

HOUSING STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING

FRIDAY 21ST NOVEMBER 2014

MINUTES

1. Minutes of meeting dated 16th October and matters arising:

On the foot of a scheduled meeting with Minister Kelly to discuss homelessness that was cancelled the Lord Mayor Cllr Christy Burke requested that the Housing SPC write to the Minister. He also asked for an update on B&Bs and hotels used to accommodate homeless families. Cllr Ray McAdam requested amendments to the Minutes of meeting dated 16th October 2014. Note disappointment that calls for expressions of interest was not agreed.

The Chair apologised to the sectoral members of the SPC who were excluded from taking a vote regarding expressions of interest at the last meeting.

2. Chairperson's Business:

- **Sub-committees**

The Chair advised that the sub-committees meetings on Pre-63, DCC Housing Stock Standards and Innovative Housing will start in January. She advised any members who have yet to confirm their interest to be on any of these sub-committees to register their preference with the Manager.

- **Traveller Accommodation Update**

The DCC Traveller Accommodation Programme Report was forwarded to the members prior to the meeting.

Lorraine McMahon welcomed the presentation and said that the inclusion of a Traveller Accommodation update at the SPC meetings is a positive step. She requested that land at Labre Park Development be ring fenced to accommodate the inclusion of traveller specific accommodation here. She welcomed the provision of additional sanitation facilities but expressed her concerns at the rental cost of sanitation units. She requested existing sanitation facilities be upgraded as many are in poor repair. Cllr Mannix Flynn said that the high cost of temporary sanitation is unacceptable and asked for more information on the proposal or tender regarding this. Cllr Tina MacVeigh enquired about ring fencing land for traveller specific accommodation and said that extra discussion is needed on this issue. Cllr David Costello enquired about a site visit to traveller accommodation.

The Chair welcomed site visits to Traveller specific accommodation and asked the Manager to organise.

Céline Reilly, Executive Manager said that consideration will be given to an allocation of housing to Travellers as part of any new development. She noted that Clúid are currently preparing a redevelopment plan for Labre Park. These discussions are ongoing. In relation to the upgrade of existing units, Céline advised she had approved a tender to look at replacing the units pending the redevelopment of Labre Park.

Cllr Pat Dunne said that plans for traveller accommodation need to be looked at. He also enquired as to why sanitation units took so long to be installed and asked what maintenance works need to be done to address this issue. Lorraine McMahon said that sanitation units were only meant as a temporary measure and were never intended for long term use. Kathleen McKillion advised that CENA, established by the Irish Traveller Movement as the first Traveller-led Approved Housing Body (AHBs) has funding for 2 pilot schemes to develop traveller specific accommodation. DCC could submit a proposal for this.

The Chair asked what Irish Water's policy will be in the event of non-payment of water charges arising from DCC tenancies and asked for confirmation that DCC will not charge DCC tenants any outstanding water charges.

Céline Reilly advised that as of the date of meeting no notification has come from the DOECLG regarding policy here and therefore no comment could be made at this point in time.

3. NESC Report 138

An Executive Summary from the National, Economic & Social Council (NESC) entitled *Social Housing at Crossroads: Possibilities for Investment, Provision & Cost Rental* was forwarded to the members prior to the meeting. Rory O'Donnell of NESC gave presentation which outlined the 3 main problem areas of housing provision faced by Local Authorities, AHBs and the private rented sector – 1) Finance; 2) Policy & 3) Direct public policy influence on supply. Reform of public housing is urgently needed but there is a lack of funding available to achieve this. Stakeholders need to work together to achieve link-up between the 3 factors in order to develop sustainable development.

The Chair thanked NESC for the presentation and pointed out that its findings echo suggestions made by this SPC in the past. She noted that Report 138 had not been discussed in the Dáil yet but when published would hope that it would form part of the Housing Strategy.

Cllr Cieran Perry said that the private rented sector is not sustainable option in the long term. Housing should provide for all, creating a social mix as a result. This requires sufficient funding. The Lord Mayor Cllr Christy Burke welcomed any development to address the housing crisis and would hope to see this Report implemented in the future. Cllr David Costello expressed his concern at the number of AHBs in operation. He also enquired about proposal to create municipal housing bodies within Local Authorities. Cllr Mannix Flynn expressed his concern about the over reliance on AHBs. Cllr Pat Dunne said he would support implementing the recommendations into policy and asked what steps can be taken to achieve this. He cited the need to develop the various sites around the city, many of which have planning permission. Cllr Ray McAdam said that the private rented sector is increasingly becoming a long-term option for many. He called for greater regulation and protection for those renting from commercial landlords who need long term security. Kathleen McKillion advised the members present that AHBs face further regulations and 164 have signed up to a voluntary regulation code and are also coming under the remit of the current PRTB. The ICSH has 12 large AHBs as members (managing over 300 homes) with 8 of these approved/certified to borrow directly from the Housing Finance Agency. The remainder of AHBs have between 50-300 units (38) and the rest (approximately 300) are smaller operations with less than 50 units in management with an average of 5-10 properties in communities throughout the country.

The Chair enquired as to the official standing of these recommendations. Rory O'Connor replied that NESC report do not form part of government policy and their findings are noted by Department of Taoiseach before publication of any reports.

Agreed: Forward on presentation to Housing SPC members

4. Intensive Inspection Programme re: Private Rented Dwellings

A Report on the Intensified Inspection Programme (IIP) of Private Rented Dwellings was forwarded to the members prior to the meeting. Colm Smyth, Principal Environmental Health Officer gave presentation updating the Intensive Inspection Programme. Environmental Health Officers have investigated a large volume of pre-63 multi dwellings units on the North and South side of the city with the aim of improving housing standards. To date 3,000 properties have been brought up to standard. Prohibition notices are served where landlords fail to meet conditions of compliance letters. In these instances the landlord cannot re-let the unit until improvements are made and they cannot evict a tenant where works need to be carried out. This programme has effectively target non-compliant dwellings and improved not just the property but the immediate environment too.

The Chair commended the excellent work carried out by the Environmental Health Officers over the past 2 years and called on the Housing SPC to support continued funding here. This was echoed by the members present and all present supported continued funding here.

Cllr Ray McAdam enquired about fire regulations. The IIP has been successful in targeting multi-unit dwellings but there is a need to address multi-let properties where fire regulations are different. He would like the Pre-63 sub-committee to look at this. Brendan MacConville asked about the percentage of pre-63 properties investigated. He noted that the size of units here are generally quite small. Cllr Anthony Connaghan asked about properties let to RAS tenancies that don't meet standards. Cllr Alison Gilliland asked what building standards are measured against. Cllr Pat Dunne said that in his experience landlords use non-compliance as an excuse to evict tenants and when improvements are made rents increase. Cllr Mannix Flynn said that Waste Management need to be involved. He also enquired about student accommodation and asked who are in these units, and who owns them.

The Chair and the members present asked for contribution from Bob Jordan of Threshold. As a non-member attending on behalf of Aideen Hayden it was agreed by those present to let him contribute to the debate.

Bob Jordan said that Threshold are in constant contact with Colm Smyth and his team regarding sub-standard accommodation across the city. No tenant is losing their home as a result of their landlord's non-compliance. Standards change over time and what was acceptable before may no longer be allowable.

The Chair said that a lot of tenants in pre-63 units are in receipt of rent allowance and asked if Social Welfare are notified if landlord is not compliant. Cllr Sonya Stapleton raised an issue at Bethen House in Sandymount where tenants have been told to leave because of condition of building. They would all be happy to stay here but can't.

Colm Smyth thanked the SPC for their support. Regulations take time to implement. Need to review housing regulations as to what works and what doesn't. Also need to take into account the age of the some properties. There are over 20,000 affected properties in the DCC administrative area of which 6,500 have been inspected by the Environmental Health Officers. Pre-63 dwellings are generally small and he noted there is no regulation with regard to size. Environmental Health Officers work closely with the RAS unit and asked Cllr Connaghan to discuss particular case directly. An overall co-ordinated approach is taking by the Environmental Health Officers and referrals are made to Dublin Fire Brigade, Waste Management and the PRTB where necessary. No knowledge of Bethen House and asked Cllr Stapleton if this is a voluntary housing scheme. Don't actively inspect AHBs and suggested that management may have decided to shut down.

Cllr Ray McAdam enquired as to where things stand regarding funding for continuation of programme. Gerry Geraghty, Executive Manager said that initial discussions with the DOECLG to continue funding here have been positive. Cllr Mannix Flynn asked for reports to be broken down by Area. These reports need to be included at Area Committee Meetings. Colm Smyth said that he would look at this but advised that it would be very time consuming.

Agreed: Forward on presentation to Housing SPC members
Agreed: Housing SPC supports the continuation of funding of Environmental Health Officers to carry out the work of the Intensified Inspection Programme.

5. Report of the Task Force on Addiction and Homeless Pathways (including update on DePaul Peters Place)

A Report of the *Task Group Examining the Development of a Pathways Model for Homeless People experiencing Addiction* was forwarded to the members prior to the meeting. A briefing paper entitled *Supports for People Experiencing Addiction in the Context of Homelessness* was circulated to the SPC members present. This report was jointly presented by Cathal Morgan, Director of Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) DRHE and Joe Doyle, National Planning Specialist for the HSE. David Carroll, Director of Services at DePaul Ireland was also in attendance. Cathal Morgan advised the members present that homeless services have changed over the last few years. Funding is provided for long-term supported accommodation for those who have difficulties sustaining independent living. The Housing First initiative addresses chronic rough sleepers with intensive case management support. Homeless Action Team provides support to families in emergency accommodation. He stressed that DRHE do not fund 'wet' hostels. Services are provided to people with complex addiction and mental health issues. Support abstinence hostels but cannot demand that any person enters a treatment programme. Criteria needs to be met before treatment programmes can be entered into. The Lexis Programme is a consultant led psychiatric programme that runs from Parkgate Street. In-depth review of types of services needed is ongoing. There are currently 97 temporary beds available for people leaving treatment programmes. This is to be increased to 116 beds in 2015. Need better synergy between Homeless Services and addiction services. If a bed isn't right sobriety may be compromised. DePaul Ireland are now managing service at YMCA and are moving towards supporting independent living. Remaining service users at YMCA will be given supports to address recovery and housing needs. Also need to support needs of those who don't wish to enter recovery/treatment programme.

Cllr Cieran Perry expressed his dismay that a successful drug and alcohol facility such as the former YMCA would be changed. He said that the lack of services available to families needs to be addressed and called to retain the 300 drug free beds at the YMCA. Cllr Patrick Costello said that the St. Catherine's Foyer and YMCA were the only 2 drug free facilities to refer young people to. Cllr Mannix Flynn said that De Paul Ireland did not consult the local community as to the change in service provision here. There was also no consultation with the local community regarding the proposal for the Longfields Hotel. Cllr Flynn said there is a need to invest in detox/rehab programmes, but he also said that each individual needed to address their addictions for themselves in order to aid successful recovery. Cllr Pat Dunne said that there is a need to offer reasonably safe accommodation to persons who enter homeless. He gave example of St. Catherine's Foyer as a facility where people feel safe and said that this needs to be echoed elsewhere.

The Chair said St. Catherine's Foyer is strongly supported by the local community here, and it was this local support that helped retain the services here when changes were proposed. She asked what the standing of the report is in Homeless Services. She also asked about supported accommodation for persons leaving treatment programmes and the role of Outreach Workers.

Cathal Morgan replied that the changes to the former YMCA will offer more services to young people with substance abuse issues. He said that no tenants at the former YMCA are being evicted. There needs to be greater interaction between Homeless Services and Addiction services with the role of Outreach Workers to assess housing needs of those leaving treatment programmes. He advised that not everyone leaving treatment programmes needs to enter Homeless Services. There have been significant efforts to retain drug and alcohol beds but there is also a need to adapt services to changing demands on facilities. He said

that TUSLA should be invited to a future meeting of SPC to give a presentation on aftercare programmes.

Cathal Morgan also advised on the Rough Sleeping Homeless Count which took place on 11th November 2014 across the 4 Dublin Local Authorities. There were 168 persons sleeping rough. There were over 1,526 adults in emergency accommodation.

Agreed: Forward on briefing paper to Housing SPC members and letter from the Homeless Network supporting the reconfiguration of Peters Place (former YMCA)

In Attendance:

Councillors:

Críona Ní Dhálaigh, Lord Mayor Christy Burke, Cieran Perry, Pat Dunne, Sonya Stapleton, Ray McAdam, Anthony Connaghan, Chris Andrews, David Costello, Patrick Costello, Alison Gilliland, Noel Rock, Dáithí Doolan, Tina MacVeigh

Sectoral Interests:

Sue Taylor, Brendan MacConville, Kathleen McKillion, Lorraine McMahon, Bob Jordan (on behalf of Aideen Hayden)

Officials:

Céline Reilly, Gerry Geraghty, Cathal Morgan, Dáithí Downey, Gerry Folan, Colm Smyth, Mary Hayes, Elaine O'Kelly

Other Councillors:

Mannix Flynn

Invited Speakers:

Rory O'Donnell, NESG; Joe Doyle, HSE

Others Present:

Noel Cahill, NESG; Larry O'Connell, NESG; Anne-Marie McGauran, NESG; Dermot Murphy, David Carroll, DePaul Ireland

Apologies:

Pat Doyle, Lillian Buchanan, Aideen Hayden

Councillor Críona Ní Dhálaigh

CHAIRPERSON