

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL,
HELD IN THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD
ON 15TH APRIL, 2019

C/132/19 MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs S Ó'Domhnaill (Cathaoirleach), L Blaney, E Bonner, C Brogan, P Canning, T Conaghan, G Crawford, N. Crossan, A Doherty, L Doherty, R Donaghey, E Gallagher, M. T. Gallagher, A Glackin, M Harley, J Kavanagh, N Kennedy, F McBrearty Jnr, M Mc Bride, JP McDaid, M McDermott, I Mc Garvey, P McGowan, B Mc Guinness, G McMonagle, M Naughton, J S O' Fearraigh, and T Slowey,

C/133/19 OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Seamus Neely, Chief Executive, Joe Peoples, Director of Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services / Meetings Administrator, John McLaughlin, Director of Roads & Transportation, Liam Ward, Director of Community & Planning Services, Michael Mc Garvey, A/Director of Water & Environment, Richard Gibson, A/Head of Finance, Mr John Gallagher , Senior Engineer, Housing & Corporate, Mr Patsy Lafferty, Senior Executive Officer, Ms Donna Mc Groarty, Administrative Officer, Anne Marie Conlon, Communications Officer, Sean O'Daimhin, Oifigeach na Gaeilge, Anne Marie Crawford, Staff Officer.

C/134/19 TO APPROVE THE CARRYING OUT OF WORKS IN ORDER TO DEMOLISH 3 NO. SINGLE STOREY DWELLINGS AND CONSTRUCT 4 NO. 3 BEDROOM/ TWO STOREY DWELLINGS FOR SOCIAL HOUSING PURPOSES, ON THE SAME SITE AT COTTAGE ROAD, DUNFANAGHY, CO DONEGAL.

Members considered the report circulated with the agenda in relation to the above.

On the proposal of Cllr O' Domhnaill, seconded by Cllr Blaney the carrying out of works with regard to the demolition of 3 No. single storey dwellings and the construction of 4 No. 3 bedroom/ two storey dwellings for social housing purposes, on the same site at Cottage Road, Dunfanaghy, Co Donegal under Part XI of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and Part 8 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001(as amended) was approved.

C/135/19 ADOPTION OF PREFERRED ROUTE CORRIDORS FOR THE TEN-T PRIORITY ROUTE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT IN DONEGAL

Members considered the report circulated prior to the meeting in relation to the above.

Cllr Mc Brearty read into the record correspondence from the Department of Culture, Heritage & Local Government advising that lands belonging to a named owner affected by the proposed road construction were not in a Special Area of Conservation or a Special Protected Area. He said that members needed to be adequately informed in relation to all the available information. The Cathaoirleach informed Cllr Mc Brearty that he should submit the letter to the Executive if he wished for it to be circulated to all members.

Cllr Brogan said that it had recently come to attention that a small number of landowners had still not been consulted or contacted and in light of same, he proposed, that the matter be deferred to the meeting on the 24th April. This was seconded by Cllr Blaney who expressed concern that members were being asked to make a decision when in fact the public had not been adequately updated in relation to the preferred route.

A lengthy debate ensued with members raising the following issues:-

- That the public needed to be satisfied with the process and all relevant information must be made available.
- Further consultation was needed and an update provided in relation to engagement with affected landowners.
- Query as to whether there was sufficient time between now and the 24th April to engage with any remaining landowners.
- That the project which would see up to €300 million invested in Donegal should not be delayed any further and should move as quickly as possible to the next stage of implementation.
- That there are specific safety issues in the area from Lurgybrack Hill to Lurgybrack School which need to be addressed. Remedial works at these locations it was noted would not require access.

- Clarity was needed in relation to the habitat issue as livelihoods were being affected.

Mr Damian Mc Dermott, Senior Engineer, NRO informed members that there had been four public consultation events all of which had been publicly advertised. It was noted that one to one meetings had been held over a five day period and that every effort had been made to facilitate all those who had attended. All submissions, he advised, had been taken on board and the scheme developed in accordance with the approval process and in line with national policy requirements. It would be possible, he said, to facilitate further consultation before the workshop on the 24th April and that members of the public seeking same should contact the NRO Office as soon as possible.

Mr John Mc Laughlin, Director Roads & Transportation said that the Council was well aware of the implications of the proposed route for the landowners concerned and noted that the advice from the consultants was that the lands alluded to earlier at Tullyrap /Drumnabradly were within a Special Area of Conservation.

The Cathaoirleach informed members that they should advise anyone who still required information on the emerging route corridors to contact Damian Mc Dermott and his team immediately.

It was thus agreed to defer the matter for consideration to the Special Meeting of Donegal County Council scheduled for the 24th April, 2019.

C/136/19

HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Members received a presentation on the Social Housing Need Profile from Mr Patsy Lafferty, Senior Executive Officer. He provided an overview of the following;-

- The housing need county-wide by Municipal District.
- Housing need by location within each Municipal District.
- Housing need based on household type/size.
- Vacancy Rates.
- Social Housing policy considerations.

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, updated members in relation to the Social Housing Programme paying particular attention to the following issues:-

- Rebuilding Ireland
- Donegal County Council Social Housing Targets 2018-2021
- Social Housing based on need.
- Social Housing Capital Programme
- Delivery Mechanisms

The Cathaoirleach said that the provision, upkeep and maintenance of housing were the primary function of every local authority. There was now, he acknowledged, a homelessness problem in Donegal and the authority was not doing enough to address the problem. Projected building targets of 60 units in 2020 and 60 units in 2021 were neither realistic nor satisfactory, he said, given that Government investment was clearly available. The Housing Construction team, he acknowledged, were doing an excellent job, but additional resources were needed to ensure that all Government assistance and funding was availed of.

A lengthy debate ensued with members highlighting the following:-

- That the building programme needed to deliver more new houses.
- There was a problem with homelessness in Donegal exacerbated by the fact that the private housing market had also reached its capacity.
- Indications were that funding was available at national level and that a specific set of criteria needed to be put in place to ensure that the building programme was advanced.
- Mica problem will increase the demand for accommodation in the next two to three years.
- Two bed accommodation should be the focus going forward.
- Apartment Blocks not an answer to the current problem.
- Building in urban areas was contributing to the decline and loss of services in rural communities. Families are moving into the towns and rural communities are being impacted.
- Towns with no infrastructure are being avoided.
- Clarity needed in relation to the provision of housing in areas of greatest need.

- Concern at the lack of provision in the Lifford area and why supply not tailored to local needs. Turnkey provision also an issue for the Lifford area.
- Sites identified needed to be suitable for building purposes.
- Downstairs bedroom and bathroom facilities need to be prioritised.
- Provision of S. I. Housing moving at a very slow pace.
- Town Centre regeneration an option for dealing with vacant properties.
- Towns and Villages need a specific footprint going forward with a dedicated emphasis on social and economic service provision, backed up with a dedicated land acquisition programme.
- Resources need to be in place to deal with any additional capital allocation.
- Serviced Site initiative needs to be actively pursued.
- County Development Plan at fault as it does not permit the development of smaller sites in rural areas.
- Retirement Village accommodation options need to be explored.
- Active involvement needed from the Oireachtas members.
- Query in relation to the Turnkey Development in Carrigart and the acquisition of units in Ramelton.
- Concern at the lack of uptake in relation to the Tenant Purchase Scheme.
- Glenties MD had not been given fair and equitable treatment with regard to housing provision.
- Additional housing maintenance staff needed.
- There needs to be engagement with NAMA and the banks regarding vacant accommodation.
- CPO process could be used to acquire additional units and greater interaction needed with local communities.
- General consensus that the H.A.P Programme was not a success.
- General Data Protection regulations impacting on ability of elected members to assist with housing queries.

The Chief Executive acknowledged that there were a number of constructive suggestions and strongly held views as to how social housing provision was to be progressed in Donegal. It was important to note, he added, that for the past ten years there had been little or no activity as a result of the economic downturn. The

Council was now tasked, he said, with moving the construction programme forward.

He acknowledged the considerable work done to date by housing staff, development of existing land bank , acquisition of additional land , procurement of Turnkey developments and acquisition of single houses were being progressed together to increase the provision of additional social houses to address the need.

The 188 unit target set for 2019 would, he confirmed, be met but there was general acceptance that this was not enough to meet current demands. He advised that there were plans to provide more units in subsequent years through the various mechanisms.

This concluded the business of the meeting.