

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE DHUN NA nGALL

Oifig Riarthóir na gCruinnithe
Aras an Chontae
Leifear
16 Eanáir, 2025

FOGRA CRUINNITHE

A Chara,

Beidh Cruinniú Speisialta den Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall ar siúl Dé Céadaoin 22 Eanáir, 2025 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
Riarthóir Cruinnithe

DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

Office of Meetings Administrator
County House
Lifford.
16th January, 2025

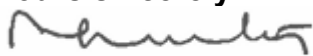
TO EACH MEMBER OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

NOTICE OF MEETING

Dear Councillor,

A Special Meeting of Donegal County Council will be held on Wednesday 22nd January 2025 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. Design & Build Projects Update.
3. Letterkenny Flagship Projects Update.
4. Date of next Special Plenary Meeting – 25th February 2025.

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD ON THE 22nd JANUARY 2025

C/1/25

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs N Kennedy, Cathaoirleach, J Beard, F Bradley, J Brogan, B Carr, D Coyle, T Crossan, A Doherty, A Farren, M Farren, M Harley, N Jordan, D McGee, P Mc Gowan, M Mc Mahon, G Mc Monagle, D Meehan, A Molloy, J Murray, D Nic Mheanman, and J S. O' Fearraigh. *Online:* Cllrs, L Blaney, M Boyle, T S Devine, G Doherty, J Kavanagh, D M Kelly, M C Mac Giolla Easbuig, M Mc Clafferty, M Mc Dermott, M Naughton and M Scanlon.

C/2/25

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Liam Ward, Deputy Chief Executive/ Director Community Development & Planning Services, Patsy Lafferty, Director of Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services, Meetings Administrator, John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, Housing Capital, Donal Walker, Senior Engineer, Housing Capital Claire Burke, Senior Executive Architect, Gillian Dempsey, Housing Design, Donna Mc Groarty, Area Manager, Housing Design/Construction, 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.

C/3/25

**HOUSING CAPITAL UPDATE – DESIGN AND BUILD PROJECTS
AND AN OVERVIEW OF THE LETTERKENNY FLAGSHIP
PROJECTS**

Mr Patsy Lafferty, Director Housing, Corporate & Cultural Services informed members that an update on Housing Capital activity would be presented together with an overview of the Letterkenny Projects.

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, outlined in detail the progress to date in relation to Turnkey Acquisitions, the overall 2023 Turnkey Process and ongoing developments with regard to In House Design and Construction Projects. This included an overview of projects on site together with those at the Part 8 stage of application, updated information on the appointment of consultants and detail in relation to ongoing site investigations. It was noted that there had been a meeting with Uisce Éireann on the 17th January to review projects and that currently several tendered projects were at draft review stage. An update in relation to S.I Housing was also provided.

Mr Donal Walker, Senior Engineer outlined the progress to date on a number of Design and Build Projects. He advised of the advantages in using this method of delivery and noted that the Housing Agency had developed a guidance document as a contractual mechanism for encouraging the use of modern methods of construction. Specific

examples were provided outlining the progress on a number of such projects county-wide.

Ms Gillian Dempsey, Senior Executive Engineer, highlighted the progress to date with regard to the Letterkenny Flagship Projects incorporating the Ballymacool Project with 165 units and the High Road Project providing 150 units. A detailed assessment of the current status of both projects was provided.

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, thanked the Cathaoirleach and members for their attention and engagement. He said that these meetings afforded an opportunity to update members in relation to the challenges and obstacles encountered in terms of housing delivery.

In terms of that progress, he said, that under “Housing for All Programme 2022-2026” 267 houses had been completed and that 313 units were currently under construction across the various delivery mechanisms with 40 additional houses to be provided under the Design & Build Framework giving a total of 353 under construction at present.

The next phase, he said, was the 111 units due to go out to tender in the first quarter of 2025. It was noted that there were also 48 houses in the planning process at present encompassing projects at Oldtown, Milford and Kilmacrennan. It was confirmed that a further 96 units were also at planning stage under the Turnkey process.

He alluded to the Letterkenny Flagship Projects and the planning and due diligence that was required with projects of this scale. Land acquisition was being pursued, he added, to meet with the growing demand for accommodation. There were, he stated, challenges in certain towns and villages and whilst there had been considerable success to date the crucial element was to find land that was suitable for development.

Mr Patsy Lafferty, Director of Housing, Corporate & Cultural Services noted that the delivery of housing was now on a different sphere and the focus on the lease of social housing had now diminished with a greater emphasis on building suitable accommodation. The economic downturn, he said, had seen Housing Capital Teams decimated. The introduction of the “Housing For All” initiative, had, he advised, created a renewed focus on the building of houses and the updates provided earlier clearly indicated where the focus is now. This level of activity, he added, needed to continue and it was clear that there were a number of obstacles to be overcome. He cited difficulties in terms of wastewater

treatment, water availability, the defective concrete block crisis and staffing and resource issues as items that had to be dealt with going forward.

He said that under the current programme funds were available to acquire lands and that this was critical for housing delivery now and into the future. The benefits were now being seen, he added, and housing provision was in a much better place today.

Cllr Mac Giolla Easbuig at this juncture apologised to the Cathaoirleach in relation to comments he had made at the previous meeting.

A lengthy debate ensued with members raising the following issues.

- That the Special Meetings relating to housing issues should be held at MD level.
- Uisce Éireann must be contacted in relation to sewerage infrastructure in Derrybeg so that the housing delivery can progress. Continued engagement needed in terms of the provision of sewerage infrastructure county-wide.
- More houses need to be built if the “Housing For All” targets are to be met with a dedicated focus on the design and build aspect.
- Should be an audit of the various housing delivery mechanisms so as to ascertain what can be done to speed up the building process given that families are being forced to leave Donegal due to the lack of social housing.
- Lack of housing is leading to the decimation of rural areas.
- Imperative that planning issues in respect of the 29 houses in Falcarragh are sorted. Sewerage infrastructure must be prioritised.
- S.I Housing policy must be streamlined to enhance provision.
- Buying of empty and vacant houses in towns and villages and those in housing estates could help alleviate the problem.
Dedicated scheme needed
- Insulation should be priority when houses are being built.
- More innovation needed in terms of incorporating play areas, community housing facilities etc at design stage.
- Islands being left behind in terms of housing provision.
- Tendering process may discriminate against local contractors and consideration needs to be given to utilising local developers.
- Progress is still too slow, and it is taking too long to get developments finished given the numbers presenting as homeless at present.

- Needs to be some form of intervention to assist with rising rental costs.
- Welcomed the fact that there is engagement with Uisce Éireann and that there is wastewater capacity in Letterkenny at present as the system is operating at 42% to 44% capacity.
- Highlighted the need to invest in water/wastewater infrastructure as a matter of urgency.
- Water capacity issues for existing residents in Letterkenny must be addressed prior to the construction of the aforementioned flagship projects.
- Need to work in tandem with Uisce Éireann and the Department of Transport etc to ensure that planned developments in Letterkenny do not give way to traffic congestion.
- Concern re the amount of outside expertise used in the delivery of housing in the county and advocated the use of in-house capabilities.
- Donegal County Council needs a strategy for dealing with people who present as homeless. Emergency Accommodation needed urgently.
- Consideration needs to be given to sourcing building materials, concrete products etc outside of Donegal to ensure that they are free of defective materials.
- Must be an agreed national standard for concrete products and materials as the presence of a particular standard for Donegal is creating numerous problems.
- Testing for deleterious materials must start in the quarries so that the aggregates do not go into the building materials. Robust national standard is needed.
- Five Bedroomed houses must be included in the overall programme.
- Lessons have to be learned from the past and cognisance taken of the problems created by unfinished estates.
- Problems with the Council's own housing stock need to be addressed and a social housing remediation scheme for defective concrete block houses put in place as soon as possible. Concern raised in respect of
- Ard na Guaile Duibhe Estate in Moville where houses are in a dangerous condition.
- Social Housing Remediation Scheme must be a priority for the incoming Government. Increased lobbying needed and local Oireachtas members to be contacted regarding same.
- Serviced Site initiative offers a reasonably priced housing option.
- Concern raised that the rehousing of tenants impacted by the

defective concrete blocks crisis is utilising available accommodation and as a result having no impact on the current waiting list.

- Houses must be tested for deleterious materials at the building stage.
- Land acquisition for housing development in Gweedore and Gortahork must be actively pursued.
- Need to look at the possibility of introducing specific liabilities and penalties in instances where developments are not finished on time.

Queries

- How is it intended to meet the Irish language requirements given that it has been identified in the new County Development Plan that a proportion of units in each new Housing Estate is to be allocated to people fluent in the Irish language.
- Will the turnover clause in the tendering process rule out local contractors from tendering to build projects?
- With regards the quality and pricing aspect is there a minimum price that would be accepted?
- What plans have Uisce Éireann for the reservoir in Rahan?
- Update requested in relation to the Cluid Houses at Glencar and Kiltroy, and the tenant -in-situ houses at Ballymacool.
- With regard to the “Housing for All” and the Donegal County Council projected delivery targets what is the total number of projects on site at the end of January, given that it was envisaged that 614 units would have been delivered?
- What is projected number of projects for the first quarter in 2025?
- Has there been any significant impact on interest for social housing and private housing delivery by the basic unit costs that are issued annually and how did they change in 2024?
- What impact and change would it benefit and attract further developers and impact housing provision in the county?
- In terms of site investigations does the basic unit cost in its imposition restrict or prevent or reduce the interest from developers?
- Is there any update in relation to water and wastewater capacity issues in Carndonagh?
- In terms of issue raised at previous meetings in relation to the Approved Housing Bodies, has a response been forthcoming?
- Request that an emergency option be put in place for DCB homeowners in light of the impending Storm Éowyn and the danger to life warnings issued in advance of same.

- Has there been any progress in acquiring lands behind the old Fire Station in Falcarragh?
- What can be done to reduce the high cost of building materials?

On the proposal of Cllr Kennedy, seconded by Cllr A Farren it was resolved that the local Oireachtas members be invited to attend a future Special Housing Meeting in order to receive the relevant updates and hear at first hand the issues being encountered on the ground.

Cllr Mc Monagle said that updates on a range of issues were provided to the Oireachtas Members at scheduled meetings with the Corporate Policy Group.

Mr Patsy Lafferty, Director Housing, Corporate & Cultural Services noted that both the executive and the members were on the same wavelength with regard to social housing remediation and the fact that it needed to be up and running. Contact had been made with the Department, he said, to follow-up on issues raised at the last meeting on the 5th December, 2025 and to arrange a further meeting.

With regard to Ballymacool, he confirmed that a meeting had been held with the vendors and the engineers and that the vendor had confirmed that he was happy to enter into discussions again. He said it was hoped to have a number of weekly meetings going forward and ultimately to conclude the process. In the interest of the affected tenants, he said that it was hoped to continue the meetings and to keep the Letterkenny/Milford members updated on the progress.

Concluding, he noted that the focus of “Housing for All” was on new builds and that there had been progress in terms of acquisitions with the 2024 target of ten units exceeded. He advised that there were plans for more in the pipeline but that the 2025 target figures had not been received to date.

Acknowledging comments from Cllr Murray in relation to Crana Crescent, he said, that generally the approach was to engage locally with communities in relation to any issues that might arise.

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer informed members that in certain instances where the main sewer is not available a site suitability is carried out and where possible to incorporate a standard treatment plant on site to allow developments proceed. Cognisance was also taken of developments connected to the main sewerage system that might facilitate additional units going forward. He said that the provision

of a standard treatment plant on site did however limit the number of houses that could be built. Every effort, he said, was made to connect to the main sewer so that maximum development could take place. It was acknowledged that this presented certain challenges in a number of towns and villages.

In relation to the tendering process, he confirmed that a robust review system was in place. He said that he could appreciate the comments made by members in relation to the use of local contractors and developers. It was noted that there were a number of substantial projects ongoing at present and that these were by and large being undertaken by local companies.

The implication of traffic associated with a development and the impact that a social housing development will have on an area was very relevant and was dealt with under the road safety aspect with roads audits and traffic impact assessments carried out routinely.

It was noted that a review of standards was taking place nationally in relation to blocks and aggregates and that the introduction of a new standard would be welcomed. In the meantime, he said, that the Council wanted to build houses to a specification which is robust and thus testing is carried out before concrete and aggregates are delivered to the sites.

Land acquisition was, he confirmed, being progressed in towns and villages and also in relation to smaller pieces of land county-wide. Housing need it was acknowledged was reviewed regularly and a focus placed on those areas that had an identifiable housing need.

He informed members that a meeting had taken place with the Approved Housing Body in Letterkenny regarding the Kilty site and that Cluid were carrying out due diligence on the issues raised and would revert to the Council in due course. He said that he would consult directly with Cllr O' Fearraigh in relation to the Respond Project in Falcarragh. The sewerage scheme in Falcarragh, he acknowledged was important piece of infrastructure in terms of housing delivery and was included for discussion at successive meetings with Uisce Éireann. Its completion would, he advised, allow the completion of additional social housing units.

Concluding, he said that there were requirements set out in every job regarding the completion periods for contractors on site and that contract documents and site meetings clearly outlined the necessary

end dates. There were, he said, from time to time challenges to be overcome but that every effort was made to minimise delays.

Overall , he noted that good progress was being made in the delivery of S.I Housing.

Mr Donal Walker, Senior Engineer, said that under the Turnkey process when a developer nominates a supplier for concrete products the Council takes samples from the quarry and if satisfactory informs the developer. Authorisation to proceed with a Turnkey is not given until this is carried out and the test results are satisfactory. Testing was also carried out, he added during the construction process.

He noted that building unit costs were set by the Department and were all in costs for the delivery of social housing. They did not include, he said abnormals and thus in relation to Turnkey Housing what is applied is a reasonable percentage of uplift in relation to abnormals. There was, he confirmed, an ongoing positive response from developers in terms of turnkey provision.

With regard to the costs presented by the Approved Housing Bodies the basic unit costs and a similar uplift as applicable to turnkey development was applied thus ensuring a consistent approach to both mechanisms of delivery. A similar approach it was confirmed was applied to Part V developments.

The Council, he said, was aware that the provision of social housing developments also impacted on private housing provision with private housing 15 to 20% more expensive than social housing.

Meetings had taken place it was confirmed with the Approved Housing Bodies in relation to the basic unit costs and the price which the Council was prepared to pay for housing units. He said there was ongoing contact with the Department and that if revised basic unit costs were issued, they would certainly be applied.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Cathaoirleach:_____

Dated:_____