



**Report to the Planning & Urban Form
Strategic Policy Committee February 2023.
No. 3 on the Agenda**

**Reviewing Dublin City Council's role in Supporting Childcare provision in
Dublin City.**

Introduction

1) At a meeting of Dublin City Council in June 2022, in response to issues relating to childcare provision, the CE commissioned a study by 'Unique insight' Consultants, with a brief to look at the current role the Council plays in supporting the sector, and what potential it might have in facilitating childcare services in the city.

The Consultant's 57 page report included 8 recommendations, in relation to the following areas: -

- I) Strengthening Relationships, including those with the Childcare Committee, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and the Department of Education.
- II) Enhancing how information is captured and shared.
- III) Providing advice and sharing experience.
- IV) Regularisation of lease/licence agreements
- V) Exceptional circumstances pertaining to Change of Use (e.g. when developer cannot find a childcare provider to occupy a premises).
- VI) Repurposing existing premises for childcare use.
- VII) A Childcare Contribution fund (in cases where a childcare facility may not be viable or needed in a particular development).
- VIII) The preparation of a Policy Statement setting out the Council's future role in supporting childcare provision.

2) The Consultant's Report, together with the CE's preliminary responses, were considered at the Planning SPC meeting on 7th Dec 2022. A number of actions were identified at this SPC meeting which are summarised as follows:

1. Establishment of Sub-Group to work on recommendations.

2. Map of childcare facilities and utilise as a tool where needs emerge in the future.
3. Ask Dep. to update the current childcare guidelines for planning and alongside this the relevant elements of the Apartment Guidelines on challenges in urban infill setting in relation to childcare.
4. Address exemption that 1-2 bed BTR apartments have from requirement for childcare for every scheme over 75 units.
5. Look at methods of reducing costs, such as management of finances and explore possibility of merging childcare requirements so a larger viable facility is delivered rather than unviable smaller ones.
6. Representative from planning on the childcare committee; greater co-ordination between both organisations; New protocols with childcare committee.
7. Development Plan should include guidelines on siting and design of childcare.

3) **Membership of Sub Group**

The Chair to clarify and confirm membership of Subgroup. It is recommended the Subgroup comprise 3 members of the SPC, and 3 from the Council Executive.

4) **Terms of Reference for Sub-Group of SPC**

- I) To investigate ways of presenting the list of childcare services (currently held by the Childcare Committee) in map form, together with areas of population growth (using Housing Task Force data which is geo-referenced), to assist with an analysis of the distribution of childcare facilities in the city and where locational gaps exist.
- II) To examine the Apartment Standard Guidelines (which states in part 4.7 that a review is to be progressed), having regard to the guidance that “one-bedroom or studio type units should not be generally considered to contribute to a requirement for any childcare provision and subject to location, this may apply in part or whole to units with two or more bedrooms”, so that the SPC can make representations to the Minister for Housing.
- III) To explore methods within the City Council’s powers of reducing the cost of childcare provision, and the possibility of merging childcare requirements so a large viable facility is delivered instead of non-viable smaller facilities. Note that sub-group recommendations may need to be addressed in any update/review of the Childcare Guidelines, and possibly in legislation.
- IV) To explore systems (if any) to facilitate combining funding to enable delivery of fitted out childcare spaces of an appropriate scale, possibly as part of large projects (such as housing).
- V) To review development plan standards in relation to childcare (over and above those standards which are properly under the control of TUSLA); setting out planning policies and planning standards in relation to location,

scale, access and parking which future childcare facilities should incorporate, which could then be included, where relevant to planning, by variation into the City Development Plan.

- VI) To investigate ways to strengthen data sharing and working relationships between key stakeholders, including the City Childcare Committee, Department of Children (DCEDIY), Dept. of Education and the City Council; such Data Sharing to include keeping the childcare committee informed when potentially suitable premises for childcare becomes available from the City Council's portfolio.
- VII) To explore on ways to regularise the criteria DCC use in delivering leases/licences in relation to childcare providers, including those in mixed use buildings.
- VIII) To investigate whether a legally enforceable childcare contribution fund can be established which developers would contribute to in circumstances where it is demonstrated that a childcare facility in a particular location is not viable or necessary.
- IX) Having regard to the outcome of the work and analysis in I to VIII above, to advise on the content of a Policy Statement/Position paper to give clarity to all stakeholders, including parents/guardians, on DCC's future role in supporting childcare provision, and the precise relationship with other organisations involved in childcare, including the Dept. of Children and Youth.

John O'Hara
Dublin City Planning Officer.
February 2023