

HOUSING STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

FRIDAY 29TH JULY 2016

MINUTES

1. *Rebuilding Ireland – Action Plan for Housing & Homelessness*

The Chair advised that the purpose of this special meeting of the Housing SPC was to allow discussion of the Government Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness in the context of the impact on the Dublin housing crisis and the actions that can be achieved. A presentation and table summarising actions listed in the Plan was circulated prior to the meeting and hard copies were handed out to those present.

Céline Reilly, Executive Manager advised that the presentation would cover the areas that are the responsibilities of the Dublin Region Homeless Executive and the Housing Department of DCC. She noted that Pillar 4 relates, in the main, to the private rented sector. The Plan addresses issues at a national level, homelessness and the private rented sector and presents challenges to DCC in how to achieve these objectives.

Cathal Morgan, Director DRHE outlined Pillar 1 and the key targets that DRHE are required to meet. This will require input from other state agencies. He outlined housing related targets. The use of hotels is unsustainable and to be used only in exceptional circumstances by mid-2017. Increase provision of rapid build units. HAP scheme is currently being piloted by DRHE and is to be increased. Tenancies sourced using Housing First Support Teams to be increased. Support related targets to include additional mental health supports. A One Stop Shop to be put in place with multiple agencies to include Local Authorities, Tulsa, Department of Social Protection, NGOs, etc for families. It is the intention that Parkgate Street will be for single persons experiencing homeless when One Stop Shop is up and running. The tenancy protection service operated by Threshold is in place. Independent legal advice will be offered to those in mortgage arrears, although this is not a responsibility of DCC.

Tony Flynn, Executive Manager outlined DCC responsibilities in relation to the Housing Programme. He explained Social Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) and Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP). There are currently 20 projects with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government awaiting sanction. A joint meeting of the Housing and Planning SPCs will be arranged to discuss plans at O'Devaney Gardens and St. Michael's Estate.

Tony Flynn advised that a dedicated project team in relation to housing supply is to be put in place to meet these targets. Remit to include building, regeneration, provision of rapid build units, acquisitions, social leasing and RAS.

The Chair expressed his appreciation to DCC management in getting presentation and table together so quickly to allow discussion. He welcomes the Plan but feels that it is not ambitious enough. He made the following observations/proposals:

- Hoped that the project team to oversee housing supply becomes a standalone unit to plan, develop and build houses
- Suggested meeting with the Minister in the next month or so to discuss funding and other options for development of DCC lands
- Look at exploring funding options through the state or other financial institutions

Cllr Christy Burke welcomed the plan and said that regular meetings with the Minister to report on progress are needed. He worried about the dependency on the private rented sector to provide supply of housing. DCC need to build on their land and not rely on the

private sector. He expressed concern about the rise in rough sleepers and while he commended the staff on the freephone he said there are problems with it. Cllr Noeleen Reilly asked when plans for vacant DCC lands zoned for housing will be done. She also raised concerns about HAP scheme. Some landlords won't take HAP now and she worried about targets here if this trend continues. She asked why DCC don't borrow from the Housing Finance Agency (HFA) and she also asked for costs of rapid build units at Poppintree. Cllr David Costello asked if extensions for DCC tenants could be processed using the grant scheme for private homeowners whereby they can chose their own builder to carry out works. He feels that taking approval for large developments out of the Local Authorities Planning Departments is a mistake as local knowledge is important. He said that there are significant lands around the Port Tunnel and asked if these could be used to develop housing. He suggested that a Manager be appointed to focus on housing development to be independent from the Housing Department. He said that a sub-committee comprising of interested members of the Housing and Planning SPCs and any other Councillors may be more efficient than a joint Housing and Planning SPC meeting. Cllr Éilis Ryan asked how many units can be delivered. She asked if the Plan addresses obstacles to the mortgage to rent scheme. She requested a breakdown of public and private developments that could be developed in the Land Initiative. With regard to DCC stock upgrade she asked about the scale of works taking place and suitable locations for densification.

Céline Reilly advised that extra funding has been allocated for 2016 from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government for extensions to DCC properties. Cathal Morgan said that Freephone is not the problem but rather the lack of available beds for rough sleepers. DRHE are currently looking for a site for extra beds and this will require funding. He said that meeting HAP targets will depend on supply of private rented properties. Tony Flynn said that DCC will have to work with all stakeholders in order to meet targets, and this includes the private sector. DCC are meeting regularly with the Minister and his team. He advised of ongoing mapping programme of all vacant sites in the city, which is due to be complete in September 2016. He said that a meeting took place with the HFA, Dept of Housing and CCMA to discuss funding options and detailed response is to follow. Regarding lands at Port Tunnel he advised that there is an indicative plan for strip of land at Whitehall Church but said that title needs to be regularised. He noted that there are significant restrictions to develop lands at Port Tunnel. Housing and Planning Sub-Committee is a good idea. He said that mortgage to rent scheme between banks and distressed mortgage holders is a long and complex process. He said that the mortgage to rent scheme operated by DCC is working well. With regard to breakdown of private and public developments he advised that the Land Initiative Brief agreed by City Council is to provide 30% for social housing. In private developments there is a 10% requirement from Part V for social housing. He advised that DCC are in negotiations with the contractor of rapid build units at Poppintree to agree the final account. As such the costs here cannot be released until this process is complete.

Cllr Cieran Perry welcomed the Plan but said that reliance on the private sector to address housing issues is a mistake. He said that all available funding options need to be taken up. Land Initiative sites are DCC lands and as such DCC should build for public housing. He suggested that vacant buildings outside the city centre be looked at to provide the extra beds required for rough sleepers. Part V reduction of 10% for social housing needs to be increased back to 20%. Cllr Anthony Conaghan asked about the Financial Contribution Scheme. With regard to extensions at DCC properties he asked if modular extensions are being examined as these will be cheaper and quicker than standard bricks and mortar. He asked what positive impact the Plan will have on land around the city and the impact on future development. Cllr Janice Boylan welcomed the Plan but expressed concerns about larger planning permissions going directly to An Bord Peanala. She is unhappy with the reliance on the private sector but said that taking into account persons in mortgage distress is a positive of the Plan. She asked that the Housing SPC meet monthly and also requested monthly progress reports. Cllr Alison Gilliland said that a protocol needs to be drawn up with regard to DCC communications to Councillors and the community. She said she would like to see DCC be main project manager across the city with responsibility for transport, social amenities, etc as well as provision of housing. DCC could build some units on larger sites for private sale and re-invest profits for social housing provision. To foster sustainable and inclusive communities she suggested building small clusters of housing with associated supports for

persons with disabilities. Cllr Pat Dunne said that he awaits details of response from HFA regarding funding options. He said there is an opportunity for DCC to become developers in direct provision of housing and the Land Initiative needs to be re-examined. DCC should provide all housing on their lands. Cllr Mícheál MacDonncha supports the request for monthly meetings of the Housing SPC. He feels that the Plan relies too much on the private sector. He said that communication is vital and he urged direct communication by DCC as soon as possible in development process. He said that the Land Initiative needs to be looked at again. He asked about provision of 1,000 units at North Fringe. Cllr Críona Ní Dhálaigh welcomed the Plan but noted that the actions here are what this Housing SPC have called for over the years. She suggested Dolphin Park as a suitable location for the Housing with Care Pilot. She expressed concerns with the overreliance on the private rented sector and said that DCC should provide housing on their own lands. While she is supportive of rapid build units she is concerned about delays. She also asked about progress on building at Bolton Street. Cllr Ray McAdam said that targets in the Plan have to be achievable. He agrees with Housing and Planning Sub-Committee. He also said that there is a demand for a secure private rented sector and as such this is reflected in the Plan. Cllr Sonya Stapleton welcomes the Plan. She said that children in homeless need to be protected and asked about child support services that families can access. She noted her concern at provision of only 10% public housing on Poolbeg site.

Céline Reilly advised that densification study to ascertain suitability for extra housing is currently being carried at four Senior Citizen complexes – Greendale Court, Covent View, Hampstead Court and Rossavel Court. She advised that the Financial Contribution Scheme is still available but is dependent on supply of available units. Site 1b adjacent to Thorton Heights (previously St. Michael's) has been chosen for the Housing with Care scheme with the intention to roll out to other areas if successful. Modular extensions have been looked at by the DCC structural engineer but have so far not been suitable for the specific sites. However, they will continue to be considered as properties come up. Cathal Morgan said that One-Shop-Stop will help address childcare issues. In the interim a play area is being created at Parkgate Hall. He also advised of staff in Focus, Sophia, Tulsa, De Paul Ireland who work with link in with children in homelessness. Plans for Bolton Street are currently developed by an AHB and are to be submitted to the Department of Housing for funding. He noted that the building has a heritage value and this slows down the progress and increases costs. Vacant buildings are not necessarily suitable for use as emergency accommodation as there may be issues with ownership, planning or location. He said that one of the successes of the Plan is reduction in emergency accommodation with a focus on a housing first approach. Tony Flynn agreed to provide Housing SPC members with a monthly report on the Housing Programme. He said that DCC will improve communication with Councillors and local communities through increased consultation and information sessions. With regard to Planning permissions he said it is intended that a pre-application stage meeting with a local planner prior to lodging a Planning Permission with an Bord Pleanála. A plot of land has been identified at Oscar Traynor site that may be suitable for units for older persons unit and accommodation for persons with a disability. DCC will work with FOLD and other groups to identify other suitable areas and develop plans. Lands at North Fringe are with a private developer and 10% of total units here will be for public housing. He gave a brief update on rapid build sites. Enabling works complete at Cherryorchard site and should be on site at St. Helena's in the coming weeks. He advised of stackable units discussed at recent presentation made by Lewisham. Could be used at infill sites when detenanting and used elsewhere for regeneration areas, student accommodation. The Poolbeg site will have a Part V requirement with 10% of units to be for social housing. He acknowledged that land values in the South East Area are always very high and will most likely be over the caps from the Department of Housing. He suggested that an option may be to buy land from developer and DCC build social housing units.

Brenda Kenny, Chief Executive said that DCC welcomes the Plan and he agreed to monthly meetings of the Housing SPC.

Agreed: Provide Housing SPC members with a monthly Housing Programme Report

Agreed: Monthly meetings of the Housing SPC to take place from September

2. Motions:

Motion Cllr Noeleen Reilly:

To Amend the Dublin City Council Housing Land initiative for Ballymun to include Social Housing of no less than 30% as similar to the other areas in the plan.

Cllr Noeleen Reilly advised that the Local Area Plan (LAP) for Ballymun does not allow for provision of social housing in future developments. She welcomes affordable housing and mixed tenure but said that the area needs a supply of social housing. Cllr David Costello said that this Motion should be referred to an Area Committee of the North West Area for discussion. Cllr Ray McAdam said that the Motion should be discussed as part of LAP process.

Céline Reilly advised that a review of tenure diversity in Ballymun is being carried out and she suggested that the motion be deferred until this review was complete

Cllr Noeleen Reilly said there are sites near the town centre in Ballymun that would be suitable for senior citizen accommodation. She asked that these sites be looked at for social housing and the LAP can address other vacant lands. She asked to put the Motion to a vote. Motion was carried.

Motion Cllr Janice Boylan:

That this housing spc calls on the housing manager to deviate from the scheme of lettings when it comes to detenancing the remaining blocks in O'Devaney Gardens. And also that each tenant will receive a letter of comfort informing them that they will not be legally forced to vacate the two remaining blocks. Recognising that if multiple offers that do not suit the tenant are made they will be refused as is their right and as has been done in the past. There must be full consultation and communication with these tenants and I am again appealing to the housing staff to meet with the tenants to give these commitments.

I am not suggesting we lose all sense of reason when it comes to alternative accommodation but what I am suggesting is that we accommodate the remaining tenants needs as quickly as possible. For example a young mother with two girls has been told she won't be considered for a three bed even though two bed accommodation is hard to come by in the area she is looking for and the fact she has a 16 year old and an 8 year old.

The practice of deviating from the scheme of lettings has been done on numerous occasions across Dublin. I'll name two Ballymun and Croke Villas.

So I am again calling on the manager to deviate from the strict scheme of lettings due to the exceptional nature of this motion. And offer the remaining tenants real alternative accommodation that may not match their needs on paper but make practical sense that will lead to them becoming housed in alternative accommodation quicker.

Céline Reilly advised that a meeting with the Area Housing Manager and the remaining residents at O'Devaney Gardens will be held to look at all available options to re-house these remaining residents which would allow the demolition of all the remaining blocks. She recommended that the motion be deferred until this was complete.

Cllr Janice Boylan asked to put the Motion to a vote. Motion was carried.

3. AOB:

On a separate note unrelated to the Agenda Céline Reilly advised all Councillors presents of the Housing Needs Assessment currently being undertaken and asked that Cllrs request that their constituents return the form as soon as possible if they wish to remain on the housing list.

Housing SPC members and other Councillors present thanked Cathal Morgan for all his hard work, professionalism and dedication during his time as Director of the Homeless Regional Executive and wished him well in his new position in the HSE.

In Attendance:

Councillors:

Janice Boylan, Christy Burke, Anthony Connaghan, David Costello, Patrick Costello, Daithí Doolan, Pat Dunne, Alison Gilliland, Ray McAdam, Criona Ní Dhálaigh, Cieran Perry, Sonya Stapelton

Sectoral Interests:

Officials:

Brendan Kenny, Céline Reilly, Tony Flynn, Cathal Morgan, Dáithí Downey, Colm Smith, Ali Grehan, Brian Swan, Nikki O'Hara, Elaine O'Kelly

Other Councillors:

Míchéal MacDonncha, Lord Mayor Brendan Carr, Noeleen Reilly, Ruairi McGinley, Éilis Ryan, Mannix Flynn

Others:

Maeve Hartnett (Dublin Simon in place of Catherine Kenny), Brian Lambe (ALONE in place of Kevin White), Peter Dopman (Community Action Network), Olivia Kelly, Lois Kapila, Michael Mulloonly, Michael McCarthy Flynn, John Cooke

Apologies:

Cllr Tina MacVeigh, Pat Doyle, Kathleen McKillion, Kevin White

Councillor Daithí Doolan
CHAIRPERSON