
Special Meeting Strategic Policy Committee – Housing , Regeneration & Planning

Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 02nd December 2020 in The Dunamais Theatre, Portlaoise

In the Chair:	Cllr. Thomasina Connell
Present:	Cllr. Mary Sweeney Cllr. Catherine Fitzgerald Cllr. Paschal McEvoy Cllr. Caroline Dwane Stanley Mr Michael Kelly Ms Sheelagh Coyle Cllr. William Aird Cllr. Aidan Mullins Cllr. Conor Bergin Cllr. John King Cllr. Ben Brennan Cllr. Paddy Bracken Cllr. Seamus McDonald Cllr. Ollie Clooney Cllr. Noel Tuohy Cllr. Pdraig Fleming Cllr. James Kelly Cllr. Aisling Moran
Apologies	Mr. Michael Cobbe Mr. Trevor Hennessy, SEE Housing,
In attendance:	Mr Joe Delaney (JD), Director of Services, Housing and Planning, Ms Nicola Lawlor (NL),A/SEO Housing, Ms Louise McEvoy(LMCE) AO Housing, Ms. Fionnula Daly (FD) Senior Social Worker, Housing, Ms. Angela McEvoy (AMCE) Senior Planner, Ms. Marie Murray (MM) A/SSO Planning
Speakers	Ms. Bronagh Darcy Tuath Housing, Mr. James Benson Construction Industry Federation and Ms. Sarah Newell Limerick City & County Council

WELCOME

Cllr Thomasina Connell welcomed and addressed all members and speakers to the Special Meeting of the Housing Regeneration and Planning SPC

JD gave a brief presentation on behalf of Paul Kelly DNG who was unable to attend the meeting, regarding the current housing market, outlining the valuations of properties in county Laois, the importance of providing new and starter homes and also stated the strong demand externally from buyers outside of the county who wish to move to the county to live. JD outlined the relative affordability of housing, broadband in all new housing estates, good infrastructure which all attracts the external buyers to County Laois. The issues regarding the current low supply of housing and affordability regarding mortgages and securing finance were highlighted.

Sarah Newell – Limerick City & County Council delivered a presentation on the context of affordable housing and the serviced sites fund

Sarah outlined the benefits of the rural housing scheme and gave the example of Adare Housing Scheme – which reduced the cost of the house by eliminating the land cost which was given by the Local Authority.

Bronagh Darcy - TUATH Housing

Bronagh outlined the perspective of the Approved Housing Body role in housing in Ireland. The role of the Approved Housing Bodies was highlighted in providing social homes through turnkey housing developments, which allows a quick delivery of housing. An example of the provision of housing through Cost Rental was outlined - the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Stepside project. *Cost Rental is housing where the rents charged cover the cost of delivering, managing and maintaining the homes. As the rent paid by the tenant in a Cost Rental tenancy is designed to only cover the actual costs, rents will not be driven by market movements.* The site service fund through the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government along with the Housing Finance Agency was used by the Local Authority to finance the project along with two housing bodies (Respond & Tuath), this in turn provided for 155 units in total, 105 social units and 50 to be available to the private rented market for cost rental amount. Normally rent would be in the region of €2,200 but with the cost rental the rent is estimated at €1,200 per month. There is a qualifying criterion for applying for the private rented accommodation and it is up to the Housing Authority of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown along with the approved housing bodies to determine this criteria and ultimately who will be allocated the housing units.

James Benson - Construction Industry Federation

James stated the key challenges facing private/affordable and social local authority housing. He outlined the current market of a strong demand for affordable housing and low levels of supply. The country is estimated to need on average 36,000 homes per year to be delivered – in 2020 approx. 20,000 homes supplied to the market.

Three key issues:

- Affordability – Financing and obtaining mortgages (central bank rules regarding mortgages needs to be addressed and take into account the rent history or perspective buyers, in order to assist people in purchasing homes)
- Planning – constraints of the Planning system in place – County Development Plans v's the National Planning Framework, Regional Spatial Strategies, Zoning of lands and land management and assessments of serviced lands
- Infrastructure – constraints of public bodies such as Irish Water, the policies implemented driving the costs of building upwards as the infrastructure is accessed.

Questions and Answers were fielded through the Chair and extensively discussed, with all Councillors thanking the speakers for their delivery of presentations, which all agreed gave an informed perspective of housing and the delivery of homes in Ireland.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT - SPC MEETING

Provisional Date for the next SPC to be issued to the members - 27th January 2021.

This concluded the Business of the meeting

Signees: Shirazehi O'Connell Quilligan
Chairperson Senior Planner
Housing, Regeneration and Planning

Date: 27.01.2021