

MINUTES OF STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING ON HOUSING, SOCIAL INCLUSION & CORPORATE SERVICES on 9 December 2022 at 11.30 a.m. in the Council Chamber, The Courthouse, Cavan

In attendance: Cllr Val Smith, Chairperson
Mr Eoin Doyle, Director of Service
Mr John Wilson, Cavan County Council
Ms Lynda McGavigan, Cavan County Council
Mr John Donohoe, Community & Enterprise
Ms Bridie McBrearty, Cavan County Council
Cllr Patricia Walsh
Cllr Clifford Kelly
Cllr Madeleine Argue

Apologies: Cllr P McDonald, Cllr T Smith, Mr T Maughan, Social Inclusion, Mr P Elliott, Development and Construction

Cllr Val Smith, Chairperson welcomed everybody to meeting.

1. MINUTES

On the proposal of Cllr P Walsh, seconded by Cllr M Argue, the minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2022 were confirmed.

2. HOUSING PROGRESS REPORT

J Wilson presented the report on the capital and void programme of work as follows:

- 314 units are at various stages of planning, design and construction. Expected delivery for 2022 is 98 units.
- An additional 63 units are being provided by Approved Housing Bodies
- Acquisitions to be concentrated on meeting specific need e.g., disability. 3 have been acquired and 11 in process of being acquired
- 6 units complete and let in Butlersbridge
- 20 units in Ballyconnell complete in December. 23 due for completion Q2 2024
- 2 units Kilnavara expected to be complete Q4 2022
- 15 units at Ballinagh to be completed Q4 2022
- 3 units at Fairymount Close, Kingscourt to be completed Q3 2023
- 13 units at Elm Grove, Cavan to be completed Q3 2023
- 20 units at St Brigid's Tce construction expected to commence Q2 2023
- 6 units Cavan Road, Cootehill work expected to commence Q1 2023
- 6 units at Taoibh Coille, Virginia work expected to commence Q1 2023
- 3 units at The Duckin Stool, Belturbet construction expected Q1 2023
- 9 units Widows Row, Belturbet – Part 8 due for decision at MD meeting
- 13 units in Kilnaleck – design work ongoing
- 11 units Ashgrove Court, Ballyjamesduff procurement of design team nearing completion.

- 8 units Portaliffe, Killeshandra procurement of design team nearing completion.
- 10 units at Chapel Lane, Cootehill tender docs in preparation for procurement of architect led design team
- 5 units will be ready for in Rampart's View (AHB) ready shortly
- 4 units in Mullagh under CAS to be complete and let
- 25 units Drumalee – CALF 17 units complete and let and remaining to be complete in 2023
- 24 units Gallops – Calf complete and let
- 7 units at Loreto Wood – CAS Scheme to be complete and offered
- 42 vacant units returned to use, work ongoing/commencing on 18 no.
- Contract awarded for refurbishment of 10 vacant units in Cavan Town under the Energy Retrofit Programme and a tender has been awarded for further 10 tenanted units in Laragh Crescent .

B McBrearty presented a report on progress in the housing office since previous meeting. Members noted the following:

- Approved applicants for social housing support - 479 nett together with 555 on the transfer list making the total number approved 1034
- A total of 838 have availed of the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme and there are currently 403 total active tenancies. Reduction in number currently on HAP represents the current market conditions.
- There are 354 household in accommodation provided under the Rental Accommodation Scheme and 122 through the Approved Housing Bodies. Reduction in numbers relates to the number of landlords getting out of scheme and selling their properties.
- Refusal rate of 34% on offers of accommodation.
- 32 loan applications to date this year, 2 approvals in principle issued, 5 finally approved and 1 paid out.
- 8 Letters of offer have issued under the Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme this year, 4 house sales completed with 3 more before year end.
- €1,541,043 is the total allocation for grants in 2022. Total committed expenditure is €4,877,744 to date.
- NTQs – a total of 38 RAS tenancies this year, 24 households have been sorted with 30 HAP tenancy NTQs on hand currently – includes 11 who have become tenants, 5 who got alternative accommodation and three others who moved back with family.
- ASB – 145 complaints received since beginning of year, 108+ cases closed. Regained possess of 8 unlawfully occupied properties without having to take legal action and 1 other following legal action.

Cllr Walsh welcomed the fact that site works had commenced at St. Bridget's Tce. and the retrofit works being carried out.

In response to a query regarding acquisitions, E Doyle confirmed that there several had been purchased in previous years. In considering acquiring houses the Council had to ensure it didn't interfere with the market, not be bidding against people trying to buy and not raise purchase prices – he gave an example of where the Council had to withdraw from a bid. He advised that the Council continues to do strategic

purchases for priority cases i.e. people with disabilities or those leaving emergency accommodation. Cllr Kelly advised that there was some confusion in this area. In response to a query, J Wilson advised that the retrofitting project would be extended to each MD in 2023.

Following a request by Cllr Kelly it was agreed that information on refusals be provided MD at the next meeting.

3. CROÍ CONAITHE - UPDATE

J Wilson gave a presentation on the two schemes available under the Croí Conaithe (Towns) Fund: the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant which provides people with a grant to support the refurbishment of vacant properties; and the Ready to Build Scheme where the Council make serviced sites available in towns and villages at a discounted rate to individuals who want to build their own home.

He advised that 117 enquiries had been received resulting in 23 formal applications for the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, 6 of which have been approved in principle for grant approval. The Vacant Homes Officer, Sinead Gibbs is the contact for the scheme. In response to a specific query raised by Cllr V Smith, J Wilson advised that he would check and revert directly to him.

In relation to Serviced Sites the Council currently has no surplus land available to introduce this scheme at present.

4. SOCIAL HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2022

B McBrearty advised that the annual assessment of social housing needs in the county had been completed and 460 applicants are deemed qualified for social housing support. Note this does not include anybody approved for a transfer.

5. SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT – INCOME ELIGIBILITY THRESHOLDS

B McBrearty advised that the awaited Circular regarding an increase to income eligibility thresholds had been received. The baseline income is being increased by €5,000 for all local authorities from 1 January and the effect of the changes are outlined below for Cavan.

Single	Adult 2	1a 1ch	1a 2 ch	2a 1ch	2a 2ch	2a 3 ch	2a 4ch	2a 5ch	3a 4ch
€30,000	€31,500	€30,750	€31,500	€32,250	€33,000	€33,750	€34,500	€35,250	€36,000

She advised that applications assessed from 1 January 2023 will be assessed as per the revised regulations and any households assessed and deemed not to qualify on income grounds on or after the 18 November 2021 may reapply for assessment under the new thresholds. There are 19 such households in Cavan and the Council will write to each outlining the new changes so they can reapply for reassessment after 1 January. They have until the 30 June 2023 to do so. If deemed to qualify under the new thresholds, then they can retain the time already accrued or which would have been accrued had they remained on the waiting list.

All members welcomed the changes which should help struggling families in the county to get approved for social housing.

6. HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING FIRST

Homelessness: B McBrearty provided an update on the increase in homeless in the county. She advised that a total of 112 households had presented as homeless compared to 72 for 2021. 22 had been provided with Emergency Accommodation which accounted for 30 adults and 15 children. She confirmed that expenditure had increased under this heading from €50,000 in 2015 to an estimate of €300,000 for 2023. The main reason for the increase is the reduction in the number of properties for rent in the private market. To help tackle the increasing demand 3 family rooms and 3 single rooms are on retainer from different B & Bs in the County together with the 2 beds in the Simon Hostel in Dundalk. Together with this where a household who has been deemed homeless can source B & B accommodation then the Council then there is no issue in paying for it.

Cllr C Kelly expressed his dissatisfaction that the Council is offering emergency accommodation outside the county and that facilities should be provided within the County. B McBrearty advised that Cavan forms part of the North East Homeless Region together with Louth as lead authority and Monaghan. All funding is channelled through the lead authority and to provide a dedicated facility in Cavan a Feasibility Study of all homeless services in the Region would first need to be undertaken to identify any gaps in the region before any funding application could be made. This matter will be raised at the next Regional Meeting.

Housing First: B McBrearty advised that Housing First provides a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing homelessness specifically designed to target those experiencing long term homelessness due to, substance misuse, social behavioural challenges, and other complex issues. It is included as a priority for in Housing for All. To date there are 7 households in the scheme with another to be housed shortly. The target for 2022 – 2025 is a further 7.

P McVerry are contracted to provide the housing and tenancy support services for the North-East Homeless Region and the Council identify clients and work with them on the individual cases.

7. HOUSING & DISABILITY STEERING GROUP MEETING REPORT

The National Implementation Plan is due to be published shortly and the December meeting has been postponed pending receipt of the document. 7 of the total allocations to date have been made to disabled people: 3 physical; 1 sensory and 3 mental health and this represents 13% of the allocations. 6 of those were accommodated in housing which had been adapted specially to meet their needs and 1 to standard housing.

8. ANNUAL TRAVELLER COUNT 2022

B McBrearty advised that the date for the annual traveller count is 25 November and the latest date to return information is 27 January. The Council is currently collating the information gathered.

9. AOB

E Doyle provided an update to members in relation to accommodation for the Ukraine Nationals. He advised that Hotel and Guesthouse accommodation were dealt with by IPAS and the Department was managing the vacant homes with the Council's assistance. 10 properties have been successfully pledged and there is a renewed campaign to secure further units. Properties must be made available under licence for a minimum of nine months at a rent of €800 per month.

Modular homes: The 30 units on the OPW site are currently under construction and due to be finished by February for existing residents in the County. No planning was required. Members expressed concern that there was no consultation. In response to a query E Doyle confirmed that the Council had not carried out an inspection of the Army Barracks.

Grants: B McBrearty advised that the grant allocation for 2022 had been spent and that a request for additional funding in the sum of €127,449 had been sent to the Department. A total of 192 grants will have been paid by the end of the year.

10. 2023 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Next Meeting: 10 March at 11.30 in the Council Chamber.

Scheduled Meetings: 9 June, 8 September, and 8 December at 11.30 in the Council Chamber, Courthouse.

Signed: 
Chairperson

Date: 10 / 3 / 2023

