

Housing SPC Meeting Minutes – 9th February 2023 – 2.30 p.m.

Present: Cllr. Brendan Weld, Cllr. Noel Connolly, Cllr. Chris Pender, Cllr. Mark Leigh, Cllr. Tim Durkan, Cllr. Vera Louise Behan, Tom O'Malley.

In attendance: Annette Aspell, Siobhan Scully, Shirley Farrar, Alan Dunney, Brian O'Gorman, Siobhan Barry, Tom Kelleher, Paddy Henderson, Veronica Cooke, Fiona Byrne, David Creighton, Elaine Price, David McDermott, Emma Mulroy.

Apologies: Pat Doyle, Peter McVerry Trust

Resignation: Wesley Rothwell. Annette Aspell to advise Corporate Services.

➤ **No conflict of interests declared**

➤ **Minutes of previous meetings**

- **Adoption of the minutes of the 8th December 2022 meeting proposed by Cllr. Durkan, seconded by Cllr. Behan**
- **Adoption of the minutes of the 19th January 2023 meeting proposed by Cllr. Leigh, seconded by Cllr. Connolly**

➤ **Previous motions – update of Defibrillators and Radon Monitoring**

Siobhan Scully advised that Housing have agreed to fund one defibrillator in Celbridge Library and that we have written to Respond to see if they will fund additional defibrillators in the Ballymakealy Community Centre.

Alan Dunney advised that Radon Testing Pilot Scheme has been agreed for 50 radon kits to be placed in vacant units across North Kildare. These radon kits will be left in place for 3 months and he will report to the SPC after the next meeting. He advised the total cost is approx. €1,500.00.

➤ **Director of Service update**

- Annette Aspell advised the target of houses built in 2022 of 370 was exceeded and 372 were delivered.
- She advised that the Leasing target was 262 and we delivered 207. It was noted that Leasing will be phased out after 2023.
- In relation to the Planning & Development and Foreshore Act 2022, this will result in a temporary suspension of Part 8 procedures for delivery of social and affordable units that are carried out jointly with the Local Authority. We are currently awaiting documentation and regulations from the Department.
- In relation to acquisitions we are awaiting an announcement from the Department regarding the 2023 Acquisitions programme. She said that acquisitions were low as there has been a focus on build. There is currently an extension to June 2023 for the acquisition of properties to prevent homelessness, i.e. one bed units and accessible units.
- In relation to the Local Authority Home Loan, it was noted that Minister O'Brien increased the loan ceiling from €320,000 to €360,000. Revised income thresholds were also announced.

➤ **Update on Work Programme 2022**

Housing for All

Siobhan Scully advised the meeting that this information was provided in the Chief Executive's Report for January 2023.

➤ **Homelessness**

S. Scully provided an update. Currently we have 53 households accommodated in emergency accommodation, presentations have reduced slightly, 5 families have exited from homeless accommodation in January, 85 households availing of tenancy sustainment services as there is an emerging issue with rent payments due primarily to the cost of living increases and prioritisation of payment of utility bills, we have 5 rough sleepers, Outreach workers have been doing street work in Leixlip, Kildare, Sallins, Naas and Newbridge. We have 30 housing first tenancies, 16 of which were created in 2022.

➤ **Affordable Housing**

A Dunney advised the Scheme of Priorities was agreed in 2022, new regulations increased the loan amount from three and a half to four times applicant's salary. He advised that we have an online survey for people to express their interest but currently there is low uptake and he advised that the scheme is difficult to operate in Kildare.

T. Durkan suggested that applicants who were refused social housing due to being over the income threshold could be advised of the affordable housing scheme. A. Dunney asked Members to make constituents aware of the scheme.

➤ **Anti-Social Behaviour Policy**

V. Cooke advised the meeting that it is envisaged to bring the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy to the Housing SPC in May 2023.

➤ **Strategic Plan for Housing Persons with a Disability**

S. Scully stated that the Housing & Disability Steering Group met on 2nd February 2023, it was very positive with good engagement. A Draft Strategy is being prepared, and it is hoped the plan will be available in April or May 2023. S. Scully stated that we are looking to add a representative from a Disabled Persons Organisation to the group and are liaising with the Housing Agency.

➤ **Energy Efficiency Programme / Midlands Energy Efficient Retrofit Programme**

- T. Kelleher outlined issues some tenants were having in relation to the cost of running heat pumps, heat pumps shutting down, heat pumps vibrating and sub-standard windows and insulation but stated that a lot of tenants were more than satisfied.
- Cllr. Durkan stated that there is a problem with condensation which tips the system and that ESB usage was high. He asked if housing are achieving B2 BER and airtightness.

- T. Kelleher advised windows and doors are not being retrofitted.
- T. Durkan asked if we could take two or three properties and put meters on the heat pumps and check for air tightness.
- T. Kelleher stated that we would and that we have already done this with one property.
- Cllr. Leigh stated he had had some complaints and asked with prepay metres if it is possible to say if heat pumps are not suitable for same.
- T. Kelleher stated the cost of power has doubled since last year but he will do an analysis on oil/gas.
- Cllr. Pender asked if it is possible to develop booklets in relation to heat pumps to give to tenants prior to them moving in.
- Cllr. Behan said there is a humidity issue and asked if there is government contract in relation to the heat pumps.
- T. Kelleher advised these are purchased through Public Procurement and it goes to tender, that heat pumps have a minimum requirement, and all heat pumps suffer the same problems. He stated there are not usually problems, but these arose because of temperatures of -7 degrees in December.
- Cllr. Behan asked if there are other units that could be purchased.
- Cllr. Durkan asked if we could look at installing PV panels to offset costs.
- A. Aspell said that it was good to have the feedback that technology is changing all the time, that funding is still critical and any additional spending cannot be recouped from the department and will have a negative impact on the housing maintenance budget.
- A. Dunney stated that we are funded for €33,000.00 per unit for specific works and we won't be able to fund any additional expenses.
- A. Aspell stated that we struggled to get work done with funding from the Department.

➤ **Rightsizing / Allocations Scheme for Social Housing**

S. Scully advised the meeting that there was a meeting in January, and it will go to the CPG and then to the full council after that.

➤ **Traveller Accommodation Programme**

Brian O’Gorman advised the meeting as follows:

The mid-term review of the TAP was completed September 2022. A new target of 89 units has been agreed (previously 73). 62 units have been delivered to end of 2022. A full review of the plan is expected to commence in Q4 2023.

The Ardrew redevelopment project (Athy) is being progressed to pre Part 8 (planning) stage. A number of other Traveller specific schemes are under active consideration. Ongoing improvement works on sites including upgrade of mobiles for a number of families are being progressed.

Quarterly meetings of LTACC have been agreed for the year (next meeting 23rd March). Kildare Traveller Action have appointed a new coordinator and the Council is further supporting the engagement of Traveller representatives on the committee. The LTACC Chairperson (Cllr P. O’Dwyer) will make a presentation to the SPC at the September meeting.

The Annual Estimate of Accommodation of Traveller Families carried out on 25 November 2022 (increase in families from 360 to 379).

➤ **Ukraine**

- Cllr. Weld welcomed Elaine Price to the meeting. Elaine advised that 70% of the properties are unsuitable, 23% have been allocated or referred for allocation with the remainder requiring some remedial works and were uncontactable and 7% of properties require remedial works. Liffey Lodge works have been completed, 52 bed capacity with 36 beds occupied and awaiting further referrals from City West. The Offer a Home Scheme has now launched. 27 offers in Kildare. A. Aspell advised the meeting that we are being asked to refurbish properties most of which are in private ownership. She stated that we are waiting on details of this, that a tracker is to be established for state investment for longer term use.

➤ **To agree Work Programme for 2023**

S. Scully provided the Works Programme for 2023. Regarding Homelessness, a Draft Plan will be ready in Q1 2024. A. Dunney advised that the Self-Help Grants is now called the Tenant Support Scheme. A. Aspell advised that the money for this comes from the tenant deposit scheme and not from the budget and this will be reviewed next year.

- Cllr. Leigh asked if the Disability Grant has been removed and A. Aspell advised that it is not, it is a different scheme.
- Cllr. Pender asked for a breakdown on housing estates by purchase type (i.e. social, affordable and private). S. Scully advised that this would be difficult to do until a development is complete and Cllr. Pender stated that he could be given same at anytime.
- A. Aspell stated that the meeting needed to trust that we are delivering sustainable community and that we are relying on developers to deliver housing.
- Cllr. Weld said that we will struggle to deliver 2023 targets and it will be harder and harder.
- A. Aspell stated that the Works Programme 2023 would go forward to the CPG, this was proposed by Cllr. Durkan and seconded by Cllr. Leigh.
- The members approved the 2023 Work Programme. Proposed Cllr Durkan, Seconded Cllr. Leigh

➤ **Correspondence / List of Circulars**

S. Farrar advised there was no correspondence and recommended that members refer to the circular “An Overview of the Provision of Social Housing by Approved Housing Bodies” produced by the Local Government Audit Service, as it is very informative in relation to the role of AHB’s in the provision of social housing.

➤ **Date of next Meeting**

The date for the next meeting of 11th May 2023 was agreed by members. Cllr. Weld thanked staff and Members and the meeting ended.