

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE DHUN NA nGALL

Oifig Riartóir na gCruinnithe
Aras an Chontae
Leifear
5 Samhain, 2024

FOGRA CRUINNITHE

A Chara,

Beidh Cruinniú Speisialta den Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall ar siúl Dé Luain 11 Samhain, 2024 ag **11.00rn. in Áras an Chontae, Leifear.** Tá Clár an chruinnithe leis seo. Seolfar nasc leictreonach chuig an chruinniú i gcomhfhreagras eile.

Mise, le meas



Pádraig Ó Laifearthaigh
Riartóir Cruinnithe

DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

Office of Meetings Administrator
County House
Lifford.
5th November, 2024

TO EACH MEMBER OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

NOTICE OF MEETING

Dear Councillor,

A Special Meeting of Donegal County Council will be held on Monday 11th November 2024 at 11.00am in the County House, Lifford. The agenda for the meeting is attached. An online link to join the meeting will issue separately.

Yours sincerely



Patsy Lafferty
Meetings Administrator

AGENDA

1. Housing Capital Update.
2. S.I. Housing Update.
3. Disability/Independent Living.
4. To approve attendance at the Annual Transport Infrastructure Ireland delegation meeting in Dublin on Friday 22nd November, 2024.

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN
THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD ON THE 11TH NOVEMBER 2024**

C/367/24

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs J Kavanagh, Leas-Cathaoirleach, L Blaney, F Bradley, B Carr, D Coyle, D M Kelly, M Mc Bride, M Mc Clafferty, D Mc Gee, G Mc Monagle, A Molloy, M Naughton, D Nic Mheanman, J S O' Fearraigh, and M Scanlon.

Online: Cllrs, J Beard, M Boyle, C Brogan, J Brogan, P Canning, T Devine, A Doherty, A Farren, M Harley, M C Mac Giolla Easbuig, M Mc Dermott, P Mc Garvey, P Mc Gowan, and D Meehan.

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OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Liam Ward, Deputy Chief Executive/ Director Community Development & Planning Services, Patsy Lafferty, Director of Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services, Meetings Administrator, Bryan Cannon, Director Roads & Transportation, John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, Housing Capital, Eamonn Brown, Divisional Manager, Housing & Corporate, Claire Burke, Senior Executive Architect, Housing Design, Donal Walker, A/Senior Engineer, Housing Capital, Jim Boner, Senior Executive Engineer, Housing Design, Gillian Dempsey, Senior Executive Engineer, Donna Mc Groarty, Area Manager, Housing Design, Thomas Melly, Senior Staff Officer, Housing & Corporate, Róise Ní Laifeartaigh, Rannóg na Gaeilge, Dónall Mac Giolla Choill, Tacaíocht do Sheirbhísí Aistriúcháin, Frances Friel, Communications Officer, William Colvin, Assistant Communications Officer, Anne Marie Crawford, Staff Officer, Corporate Services.

C369//24

UPDATES IN RESPECT OF HOUSING CAPITAL, S.I. HOUSING, DISABILITY AND INDEPENDENT LIVING OPTIONS

Mr Patsy Lafferty, Director of Housing, Corporate & Cultural Services informed members that the presentation would outline housing targets and delivery statistics as applicable in November 2024. He said that progress updates would be provided in relation to the following and an overview of the key upcoming deliverables outlined:

- Inhouse Design projects
- Inhouse Construction Projects
- Turnkey Acquisitions
- Design & Build
- Letterkenny Flagship Projects.

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, Housing Capital updated members on the delivery process and the status of a number of projects as of November 2024 together with an analysis of the key upcoming deliverables.

Ms Claire Burke, Senior Executive Architect, Housing Design provided an overview of the various inhouse design projects being undertaken together with an update on their current status.

Mr Jim Boner, Senior Executive Engineer, Housing Design gave an overview of the inhouse construction projects including those on-site and those currently out for tender.

Ms Donna Mc Groarty, Area Manager, Housing Design, advised that the projected delivery for turnkey acquisitions over the period 2022-2026 was 307 representing a projected investment of €84m. She noted that by the end of 2024 173 turnkey units will be completed or on site and that approval is being sought for 5 further turnkeys encompassing 164 units. It was acknowledged that there were ongoing meetings with developers and that this had assisted the process.

Mr Donal Walker, Senior Engineer, Housing Capital, outlined the range of Design and Build projects being undertaken including referencing works at Barrackhill, Carndonagh, Gleneely, Malin and Oldtown, Letterkenny.

Ms Gillian Dempsey outlined the status of the Letterkenny Flagship Projects at Ballymacool and at the High Road.

Mr Eamon Brown, Divisional Manager, Housing & Corporate gave an update on SI Housing, outlining the application process involved, the various stage processes, and the consideration given to alternative accommodation options. An analysis of the range of SI applications was also provided. He proceeded to give an outline of the Housing Grants Scheme, the overall strategy in relation to housing for people with a disability including accommodation options under "Housing for All". Details were also provided on the provision of Group Homes under the Capital Assistance Scheme.

The meeting was opened to the floor and the following issues raised.

Issues Raised

- Lack of housing development in the Milford Electoral Area with towns such as Milford, Ramelton Rathmullan, Kerrykeel, Carrigart and Downings suffering. Smaller rural communities suffering, and the Council needs to support the retention of services in these localities. Reference made to Termon, Glenswilly and Churchill and the viability of services in these areas. Dedicated focus needed in this electoral area. Planned 10 units represent only 4% of the current housing need which currently stands at 254 units. Projects and sites need to be identified across the area.
- Number of stumbling blocks identified in terms of S.I Housing all of which are delaying the effective development of same including access to the N56 and other national roads. Noted that the provision of S.I. Housing had been very successful in the past.
- Houses where available and on the market should be bought if they can accommodate the specific housing need in an area.

- Growing number of people on the housing waiting list together with increased rents are contributing to the homelessness situation. Not enough social houses being built.
- People are being refused HAP on the basis that tenancies are becoming untenable due to increased rental costs.
- Concern regarding delays with ESB connections. Update requested.
- Building of extensions not an option down the road in many new housing schemes and thus not facilitating the needs of the elderly in the long-term.
- The Local Authority should get involved in the provision of care homes. Noted that the Habinteg model in Lifford was an excellent facility that should be replicated county-wide.
- Disability inclusive accommodation should be a priority. Specific need in the Milford Electoral Area.
- Local Authority should provide proper Homeless Shelters and not leave this to the private sector.
- Length of time involved in the procurement of housing is far too long. Benchmark prices provided by the Department are outdated for Donegal.
- Noted that there were serious problems in relation to the advancement of housing grants directly related to the fact that the HSE was having difficulty recruiting occupational therapists.
- Serviced site initiative worked very well in the past especially in and around Letterkenny.
- Group Homes should be provided for in all planned housing developments.
- Further detail required in relation to the feasibility of the water supply in Ballymacool given that the infrastructure in place is not adequate at present.
- Update requested in respect of the meeting held recently involving the various lending institutions and the Vacant Home team.
- Pre-Planning an issue in Inishowen in terms of housing development and as a result rural communities are suffering.
- Little or no emphasis in relation to housing provision on the Islands.
- Potential for traffic issues highlighted on the road from Ballymacool into Lower Main Street, Letterkenny as a result of development at that location. Concern that traffic volumes will have an impact for all road users going forward.
- Builders are struggling with current rates of payment, and this is impacting on adaptation and disability grants.
- Request that current HAP rates be reviewed, and the relevant body contacted in relation to amending same to make them more compatible with current rental prices.
- Letterkenny needs to be prioritised given that there are currently 1262 application for housing in the Letterkenny area.
- No reference to Ardara or Glenties.
- Uisce Éireann should be coming to Donegal County Council with their short and long term infrastructural plans.

- No mention of Laghey, Ballintra, Pettigo or Mountcharles where there is adequate service infrastructure.
- Drumrooske not mentioned in the update.
- No reference to Fintown and over 22 years since social housing was provided in Brockagh. Population declining and larger towns are bursting at the seams.
- Current policy pushing people to seek accommodation outside their own localities.

Queries

- What will happen to existing applications when the new criteria for housing adaptation grants is issued and how will existing applications be dealt with?
- Request that the Disability Access Officer be invited to address members on the work currently being undertaken under her remit and in relation to adaptation measures that could be incorporated into new and existing buildings.
- Query as to who is responsible for water upgrades, the overall cost of same together with the associated timelines involved.
- How many houses have been purposefully built for people with disabilities and what are the plans for same in the future?
- Are there any plans to build group houses in Kilmacrennan?
- What is the delay in letting the houses in Killylastin?
- How many houses will be built in Falcarragh and what are the dedicated timelines?
- What stage are the 29 houses in Falcarragh and has provision been made for independent living issues?
- Update needed regarding the houses in Annagry.
- What has happened in relation to “Serviced Sites” given that the Department sanctioned the acquisition of certain sites over a year ago.
- What is holding up the development of the houses behind the Fire station in Letterkenny and is this directly related to the presence of invasive species?
- Is the target of 11 S.I Houses identified in “Housing for All” an annual target.
- What is the process for applying for an S.I. House?
- Update sought on housing provision in Gweedore.
- Has any progress been made in terms of collaboration with Udarás na Gaeltachta.
- Query regarding Voluntary Housing in Raphoe.
- What is the situation regarding the provision of four bedroom accommodation?
- Will disability access be a standard feature in all new social housing stock?
- Does planning permission have to be sought again for the development in Newtowncunningham?

- Given that Policy RHP4 has been adopted in the new County Development Plan, has any effort been made to meet with developers in relation to housing provision on small rural sites?
- What has been done in terms of carrying out a survey of vacant houses in Housing Estates?
- What plans have the Council presented to Uisce Éireann in terms of capital investment in water and sewerage services over the next five years?
- Breakdown of turnkey developments by MD requested.
- Staged payment must be prioritised.

Mr Patsy Lafferty, Director Housing, Corporate & Cultural Services informed members that the presentation was available on eCouncil. He acknowledged the comments in relation to the progress to date and thanked the Housing team for their contribution. It was noted that a range of issues had been raised and highlighted and that updates would be provided where applicable.

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, advised that there had been a number of meetings with Uisce Éireann in relation to the developments at Old Town, Ballymacool and the High Road in Letterkenny encompassing 356 housing units. A confirmation of feasibility had been received, he confirmed, in relation to the Ballymacool site which was positive but also referenced the need for upgrade works. He said that an update would be provided going forward on how this would affect the existing houses in the area.

Clarification was provided in relation to the following:

- It was confirmed that there were 181 additional units to be catered for in Southern Letterkenny in addition to maintaining and ensuring a robust water supply for existing consumers. It was positive, he added, that a confirmation of feasibility had issued.
- The Council, he advised, was progressing projects in Letterkenny for social housing with Uisce Éireann being asked to define the works required to facilitate such development. The cost, it was noted, would be abnormal to the social housing projects concerned and would be sought from the Department. It was hoped, he said, that the projects in Letterkenny would act as a catalyst for Uisce Éireann to enhance project delivery in the area. Members would, it was confirmed, be updated in relation to the upgrades as soon as the connection offers became available.
- There was acknowledgement that there had been issues with service provision at the Killylastin site but that this was now in the process of being resolved. Mr Gallagher outlined the importance of early intervention in terms of interaction with the utility providers.
- It was confirmed that there had been an issue with Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam on the High Road site and that these would be dealt with at the design stages.

- With regard to the problems arising at preliminary stage it was confirmed that consultation was taking place in different towns around the county and that a number of turnkey projects were at pre-planning stage in towns such as Carndonagh, Muff, Buncrana and Moville. Land acquisition, it was noted, was being pursued in Moville.
- It was noted that ongoing efforts were being made to identify suitable sites for social housing in the correct locations in the Milford Electoral Area.

Mr Gallagher proceeded to inform members of the following:

- That the layout of the Gweedore and Derrybeg sites would be made available to the members.
- That the Sewerage Scheme in Dungloe was the responsibility of the Uisce Éireann and that the Council would have to make an application to connect. Issues raised by Cllr Mac Giolla Easbuig it was confirmed would be followed up outside of the meeting process.
- There were traffic implications arising from the proposed 300 units in Ballymacool but that the design works included a road safety audit and consideration as to where the additional traffic would go.
- That where applicable initial studies undertaken in respect of Newtowncunningham would be utilised.
- Killea is on the agenda and consideration is also being given to smaller towns and villages such as Derrybeg, Fintown etc where developments of 1-5 houses could be accommodated.
- Uisce Éireann to be briefed on Donegal County Council plans going forward at the next scheduled meeting in December. Update will be sought on their county-wide programme and the implications for housing development in Donegal.
- Update will be provided on the DCC lands at Ard Connell.
- Consideration being given to developments in Laghey and Mountcharles with discussions at an early stage.
- All areas of housing need being looked at in Brockagh, Cloghan and Fintown including the possibility for land acquisition for specific schemes.
- Department not in favour of staged payment and have indicated that payment is to be made only after completion of projects.

Mr Eamonn Browne, Divisional Manager, Housing & Corporate alluded to the fact changes to the Housing grants Scheme would see an increase in grant levels but would not cover the entire cost of any proposed works. Further guidance, he said, was awaited from the Department. In terms of existing applications, he noted that from past experience these had been treated in a sympathetic manner.

Responding to members in relation to a number of comments on the lack of occupational therapists to assess grant applications, he confirmed, that contact would be made with the HSE regarding same. It was the intention going forward, he added, to tender for OT services and draw up a dedicated listing that could be called upon. This under the service level agreement with the HSE would allow Donegal County Council to go to the

approved tender list should the HSE not be in a position to provide the service within a five-day working period. The cost of same, he added, would be deducted from the overall grant. There was a third option, he advised, in that the applicant could engage a private OT costing in the region of €300. It was envisaged, he confirmed, that the tender list would offer better value with the cost then deducted from the standard grant monies.

With regard to disabled applicants, members were informed that when a person qualifies for social housing support, they have to be capable of independent living and that where this is not possible a support plan is needed from the HSE. This support plan it was noted would be sought at the point of allocation.

Group Homes he advised were for individuals with high support needs and the AHBs and the HSE had the skill set to manage these. In terms of this type of accommodation it was noted that there were currently 15 units in Dungloe and 10 in Donegal Town with a further 10 planned for Castlefin, 5 in Drumkeen and 8 in Dungloe. With the support of the AHBs and the HSE it was planned to provide further units in Falcarragh and Gweedore.

Mr Browne noted that at least 20 units were needed in Letterkenny with consideration being given to the Ballymacool site.

In 2023 it was confirmed that 15% of social housing allocations had been made to those in the disabled category.

Responding to the query on the need for four bed accommodation, he said that schemes were drawn up based on need and that there was ongoing consultation involving the Housing Assessment Officer and the Area Manager in the relevant Municipal District.

He confirmed that an update would be provided in relation to the 29 units in Falcarragh being developed by Respond.

Comments in relation to the timelines for the provision of SIs were, he advised, noted and that continuing efforts were being made to improve and monitor same.

Cllr Mac Giolla Easbuig was informed that an update on his query in relation to accommodation in Raphoe would be provided outside of the meeting.

Mr Donal Walker, A/Senior Engineer advised of the following:

The project in Carrigart was expected to proceed to commencement but that issues in relation to wastewater treatment had yet to be teased out with the developer.

With regard to the Turnkey Scheme in Gweedore, it was confirmed that Uisce Éireann were looking to develop individual pods for the units at that location. It was noted that a letter of offer had issued and that this had confirmed that there would be no impact on the overall network or on any other connections.

Approval was in the process of being sought for the development of 25 units in Falcarragh.

The department had approved the development in Annagry and it was now proceeding to final tender stage.

Ongoing dialogue was taking place with the developer in Killea.

Contracts had been exchanged in respect of the Drumrooske project and work was due to commence shortly.

The Department had confirmed that it would not be possible to facilitate staged payments.

The current Turnkey Scheme was valid until 2026 and that it was possible to look at small scale developments in smaller towns and hamlets. He encouraged members to actively promote this initiative as the Housing Capital team would be happy to meet with developers in relation to the small-scale development.

Mr Liam Ward Deputy Chief Executive said that following on from the last Special Meeting and the item on vacancy and dereliction, a meeting had taken place with the various lending institutions and that an update on same would issue in due course.

Responding to comments on the carrying out of a survey in relation to vacant properties in Housing Estates, he said that plans to fully implement same had been delayed given the success of the Croí Conaithe Scheme, but that it was intended to proceed with same as soon as resources became available. He said that he would check whether or not Newtowncunningham was on this list.

Concluding, he said that the meeting had been useful and informative and that the value of holding these Special Meetings was clear. He acknowledged the work and ongoing effort of the Housing team. It was intended, he said that the Special Meeting scheduled for the 9th December would commence at 10am.

C/370/24 T.I.I DELEGATION 22ND NOVEMBER 2024

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

On the proposal of Cllr Mc Bride, seconded by Cllr Mc Monagle it was

to approve the attendance of members at the Annual Transport Infrastructure Ireland delegation meeting in Dublin on Friday 22nd November, 2024.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Cathaoirleach: _____

Dated: _____