

Cllr. Tom Ruddle questioned what is the average duration that individuals are accessing these services. Ms. Hayes responded that the team endeavours to provide a prompt turnaround time for those accessing homelessness services by reasonably meeting the needs of applicants within their areas of choice where possible. Ms. Hayes noted that this can take anywhere from twelve to twenty-four months based on the long-term accommodation options available at the time of assessment.

Item 4: Choice Based Letting

Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer, presented an overview of the Choice Based Letting (CBL) scheme. Ms. Hayes outlined the objectives, operational benefits and the user experience of the upcoming Pilot Choice Based Letting System due to be launched in Autumn 2026. Ms. Hayes noted that the initial focus of the system would be in hard to let areas and the rollout would be executed on a phased basis. Ms Hayes welcomed any feedback on the pilot from members of the SPC.

Cllr. Sarah Kiely recognises the extensive work carried out on this project which will help to reduce the refusal rates on accommodation offers. Cllr. Kiely questioned if applicants on the transfer list and tenants with a record of rent arrears are eligible to apply for CBL. Ms. Hayes responded that applicants with a history of arrears would be required to demonstrate a serious effort to address payments to qualify for CBL. Ms. Hayes stated that Ms Norma Purtill and her team would evaluate the eligibility of applicants to the scheme.

Cllr. Kiely questioned if an applicant could apply for a property outside their area of choice. Ms. Hayes responded in the affirmative, noting that this would provide an option for individuals whose area of choice has limited units available. Cllr. Noreen Stokes asked how long a property would be advertised on the CBL system. Ms Hayes replied that all adverts would be open to applications for a period of one week and the team are working in consultation with ICT to provide specialised accounts for councillors to be view the properties available. Ms. Hayes noted that these adverts would be circulated to social media by the Communications Department and Age Friendly would be informed in order to provide assistance to older applicants with the online process. Cllr. Keary questioned if applicants with a local connection would be prioritised within that respective area. Ms. Hayes replied that this will be considered along with the Scheme of Priorities.

Item 5: Approval of the SPC Work Programme

Ms. Kathy O'Grady, Administrative Officer, provided an update on the SPC Work Programme. Ms. O'Grady stated that this plan will form the workload of the SPC for the remainder of its lifetime. The members agreed that the Work Programme should proceed to Full Council for approval.

Proposed: Cllr. Elisa O'Donovan

Seconded: Cllr. Noreen Stokes

Item 6: Update on Affordable Scheme of Priority

Ms. Sarah Newell, Senior Executive Officer, delivered a presentation on feedback received from the survey on the Scheme of Priority for Affordable Dwelling Purchase Arrangements. Ms. Newell stated that a workshop took place in February to discuss the scheme which had been last agreed at the SPC in 2023. The survey was circulated to Councillors and members of the Home and Social Development SPC on the 17th June 2026 and were given one week to respond. Ms. Newell noted the survey consisted of eight questions and the main purpose of which was to establish amendments to the current assessment criteria for applicants of the Affordable Housing Scheme.

Ms. Newell explained the next step in this process would be for the SPC members to hold a workshop on the subject and then compile a proposal for a new Scheme of Priority relating to Affordable Housing, a draft of which will be sent to the Minister for approval. A number of members agreed it would be beneficial to hold a workshop in the Autumn to discuss the proposal further. Following approval from the Minister, the proposal would be brought before Full Council in September.

Item 7: Update on review of Tenant Handbook

Mr. Neal Boyle, Senior Executive Engineer, provided an update with regard to the ongoing review of the Tenant Handbook. Mr. Boyle stated that a working group had been established to assess the current version of the Tenant Handbook and that a draft of the updated version is due in Autumn 2026. Mr. Boyle noted the suggestions from the SPC members that do not sit on the working group would also be welcomed. Cllr. Stephen Keary queried the next steps once the updated Tenant Handbook has been approved. Mr. Boyle replied that the Handbook would be issued to all tenants of Limerick City and County Council.

Item 8: Short Update of Rightsizing Voids

Ms. Kathy O'Grady, Administrative Officer, stated there has been no current rightsizing voids to date. Ms. O'Grady noted that any voids that are returned will be allocated to an individual or couple under the Rightsizing scheme as opposed to returning to general social housing stock.

Item 9: Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor E. O'Donovan (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 for the weekly rent for emergency accommodation to be reduced to new rates based on individual circumstances.

Ms. Mary Hayes, Senior Executive Officer, provided a response to the motion and outlined the rationale behind the upcoming introduction of charges for Private Emergency Accommodation. Ms. Hayes stated that hardship cases will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by Mr. Joe McDonald and his team. Cllr. Elisa O'Donovan outlined the disparity in rental payment for couples versus individuals accessing emergency accommodation. Ms. Patricia Phillips commented that the process of rent

collection would be a beneficial stepping stone for people moving from homeless accommodation to traditional renting.

Cllr. Stephen Keary asked what the next steps would be for a family once they present to homeless services. Ms. Hayes explained that a family would be assigned a case worker and allocated emergency accommodation in the form of a hotel room or family hub. Cllr. O'Donovan questioned when the updated charges would come into effect. Mr. McDonald noted that the exact date has not yet been confirmed but it will likely commence in Q4 2026.

A number of members expressed their queries on the figures who are accessing emergency accommodation, the cost of provision and the conditions for family units. Mr. Vincent Murray, Director of Service, noted that if members of the SPC would be interested in a more detailed presentation, a workshop could be held on the subject.

AOB

Cllr. Stephen Keary addressed the SPC and stated he would be stepping down as Chair of the Home and Social Development SPC. Cllr. Keary welcomed Cllr. Noreen Stokes as the next Chair of the SPC.

Next SPC meeting date Thursday, 8th October 2026

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Stephen Keary thanked everyone who attended the SPC and to enjoy their summer.

END OF MEETING