



**Minutes**  
**Housing SPC Meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

**Present:** Cllr. Brendan Weld, Cllr. Noel Connolly, Cllr. Chris Pender, Cllr. Mark Leigh, Cllr. Tom O'Malley, Pat Doyle

**In attendance:** Annette Aspell, Siobhan Scully, Alan Dunney, Shirley Farrar, Ollie Brady, Brian O'Gorman, Veronica Cooke, David Creighton, Ciara Sherry

**Apologies:** Cllr Daragh Fitzpatrick, Cllr Vera Louise Behan, Cllr. Tim Durkan, John McLoughlin, Billy Wall

1. Minutes proposed by Cllr. Leigh, seconded by Cllr. Pender

2. No conflict of interests declared

3. Correspondence/List of Circulars: SFarrar advised list circulated and available on request. AAspell referred to letter written to Minister in relation to the Energy Retro Fit Programme and concerns in relation to unit costs raised at last meeting. An acknowledgement has been received but no response to letter as of yet. The 2022 work programme has seen an uplift in the cost allowed per unit. AAspell will follow with Department to seek response to letter issued.

Cllr. Weld raised concerns in relation to retrofit and windows not being replaced. DCreighton advised that there is a cost issue and that the upgrades are already over the allocation per unit, to replace windows would add to the cost and advised that in terms of the BER they are achieving the minimum B2 rating without replacing windows.

Cllr. Leigh also raised concerns about the excess cost and the feasibility going forward. AAspell informed that it is having an impact on Revenue Budget however there is a commitment to deliver the scheme and the new work programme for 2022 has seen an up lift in cost allowed per unit and this is currently under review.



4. Presentation on Cost Rental Housing by Colin Byrne & David Murphy, Clúid

5. Presentation on Kildare Public Participation Network by Grainne Fleming

It was agreed that it would be beneficial to arrange a meeting between the SPC members and the Kildare PPN to discuss the role of the PPN in policy making going forward.

6. Referral from November full Council Meeting - Motion Councillor Noel Connolly:

*“That Comhairle Contae Chill Dara divests itself of all land that it owns both inside and outside the County, unless it has a compelling reason for continued ownership (ie. that the land is being used productively or that it has immediate or strategic plans for its use); and that it uses the proceeds of these sales to improve and grow its housing stock, including the purchase of land suitable for public housing provision”*

Cllr. Connolly expressed concerns over examples of lands owned by KCC that are leased/not in use and the suggestion of selling land not used.

AAspell informed that a response was given at Full Council Meeting, and in relation to housing land, a review has been carried out in line with the Housing Delivery Programme and suitable land for development has been put forward and that there is no land to sell from the Housing Departments land bank.

AAspell advised she cannot speak on behalf of lands owned by other departments within the council.

Cllr. Weld mentioned that lands purchased through CPO for Roads etc, if no longer needed are generally sold back to the original owner.

AAspell also mentioned Adverse repossession and the difficulties in identifying these cases and the legalities surrounding it.

Cllr. Connolly noted and accepted that the housing land is being adequately used, and acknowledged that Housing SPC was not the correct platform for this discussion.



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Cllr. Weld suggested referring the matter to the other SPC's for response.

Update on Ukraine

SScullly provided an update:

The council has established a rest centre at Liffey Lodge, Newbridge. Over the period 31<sup>st</sup> March to 3<sup>rd</sup> April the council was on standby to accept Displaced Persons arriving from Ukraine. The centre opened on the 6<sup>th</sup> April and accepted 44 people.

Displaced persons are referred to the centre by the International Protection Accommodation Service. Over the first weekend the centre was staffed by volunteers from the Housing Department, the Fire Service and the Civil Defence. The Community Department also played an important role in securing services and furniture. Currently, 37 people are living in the centre, which represents 12 family units.

Liffey Lodge requires upgrading to make it more suitable for use as a Rest Centre, bathrooms, heating, fencing. A business case has been submitted to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, a decision is awaited.

The Homeless Team are currently examining pledged accommodation to seek suitable matches for people living in the centre. The first preference is for accommodation located within Naas, Newbridge and Kilcullen and which provides independent living.

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage requested local authorities to identify sites which may be suitable for the accommodation of Displaced Persons. Sites should be suitable for immediate development of temporary or permanent housing which have not already been earmarked for social and affordable housing delivery under the Housing for All Programme.

Along with colleagues in the Planning Department a number of sites were examined, a final list of 11 was submitted to the Department.

Accommodation is divided into 3 streams:

Short Term, Medium Term, Long Term



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PDoyle referred to the partnership between Kildare County Council and Peter McVerry and the hopes to continue this partnership.

Cllr. Weld & AAspell expressed their thanks to Pat Doyle and the Peter McVerry Trust for their continued support to KCC.

Cllr. Connolly queried if there was any support in relation to the costs.

AAspell advised that the costs can be recouped but that they are awaiting the details on the recoupment process.

Cllr. Leigh expressed thanks for works done and queried if there was any time scales given in relation to the Short, Medium and Long Term.

AAspell informed that no time scales were specified.

### 8. Update on Housing Grants

SFarrar provided an update on Housing Grants. Work Programme has been submitted to the Department.

SFarrar referred to the categorization of grants and explained each one.

To date 193 payments (€1.5million) have been processed.

Cllr. Connolly queried if the inflation in building costs is having an impact.

SFarrar advised that the impact hasn't yet been seen but expects that it will soon.

AAspell mentioned that if more funds are allocated then this will lead to more grants.

Cllr. Connolly also queried if the Self-Help Grant would be offered. AAspell informed that the resources are not there to administer the Self-Help Grant and that the scheme has anomalies that need review however there is no staff capacity for this to happen. As per the request of Elected Members grant applications have been prioritised this year, and additional funding sought.

Cllr. Leigh queried if it has been difficult to source contractors to carry out works.

SFarrar advised that there have been difficulties and at times only one response received to tenders, and that the interest in active tenders is slow. Batching of tenders of 3-4 works is being progressed to address this issue.



### 9. Update on Work Programme 2022

#### ➤ Housing for All

Update provided in relation to Affordable Housing Delivery Targets.

Work is ongoing on a Housing Delivery Action Plan and once agreed it will be presented to SPC members.

In relation to staffing, 13 staff have been sanctioned for capital housing delivery. A submission has been made for staff for Affordable Housing, a response is still awaited.

There are significant concerns on relation to delivering the programme.

#### ➤ Homelessness

OBrady advised that there has been an increase in family presentations, which is proving challenging due to the shortage in HAP properties.

Staff resources have been strengthened with Tenancy Sustainability Officers, that now provide support to 55 families.

Under Housing First there are 19 active tenancies which is hoped to increase, the target of 30 is very high.

OBrady mentioned 12 own front door properties in Jigginstown and collaborations with Teach Íosa in Athy with shared units.

Work is also being carried out on the cold weather initiative.

Cllr. Leigh queried the provision of Peter McVerry units in Athy for single men, OBrady informed timelines were not known at present and PDoyle informed he would look into it and revert.

Cllr. Pender queried if there were more difficulties in securing emergency accommodation in hotels and B&B's with the continued re-opening of society after Covid-19 restrictions.



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OBrady advised that it can be difficult to secure block bookings however with the IPA's there hasn't been a huge impact as they have a number of providers and they have been consistent with provision.

➤ Affordable Housing

ADunney advised that resources have been requested and targets have been received. Regulations are currently under review and that the scheme is a priority for Kildare.

AAspell added that the scheme will have to come through the SPC first and then go to Full Council and that this will need to be prioritised.

➤ Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

The Anti-Social Behaviour Policy is due for review next year. An Estate Management Strategy is being developed and will sit together with the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

➤ Strategic Plan for Housing Persons with a Disability

VCooke informed that national details on the scheme are awaited and these are required before any movement can be made and mentioned the importance of the steering group.

➤ Energy Efficiency Programme/Midlands Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme

ADunney provided an update to the SPC. 175 first stage have been completed. Discussions are ongoing with the Department in relation to costs etc.

➤ Rightsizing/Allocation Scheme

A review of the allocation scheme is due to take place in the second half of the year.

➤ Traveller Accommodation Programme

BOGorman provided an update on the existing work programme and advised that two-thirds of the target has been achieved to date.

BOGorman also advised of a new AHB for the traveller community.

The Annual Fire Safety Report has been referred to the LTAC meeting for approval and will then be forwarded to the Department.



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PDoyle also mentioned the new AHB aimed at the traveller community and AAspell noted that it was welcomed.

### 10.AOB

AAspell mentioned motions that have been recurring in relation to vacant homes, and assured the SPC that KCC are not sitting on vacant stock and requested that the SPC members note this if brought to the attention of Full Council.

Cllr.Weld suggested a hand out be circulated at the next Full Council Meeting on the policy around vacant properties (KCC Stock)

Cllr. Leigh showed agreement with this and noted that Social Media is fuelling some negativity in relation to this matter.

Cllr. Weld expressed his thanks to SPC and closed the meeting.

11.Date of next meeting: 08<sup>th</sup> September 2022

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