



## Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

### Housing, Community and Cultural Development SPC

**14<sup>th</sup> September 2018, Training Room, Buvinda House, Navan**

**Attendees -**

**Councillors:**

Cllr Sarah Reilly (Chairperson), Cllr Pdraig Fitzsimons, Cllr Caroline Lynch, Cllr Gillian Toole, Cllr Sinead Burke,

**Apologies:** Cllr Maria O' Rourke, Cllr Maria Murphy

**Attendees -**

**Sectoral**

**Representatives:**

Cathy Whelan, Niamh Ui Loinsigh, Vicky Harris

**Apologies:** Robert Bradley,

**In Attendance:**

Deputy Peadar Tobin TD, Deputy Shane Cassells TD, Paul Smith

**Apologies:** Minister Helen McEntee TD, Deputy Fergus O' Dowd TD, Senator Ged Nash

**Officials:**

Barry Lynch, Ciaran Mangan, Ger Soady, David Jones

Item	Discussion / Action
1.	<p><b><u>Minutes of Previous Meeting</u></b></p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2018 were approved. Proposed by Cllr Lynch, seconded by Cllr Toole.</p>
2.	<p><b><u>Matters Arising</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cllr Lynch sought that the topics of overcrowding and attendance at housing assessments by an advocate be placed as future agenda items (both subject to Notice of Question at full Council meetings recently)</li> </ul>
3.	<p><b><u>To Note High Level Housing Topics for Consideration by Oireachtas Members</u></b></p> <p>At the outset, disappointment was expressed by a number of members present in respect to the absence of Minister English or representative at the meeting.</p> <p>The topics raised at the previous meeting for consideration by the Oireachtas members were reviewed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. <u>Affordability Purchase Scheme</u> – Regulations currently being prepared in order to launch same. The matter of funding to Local Authorities to construct affordable units on Local Authority owned land should be provided as part of any pending scheme. The inclusion of repayable equity share to the Local Authority should be reconsidered given past experience of previous shared ownership schemes – <b>no further follow up information obtained</b></li> <li>II. <u>Land Acquisition</u> – Local Authorities to be provided with up front funding to acquire lands for</li> </ul>



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	<p>the purposes of social/affordable housing, rather than the requirement to raise Housing Finance Agency loans and repayment of same in advance of any approved scheme on said lands – <b>no further follow up information obtained</b></p> <p>III. <u>State Owned Lands</u> – Department of Education site (Ashbourne) demonstrates positive social housing dividend from this exercise. Process of progressing further such sites (eg HSE Ratoath site) should advanced - <b>no further follow up information obtained</b></p> <p>IV. <u>Land Hoarding</u> – Measures required to unlock current undeveloped lands - <b>no further follow up information obtained</b></p> <p>V. <u>Housing First</u> – Request for inclusion of Mid East Region Homeless Region in pending Housing First National Implementation Plan (due to be launched June/July 2018). - <b>Noted that Plan now due to be launched October 2019</b></p> <p>Discussion took place on a number of related topics, with the following general points noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Legislation required to unlock unused lands on a ‘use it or lose it’ principal</li> <li>▪ Role of the recently announced Land Management Agency raised, as well as NAMA related lands</li> <li>▪ The overall context of the National Planning Framework and draft Regional Economic Strategies was discussed, and potential cap on housing numbers in Co. Meath, if current draft adopted</li> <li>▪ HAP rates discussed, in particular those for single adults and inability to secure private rented accommodation on current rates set for the County</li> <li>▪ The operation of the vacant site tax was queried and its impact to date. Noted that the vacant sites register is maintained by the Planning Section. Vacant Sites tax will be applied from January 2019</li> </ul> <p>Key areas for follow up by Oireachtas members, where possible, as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. <u>HAP rates</u> – an increase required in respect to single adult rate</li> <li>II. <u>State owned lands in Co. Meath</u> – list of same to be ascertained</li> </ol>



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4.	<p><b><u>To Receive a Presentation on the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan</u></b></p> <p>G. Soady provided a presentation on the operation of the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan. The following key points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2-3 week turnaround on processing application received at local level</li> <li>▪ All applicants are met, with complete quality applications submitted to the Housing Agency, which facilitates a speedy turnaround time by the Housing Agency</li> <li>▪ Noted that interest rates charged may increase overtime from current level. Due to low fixed rate, loan eligibility extends to five times an applicant's income</li> <li>▪ Low number of refusals to date. Appeal can be submitted within 30 days</li> <li>▪ Estimated that €7m is likely to be drawn down by year end</li> </ul> <p>Finance team was commended on their efficient work on administering the loan scheme</p>
5.	<p><b><u>To Receive an Update on Creative Ireland</u></b></p> <p>C. Mangan provided an update on Creative Ireland, and highlighted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Draft local plan has been approved. All 31 plans were official launched on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018</li> <li>▪ Soft copies of each plan available on the national Creative Ireland website</li> <li>▪ 2019 funding has been secured - €96,000 (equivalent to 2018 funding)</li> <li>▪ 'Walk Along the Boyne' publication referenced as one action from the Creative Ireland Plan that has been completed. This is an example of an action that spans across the various creativity aspects (eg library, heritage)</li> <li>▪ Library newsletter circulated to members present</li> <li>▪ Book festival 2018 referenced</li> </ul> <p>Chairperson commended the work achieved by the Creative Ireland team. Noted that it is important that a representative of Meath County Council is invited to attend/speak at related events</p>
6.	<p><b><u>To Receive details on current Social Housing Demand Statistics</u></b></p> <p>D Jones provided an outline of key social housing demand statistics, including gross housing needs per area of choice, gross housing needs according to house type and gross housing need per disability category. Documents detailing same circulated to members present.</p> <p>Discussion took place on the figures presented, and the following key points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The high need for one/two bed units was noted. The matter of downsizing was discussed in this context.</li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Confirmed that the statics outlined do inform the requirements in respect to our direct construction programme, Part V discussions and Approved Housing Body activity</li> <li>▪ Noted that the An Bord Planeala are requiring higher densities in respect to Strategic Housing Developments (&gt; 100 unit developments), which has resulted in the removal of ground floor bungalows in certain cases. This has impacted on our ability to cater for applicants with a physical disability, in line with Meath County Council’s Strategy for Housing Persons with a Disability and the parent National strategy on the matter</li> </ul>
7.	<p><b><u>To Review Draft Policy on the Provision of Low Cost Sites</u></b></p> <p>D. Jones circulated revised policy, following observations highlighted at the previous meeting.</p> <p>It was agreed that the terminology regarding ‘local need’ contained within the document be revised.</p> <p>Any further suggested amendments to be forward in advance of the next meeting in order to conclude on the matter and adopt final draft for implementation</p>
8.	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Statistics regarding rough sleepers in the County were requested. Noted that there are comprehensive figures now being recorded in the context of the Regional Homeless Action Plan, including that of rough sleepers. To date Meath have recorded a nil return as the issue is not visible in the County. However, initiatives undertaken in response to Storm Emma would indicate a cohort of up to 10 persons that would be deemed vulnerable with no fixed abode, and would fall under the general heading of rough sleepers</li> <li>▪ The matter of anti social behavior by family members who are not tenants of the local authority property was raised. It was noted that it was the responsibility of the tenant to control the activity of visitors to their home, and as such, failure to do so is a breach of tenancy, and the process of written breach of tenancy would be invoked, culminating in an official Warning Notice and an application for possession of the property, if the offending behavior persists</li> </ul>

**Recommendations to the Corporate Policy Group (CPG)**