

**Minutes of Meeting of the Social Development Strategic Policy Committee
held in the Council Chamber on Tuesday 6th December 2022 at 2.30pm**

Present: Cllr. Gerard Flynn, Chairperson
Cllr. Tony O'Brien
Cllr. Joe Garrihy
Cllr. Paul Murphy
Cllr. Donna McGettigan
Larry Brennan
Tommy Guilfoyle
Noel Kearney
Mary Leahy
Padraig MacCormaic, A/Senior Executive Officer
Adrian Headd, A/Senior Engineer
John Corry, Administrative Officer
Helen Walsh, County Librarian
Niamh Madden, Senior Executive Engineer
Linda Earlie, A/Town Regeneration Officer
Triona O'Connor, Limerick City & County Council
Julie Brosnan, Social Worker.

Apologies: Cllr. Ann Norton
Anne Haugh, Director of Service

Welcome to Conor Marrinan, A/Senior Executive Engineer, who will be dealing with Defective Concrete Blocks Scheme and Affordable Housing.

1. Minutes of Social Development SPC meeting held on 7th September 2022

Minutes of meeting held on 8th June 2022 were proposed by Cllr. Joe Garrihy, seconded by Cllr. Tony O'Brien and agreed.

2. Matters Arising

Cllr. Gerry Flynn advised Ennis and Shannon will be supported for Affordable Housing.

Noted that there will be an increase in social housing income eligibility threshold from 1st January 2023.

Congratulations to Helen Walsh and team on winning two awards.

**3. Climate Change & Biodiversity
Dealing with Invasive Species on Housing Capital Sites**

Niamh Madden, Senior Executive Engineer presented to the SPC on dealing with Invasive Species on Housing Capital sites.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn thanked Niamh Madden for the presentation.

A discussion ensued including queries on how quickly the problem is dealt with when aware of it; if the Council will be resourced to take ownership and deal with problems; is the County mapped and is Drumcliffe clear for building houses.

Niamh replied that as soon as the Council becomes aware of an invasive species it is mapped, a Japanese knotweed specialist is engaged and treatment begins; noted Drumcliffe site is not at construction stage yet but problem identified on first day and treatment commenced; determination with An Bord Pleanála re. Drumcliffe.

Adrian - the presentation relates to housing sites rather than a county wide basis; Re. Drumcliffe – as part of designs and planning application, remediation plans will be included in addition to the treatment that has been undertaken to date on site.

4. Town Centre First/Town Regeneration Officer

Linda Earlie, A/Town Regeneration Officer advised the Town Centre First policy aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.

Cllr. Donna McGettigan – the name “Town Centre First” sounds like it excludes rural communities; transport needs to be looked at in towns and villages.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn – would like to support that and see a “Rural Development First” also; title could be more inclusive.

Cllr. Joe Garrihy – welcome this potential to pull together a lot of strategies; what does a Town Team look like; can one be started in the morning everywhere; what supports can we get to do that.

Noel Kearney – town centres must be connected to reliable, accessible and consistent transport; concerned about transport for people with disabilities.

Mary Leahy – did the Ennis MD look at the Walkability Study that was carried out by the Clare Older Persons Council which enabled Ennis to draw down money for development in Parnell Street and O’Connell Street; village would like bus to town centre; it is a social deficit in Ennis and needs to be addressed.

Linda replied – re. transport and walkability – considered within any plan; looking at options in the town as part of the Masterplan; working closely with RCDO’s; the word “town” actually relates to towns and villages; town team - national network going to provide info on this – acknowledge that every town and village different; have requested direction on this; some funding streams are for larger towns; looking at multi centred approach to town regeneration and a plan would be developed around that; under consideration at national level.

5. Quarterly Briefing on Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027

John Corry advised a total of 134 properties allocated in Q3; 22 were reserved for applicants with disabled needs – 30 in total between LA's and AHB's allocated as follows:

Physical (22), Sensory (4), Mental Health (2), Intellectual (2).

National target is 10%; during that quarter 22.39% of our allocations were for disabled needs; well above expected requirement.

Expecting the Department are going to launch a National Disability Implementation Plan early in the New Year to further support the National Housing & Disability Strategy; will continue to give progress reports every quarter.

Larry Brennan queried how many on the housing list under those headings.

Padraig MacCormaic – we will circulate SSHA figures; a lot of work to be done locally on the National Disability Plan; Steering Group currently meets quarterly; we will bring more detail to next SPC meeting and give presentation.

John Corry – gross need is 2898 – net need is 1191.

6. Mid West Homelessness Action Plan 2022/2025

Triona O'Connor, Limerick City & County Council presented on the Mid West Homelessness Action Plan 2022/2025.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn thanked Triona for the presentation and a discussion took place.

Cllr. Donna McGettigan - figures down in 2020 because of moratorium on evictions; very high now; at capacity in Clare; we need to call for more funding for wet hostels; CCC Homeless Action Team doing great work.

Julie – appreciated comments and advised the HAT Team doing the best they can with what they have; would welcome additional funding; it is a concern that we are at capacity.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn – comes down to resources; big issue.

Tommy Guilfoyle – HAP was brought in as a temporary measure many years ago; it has now become a funnelling system to put public funds into the private purse; is it the only option people have; can Council housing be provided for people to come out of homelessness; HAP has to stop at some stage.

Cllr. Joe Garrihy – expressed appreciation for the work being done; would query cold weather initiative effectiveness; support Donna's request for more funding; family homelessness is very disturbing; what drives it; can we get to the core of what it is.

Noel Kearney queried why emergency accommodation doesn't continue from one night to the next.

Larry Brennan – rather than rush to attack landlords – currently in Clare 8/9 out of every 10 houses for sale are landlords leaving the market; additional legislation encouraging them to leave; solution is not to put in more legislation; bigger landlords now also leaving the market.

Tommy Guilfoyle – my question was not an attack on landlords; it was an attack on HAP; let the Council buy the houses landlords sell and use for Council housing.

Padraig – there are issues on landlord and tenant side that cause homelessness; puts pressure on the Council when landlords exit the market; 2,800 on list; 350 allocated this year to date; another 40-50 before year end; a lot were homeless families who went in to standard local authority housing; quite a few went in to AHBs and Cleann Nua; there is an adopted scheme of letting priority; list has reduced and will continue to be reduced; as well as HAP there is RAS, Leasing and AHB's; continuing to work towards more funding; wet hostel in Limerick; none in Clare.

Cllr. Tony O'Brien – Council have delivered over 400 houses; we do need private landlords; there is room for everybody.

Cllr. Donna McGettigan – we need to admit we are over reliant on HAP; we don't have control over anti social behaviour in HAP houses.

Triona – we are looking to SPC to approve Plan and bring to full Council.

Proposed by Cllr. Tony O'Brien; seconded by Cllr. Paul Murphy and agreed.

7. Traveller Accommodation Programme

Padraig updated the meeting re. Traveller Accommodation Programme and the New Caravan Loan Scheme.

Cllr. Donna McGettigan – would like to commend Gerry Murphy, Traveller Liaison Officer; figures now available that weren't before; mobile home scheme fantastic scheme; delighted permanent housing being looked at in Ballaghboy.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn – at an all time low around the issue of accommodation of Travellers; lack of engagement; support groups in place and funded by the Government need to do more.

8. Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026

Adrian Headd updated the meeting on the Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn – we are not going to come close to new applications.

Cllr. Donna McGettigan – who sets the targets? Are they low because they are not meeting the need?

Tommy Guilfoyle – targets not reaching anywhere near amount of people on housing list; Government policy took the reins on housing – targets are too low.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn – latest correspondence from Minister says target of 300,000 new homes over the next decade.

Larry Brennan – target of 30 units for next year according to monthly management report; it would be preferable to purchase landbanks; available lands should be declared to this meeting.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn – four estates opened recently and a number of others in the last year and a half; more needs to be done on the affordability side.

Cllr. Joe Garrihy – it is important to acknowledge achievements; Adrian and team have delivered high quality housing; need to raise the targets significantly; would urge us to look at Croi Conaithe, Derelict Homes and Serviced Sites.

Adrian – the targets are set by the Government under Housing for All; considerable work to achieve and exceed targets; re. projections – show over delivering by 27 units next year; Part V -3 proposed schemes; landbanks – 3 proposed schemes; turnkeys 5 schemes; buy and renew – 6 proposed schemes; AHB Calf – 8 proposed schemes; AHB Cas – 3 proposed schemes; target 149 next year; current projection 176; re. lands - it is difficult to get land; we have now addressed a large number of legacy sites in the delivery of schemes; have to be conscious of the County Development Plan; response awaited re. Croi Conaithe queries.

9. Defective Concrete Blocks Scheme

Adrian updated the meeting on the Defective Concrete Blocks Scheme.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn – thanks for update; there will be a full debate on this at the December Council meeting.

10. Library, Arts & Culture Update

Helen Walsh, presented on Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027.

Cllr. Donna McGettigan – fully support the Creative Ireland Strategy.

Tommy Guilfoyle – fully endorse and support it; this item very important and suggest it features higher on agenda.

Cllr. Joe Garrihy – commend the team who do fantastic work.

Mary Leahy – compliment Helen and staff; brilliant job over the years; also happy birthday Ireland – 100 years old today.

Cllr. Tony O’Brien – expressed appreciation for all the work being done.

11. Meeting Dates for 2023

The following meeting dates were agreed for 2023:

- 7th March
- 7th June
- 6th September
- 6th December

Meetings to commence at 2.30pm in the Council Chamber.

12. AOB

Cllr. Gerry Flynn – housing options workshops – would like to see them back on the road - Padraig advised Linda Earlie doing MD workshops; could tie in with that re. housing options workshops.

Tommy Guilfoyle – thanked the Chair for the last year.

Larry Brennan – seek support of this SPC to write to the First Home Scheme Ireland and request them to increase baseline for private housing; currently €300,000; nobody able to take advantage of the first home scheme; try to get them to review it; maybe presentation on this item at a future meeting.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn – agreed.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____ **Signed:** _____
Cllr Gerard Flynn **Anne Haugh**
Chairperson **Director of Service**

Date: _____