



Miontuairiscí/Meeting Minutes

Special Housing Meeting 25th June 2012, Council Chamber

An Cathaoirleach, Councillor Eoin Holmes, presided.

Members Present:

Councillors, Sirena Campbell, William Carey, Shane Cassells, Eugene Cassidy, Jimmy Cudden, Francis Deane, Ann Dillon Gallagher, John V Farrelly, Jimmy Fegan, Brian Fitzgerald, Joe Fox, Oliver Fox, Wayne Harding, Jim Holloway, Nick Killian, Noel Leonard, Niamh McGowan, Jenny McHugh, Tracey McElhinney, Maria Murphy, Gerry O'Connor, Seamus O'Neill, Joe Reilly, Tommy Reilly, Catherine Yore.

Apologies: Joseph Bonner, Suzanne Jamal, Bryan Reilly

Officials in Attendance:

Directors of Service: Tadhg McDonnell, Brendan McGrath, Des Foley

Meetings Administrator Ger Murphy

Senior Executive Officers: Brendan Fulham (A)

Senior Executive Engineers: Tom Traynor

Agenda

1. To receive a presentation in respect of progress made on various housing projects as well as updates on new policies and procedures recently introduced or proposed for introduction in the near future. The presentation will cover inter-alia the following issues:
 - Social Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) projects and allocations for 2012;
 - Housing Waiting Lists;
 - Rental Accommodation Scheme/Leasing and Voluntary Housing Bodies;
 - Housing Stock Maintenance Issues including Void/Vacant Management;
 - Update on Part V and Affordable Housing;
 - Tenant Purchase Scheme for long standing tenants;
 - Traveller Accommodation and Homeless;
 - Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability /Housing Aid For Older People/Mobility Aids Grant;
 - Changes in Housing Policy and challenges that lie ahead.

Cllr. Anne Dillion-Gallagher opened the meeting in lieu of the Cathaoirleach.

Presentations covering the agenda items were made by Des Foley, Director of Services, Brendan Fulham, A/Senior Executive Officer and Tom Traynor, Senior Executive Engineer. Following the presentations the following issues were raised by the Councillors.

- Concerns were raised in regard to Housing Associations and how well or not they are advising the Council of all their developments. What vetting procedures are being used by Housing Associations? How many people have these associations housed over the past few years from the Council's housing list? Who monitors the activities of Housing Associations?
- It was outlined that Councillors have a very limited input into the allocation of houses. Councillors would welcome being informed of forthcoming allocations.
- It was noted that anti-social behaviour is only a problem in relation to a small number of social housing estates.



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- It was outlined that the Council requires a land-bank in order to be in a position to plan ahead in relation to the provision of social housing.
- There was a general welcome from the Councillors in relation to the plans to centralise housing services in the county.
- It was queried as to whether the Individual House long term leasing scheme can be extended beyond a ten year term and whether persons availing of the scheme could buy out their property?
- It was noted that there is currently no funding available for a homeless hostel in the county. It was queried to what happened the funding stream associated with it and as to how the Council is now intending to pursue such a facility?
- It was agreed that the Housing Section would provide a synopsis of the acronyms used in the service.
- It was queried as to the percentage of housing applications submitted for ‘ulterior’ motives.
- It was outlined that funding is required for the Housing Maintenance Programme.
- It was queried as to how many persons on the housing list (4,100) would accept a house if offered. It was noted that the figure is somewhat distorted as many persons on the list would not accept a house even if offered. It was noted that many persons are on the housing list for the purposes of being eligible for Rent Supplement.
- The management and maintenance of Traveller halting sites was discussed.
- It was proposed that the Council requires an arrangement were houses are inspected so that they can retain their longevity.
- The introduction of a new Housing Rents Scheme before year end was also discussed
- It was noted that the dominant household structure is 2.9 persons in Co. Meath which is higher than the national average and will have an effect on the Housing Strategy. Allocations: It was noted that 27% of households are in the Dunshaughlin Area but that there is a low allocation rate in this area due to a shortage of units.
- Issues relating to Rent Supplement and Garda Vetting of applicants were also discussed.
- It was outlined that it would appear that the Council is very limited by the national policies in relation to Housing Services. What is the process when a person wishes to be placed on the housing list? What are the criteria for social housing i.e. is it purely financial or are other factors taken into consideration?
- It was noted that in relation to Housing Grant Schemes there is a perception that a person will only get priority for a grant if they are terminally ill.

Summary of responses:

- In relation to housing list numbers it is the Housing Section’s experience that numerous persons would not accept a house even if it were offered to them for a variety of reasons. It was noted that possibly 80/90% of housing applicants are seeking to be placed on the housing list purely to obtain rent supplement.
- Under the Data Protection Acts the Council is precluded from advising members of forthcoming allocations
- It was noted in relation to leasing units that it might be better value for money to acquire properties than lease them. It was outlined that the Council made a submission to acquire a number of houses to the DoECLG in recent weeks.
- It was outlined that there are approximately 700 voluntary housing associations in the country and that there may be governance issues associated with them.
- It was outlined that there is no funding stream available for the provision of a homeless hostel in Navan/Co. Meath
- It was outlined that the Council’s land-bank for social housing is 100 acres (Council owned land rather than zoned land). It was noted that it is important that the Council retain this asset as housing policy changes regularly. The Council may be required to return to building houses in the future.
- Rent supplement: it was outlined that Government Policy is to transfer Rent Supplement from the Department of Social Protection to local authorities. The aim is that the provision of rent supplement will be seen as a means of social housing support and households in receipt of rent supplement will no longer be on the Council’s waiting lists.



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- It was agreed that the housing schemes should be less complex as it results in the delivery of housing services being more difficult to administer, manage and therefore avail of.
- The Land Aggregation scheme was discussed and the financial position with regard to the Council's land-bank at Feargansdown was noted.
- It was outlined that the Council is hoping to receive an allocation in relation to windows & doors later this year.

The meeting then concluded.