

**Minutes of Meeting of Housing, Community and Culture Strategic Policy Committee held in via MS Teams on Wednesday, 10 February 2021.**

**Members Present:**

Councillor Caillian Ellis (Cathaoirleach)  
Councillor Mary Bohan  
Councillor Padraig Fallon  
Councillor Sean McDermott  
Councillor Paddy O'Rourke  
Councillor Enda Stenson  
Aodh Flynn

**Officials Present:**

Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services, Community and Cultural Services  
Samantha Healy, Senior Executive Officer Corporate Services and Housing  
Kieran Brett, Meetings Administrator  
Ramona McAvenue, Administrative Officer Housing

**Apologies:**

Sean O'Reilly

**7 Adoption of Minutes 2nd December 2020**

**Proposed by Councillor Paddy O'Rourke, seconded by Councillor Padraig Fallon, and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:**

'That the Minutes of the Housing Policy, Social and Cultural Development Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 be adopted.'

**8 Housing Update**

Ms Mary Quinn provided the members with an update on the latest Housing information for Leitrim:

- There are currently 191 persons on the Housing waiting list.
- There are 320 on the Housing transfer list, of these 34 are Local Authority tenants and 286 are persons in receipt of Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).
- There are 293 persons in receipt of HAP in Leitrim. 101 new HAP tenancies were created in 2021.
- There are 74 persons on the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)
- 75 allocations housing allocations were made in 2020, consisting of 47 no. Local Authority properties re-lets, 14 no. 1<sup>st</sup> time letting of new property acquisitions, 12 tenancy regularisations, and 2 no. allocations under the Mortgage to Rent Scheme.
- There were 20 vacant properties at year end 2020, of these 15 were new acquisitions.
- The Choice Based Letting (CBL) scheme has been suspended for the month of February due to COVID-19 restrictions. It will recommence in March and a review of the scheme will take place later this year.

- In November, December, and January, 26 properties were allocated through the CBL scheme and there has been a 100% acceptance rate from tenants of properties offered.
- The Housing grant allocation for 2020 was €549K, of which €336k has been paid out. The rules of the scheme do not allow for the outstanding balance to be carried over to 2021. A new Housing Grant Allocation will be received from the Department for 2021, it is expected that this will be approximately €550-560K. Applications on hand as of 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and applications already approved but not yet paid out have a cumulative value of approximately €833k. A Scheme of Prioritisation may need to be introduced later in the year given the interest in the grants and the level of funding currently available.

Councillor Mary Bohan queried if a case could be made to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government for additional funding which would enable all existing applications to be dealt with.

Ms Samantha Healy stated that it is the intention of the Housing Department to seek additional funding from the Department before a Scheme of Prioritisation is required.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke noted the €300k shortfall between funding received and grant applications and expressed concern that the grant application process may have to be suspended. He proposed that representations be made to the Minister for Housing now for additional funding rather than waiting until later in the year as doing so may result in the problem continuing in another year.

Councillor Pdraig Fallon supported this proposal.

Ms Samantha Healy confirmed that the Housing Department will issue a letter to the Minister of Housing on this issue in the coming days.

## **9 Consider the SPC Work Programme for 2021**

Ms Mary Quinn, Director of Services, outlined the suggested policy areas for consideration under the SPC Work Programme 2021 to the Members. A copy of the Draft Work Programme as circulated to the Members appears as **minute item no. 3** in the minute book.

Ms Quinn informed the members that COVID-19 has led to the suspension of the Love Where You Live Programme in 2020 and due to the ongoing pandemic, it will be suspended again in 2021. There are a number of other supports and funding opportunities being made available to community groups at this time.

Ms Quinn advised the SPC work programme can be reviewed during the year if necessary and that the agreed work programme will be presented to the meeting of the Corporate Policy Group for consideration.

## **10 Consider Schedule of Meetings for 2021**

The following dates were agreed:

- Wednesday 26th May 2021, at 10:00am

- Wednesday 29th September 2021, at 10:00am
- Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021 at 10:00am

Councillor Sean McDermott asked that where possible, meetings are scheduled so as not to coincide with other Local Authority meetings that also require the attendance of elected members.

Ms Mary Quinn agreed that this request would be facilitated.

#### **11 Note current vacancies on the SPC**

Ms Mary Quinn advised the members that Ms Maura Gallagher representing the Social Inclusion Pillar of Leitrim PPN was stepping down from the committee. There are now 2 vacancies to be filled on this committee through Leitrim PPN. It is hoped that Leitrim PPN will have two nominees in place for the next meeting of this committee.

#### **12 Summary of issues for the Corporate Policy Group**

Ms Mary Quinn summarised the items for presentation to the Corporate Policy Group and Council.

#### **13 Date and Time of the Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the SPC will be held at 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

#### **14 AOB**

Councillor Caillian Ellis queried the no. of persons on the Housing Waiting list in Ballinamore. Ms. Mary Quinn stated that she would revert to Cllr Ellis with the current figure after the meeting.

Councillor Caillian Ellis queried if the Local Authority would consider buying residential properties in town centres to bring vibrancy back into towns and villages. This was supported by Councillor Enda Stenson and Councillor Sean McDermott. Ms Mary Quinn advised the members that options are being considered in this regard.

Councillor Enda Stenson sought an update on the building and allocation of the housing units that are currently under construction in Summerhill, Carrick-on-Shannon. Ms Mary Quinn advised that the building works had been delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions, however following Ministerial direction, building work will recommence very shortly on this project. It is expected that the houses will be ready for allocation in May 2021.

Councillor Sean McDermott queried the situation with regard to the provision of housing units in the Manorhamilton area to support independent living for young people with special needs. Ms Mary Quinn advised that discussions are ongoing with both the HSE and the AHB with a view to progress this situation.

Councillor Mary Bohan queried if there had been any recent changes to the eligibility criteria for the Tenant Purchase Scheme. Ms Mary Quinn advised that the terms of the scheme had not changed recently. Leitrim County Council are continuing to process valid applications under this scheme. Councillor Mary Bohan proposed that that this matter be referred to the plenary council meeting for consideration. She stated that the existing eligibility criteria is preventing long term Local Authority tenants from purchasing their homes under this scheme.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

**SIGNED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Councillor Caillian Ellis**  
**Chairperson**

**SIGNED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Kieran Brett**  
**Meetings Administrator**  
**Housing, Community and**  
**Culture Strategic Policy**  
**Committee**

**DATE: Wednesday, 26 May 2021**