

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE DHUN NA nGALL

Oifig Riarthóir na gCruinnithe
Aras an Chontae
Leifear
21 Márta, 2025

FOGRA CRUINNITHE

A Chara,

Beidh Cruinniú Speisialta den Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall ar siúl Déardaoin 27 Márta, 2025 ag **10.00rn. 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.
21st March, 2025

TO EACH MEMBER OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

NOTICE OF MEETING

Dear Councillor,

A Special Meeting of Donegal County Council will be held on Thursday 27th March 2025 at 10.00am 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. Land Acquisition Presentation

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD ON THE 27th MARCH 2025

C/83/25

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs J Kavanagh, Leas-Cathaoirleach, F Bradley, C Brogan, J Brogan, A Doherty, A Farren, N Jordan, M C Mac Giolla Easbuig, P Mc Garvey, P Mc Gowan, M Mc Mahon, G Mc Monagle, M Naughton, and J. S. O' Fearraigh.

Online: Cllrs J Beard, L Blaney, P Canning, B Carr, D Coyle, T Crossan, T. S. Devine, M Farren, M Harley, D M Kelly, M Mc Clafferty, M Mc Dermott, D Mc Gee, J Murray, D Nic Mheanman, and M Scanlon.

C/84/25

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Patsy Lafferty, Director of Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services, Meetings Administrator, John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, Housing Capital, Eamonn Brown, Divisional Manager, Housing & Corporate, Claire Burke, Senior Executive Architect, Housing Design, Jim Boner, Senior Executive Engineer, Housing Design, Donna Mc Groarty, Area Manager, Housing Design, Thomas Melly, Senior Staff Officer, Housing & Corporate, Margaret Doherty, Executive Engineer, Housing Design Róise Ní Laifeartaigh, Rannóg na Gaeilge, Cliona Ni Ghallachoir, Rannóg na Gaeilge, Frances Friel, Communications Officer, William Colvin, Assistant Communications Officer, Patrick Gallagher, IS Technician, Anne Marie Crawford, Staff Officer, Corporate Services.

C/85/25`

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the following who were unable to attend the meeting:

- Cllr Declan Meehan
- Chief Executive, Mr John Mc Laughlin
- Director of Planning & Community Development, Mr Liam Ward
- Director of Economic Development, Information Services & Emergency Service, Mr Garry Martin.

C/86/25

HOUSING CAPITAL UPDATE/LAND ACQUISITION

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer updated members in relation to Housing Capital developments and provided detail on the status of Turnkey Acquisitions county-wide.

It was further acknowledged that 8 no. turnkey proposals had received Stage 1-2 Departmental approval for an additional 178 units with 4 of these proposals already progressing to planning stage. Members were informed that 2 further turnkey proposals were with the Department of Housing for Stage 1-2 consideration and that a turnkey project located in Annagry had received departmental approval and had moved to contract stage.

He proceeded to give an overview of the various in-house projects including those on-site and at planning, tender and design stage.

Detail in relation to several Design and Build projects at various locations across the county was also provided.

Members received an update on the Letterkenny Flagship projects.

Ms Margaret Doherty, Executive Engineer, addressing the meeting provided an overview of the current land acquisition programme. She outlined the approach taken and the processes involved with each stage of acquisition giving an appraisal of the following:-

- Land Assessment & Appraisal
- Land Acquisition Process
- Expressions of Interest
- Housing Land Identification
- Land at Conveyance Stage
- Lands Purchased
- Land Status Summary

Concluding she advised that a total of 481 sites had been looked at to date with 229 not proceeding for a variety of reasons. Thus, it was noted that 239 were being actively considered and that 27 offers had been made with 13 accepted to date. 4 sites, it was noted, had been acquired at this juncture.

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer said that the provision of social housing was progressing utilising the various delivery methods, but that a dedicated land bank was crucial to future proof the delivery of housing. He acknowledged the assistance of the elected members in this regard and said that a sufficient land bank was needed to allow the different mechanisms of social housing delivery to move forward.

Mr Patsy Lafferty, Director Housing, Corporate & Cultural Services advised that considerable work had been done to date in terms of land acquisition and acknowledged the contribution of all involved in the process. He said that in order to speed up the delivery process, the design and planning aspects were being pursued in conjunction with the conveyance process.

A lengthy debate ensued, and the following issues were raised:

- Special Housing Meetings could have more impact if held at MD level.
- Social Housing needed in the Bun na Leaca and Machaire Rabhartaigh areas so as allow families live in their own localities.
- Housing rents an issue, and the result is that young people are emigrating thus decimating rural areas.
- S.I Housing policy needs to be opened up and more accessible.

- Retrofit Programme must be extended and progressed. Concern regarding the lack of retrofit works in the Glenties Municipal District.
- Issue in relation to the planning permissions on Tory arising from the boiled water notices in place.
- Tenant Liaison Officer needed in each Municipal District.
- Suggested that a Social Worker be allocated to each Municipal District to deal with a range of social issues.
- Long-term Homeless Refuge a priority.
- Naming of Estates in Irish. Much needs to be done to ensure that this initiative is progressed.
- Noted that little or no land is being acquired in the Donegal Town area.
- Developers need help and assistance. Staged payment would be of benefit here.
- Emphasis should be on readymade sites
- Ard na Guala Duibhe Estate in Moville needs urgent remediation.
- Lands need to be purchased in advance of the RZLT coming into effect.
- Modular Homes option must be explored in light of the housing crisis and defective concrete block issues.
- Void in turnkey provision and the delivery of Approved Housing Body accommodation in the Inishowen area.
- Proactive approach needed to deal with the vacancy issue including the use of apartments, commercial units and upstairs vacancies to alleviate the housing need.
- Members need greater access to Úisce Éireann and more frequent update on what is happening on the ground in each respective Municipal District.
- Building of reservoirs in Donegal must be prioritised together with rainwater harvesting so as to combat the infrastructural deficits.
- Access issues on the N56 need to be resolved.
- Donegal County Council need to take ownership of the estates in Dun Luiche and An Fál Carrach.
- Consideration must be given to taking over vacant commercial buildings and properties in our towns and villages.
- Executive should visit and look at the Ballyconnell Estate in An Fál Carrach given that it has the potential to serve many purposes and could be used for housing purposes.
- Land Acquisition must be progressed in the Letterkenny area.
- Acknowledged that there were specific issues in Letterkenny with 1300 people on the housing waiting list all of which indicated that the current model of provision was failing, and that the procurement process was not effective.
- Need to engage with the Department in relation to the funding and a review of the overall procurement process.

- Could be more of an impact if Housing Capital was based in each of the Municipal Districts as the centralised system in operation is causing a disconnect at present.
- No mention of temporary housing or modular homes all of which is very concerning given that people are living in crumbling and unsafe homes.
- Alternative methods of construction should be pursued.
- Delay in a Social Housing Remediation Scheme is causing needless harm.
- Tenant-in-Situ Scheme did allow families to remain in their own homes but was flawed in that the cap on what the Local Authority could pay was far too low.
- Not enough land zoned for development around our towns and villages.

Queries

- Does land have to be bought in proximity to shops and educational facilities?
- What is being done to link in with Údarás na Gaeltachta's housing initiative in the Glenties Municipal District?
- What progress had been made on the serviced sites initiative?
- What has been done to ensure that 85% of the tenants placed in estates in the Gaeltacht areas are fluent in the Irish language?
- Concern that the Approved Housing Body route was not the way to go, and that the Council should move to build more houses itself.
- Has the Scandinavian model of social housing allocation been looked at for the development in An Clochán Liath, as opposed to the standard social housing mix?
- Update needed in relation to the schemes in An Clochán Liath, and Anagaire.
- Is there a specific reason why the houses in Anagaire have not been let?
- Why are communal houses and play areas not a feature in all housing estates?
- What has been done to progress the independent living aspect including any planned interaction with Cluid and the Respond Housing Bodies.
- Is it the person selling the land that carries out the survey in relation to service availability?
- Who makes the decision as to what a developer will get for selling a house to the Local Authority?
- What considerations are looked at when acquiring land in terms of the range of services available
- How relative is heritage and the historical aspect to the land acquisition process?
- Has the Council taken into consideration the University of Ulster study carried out on lands at Churchland Quarter in Carndonagh and the presence of a double circular enclosure at that location.

Cllr A Doherty advised that there was a family interest in the land at Churchland Quarter.

- Has there been an affirmative conversation with Úisce Eireann in relation to infrastructure deficits and the role that they need to play in assisting with the delivery of social housing?
- What is the expected lifespan of timber frame housing and has there been a move away from the utilisation of concrete blocks/
- How many housing completions are expected by the end of 2026 and where will the houses be located?
- What efforts are being made to meet existing demands given that the planned number of units up until the end of 2026 is 1268?
- How many applications were received under the Tenant-in-Situ Scheme and how many were processed?

Follow-up

- Resolved on the proposal of Cllr Naughton, seconded by Cllr Mc Gowan that the Construction Industry Federation be invited to the next Special Plenary Housing Meeting.
Cllr Mac Giolla Easbuig said that he was opposed to the Construction Industry Federation addressing members and said that he was against the privatisation of housing provision.
- Update requested in relation to the Ballyshannon Scheme and the status of water and sewerage provision.

Mr Patsy Lafferty, Director Housing, Corporate & Cultural Services said that there was clear evidence that an inroad was being made into the overall delivery process. He said that continued efforts would be made to push and address the issues outside of the Council's control. He said that he had no issue with arranging a meeting with the Construction Industry Federation and agreed to invite a deputation to the next meeting.

He informed member that a meeting had taken place with Department officials on the 26th March in the Custom House in Dublin and that all concerned were anxious to get the Social Housing Remediation Scheme up and running and to ensure that it was clear and streamlined. He said he was happy that the Department were committed to progressing same and that a further meeting was to take place in April 2025.

Cllr Mac Giolla Easbuig again outlined his concern at the Construction Industry being invited into a meeting and was informed by the Leas-Cathaoirleach that he could put forward a counter motion if he wanted to make a formal objection.

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, responding to a number of queries raised by members said that the Council were looking at land in all settlements and in areas close to shops and schools etc. He said that contact would be made with Údarás na Gaeltachta in relation to

housing issues in Gaeltacht areas and that the Serviced Site initiative was being actively progressed.

S.I Housing it was acknowledged was being pushed forward and that policy issues could be looked at by the Housing & Corporate SPC. Comments in relation to the fluency of Irish for social housing tenants in Gaeltacht areas were noted and would require a cross-directorate conversation.

He advised that the water issue on Tory Island was not a Housing Capital issue but would pass on the concerns to the relevant personnel.

Mr Gallagher said that he would speak directly to the member concerned who had queried the use of the Scandinavian model in Dungloe. He said that there was no contractual issues with the Contractor in Gaoth Dobhair but that the Council had taken an observational role onsite. It was confirmed that in accordance with the contract monies would be released on completion of each phase of development. It was noted that the contractor had left the site of his own free will and that there was continued interaction with same.

With regard to the project in Anagaire, he said that it was at final contract stage and Department approval was in place. The developer concerned, he added, had proposed a change to the contract and that now needed to be dealt with. There had been considerable engagement, he advised on the matter and at present necessary amendments to the contract were being looked at.

He advised members of the following:-

- That the issues raised in relation to anti-social behaviour had been noted and he confirmed that there was ongoing interaction with the HSE in relation to such matters.
- As Úisce Eireann was the Water Utility for the county, ongoing consultation was taking place in terms of mains, water and sewerage services for the development of social housing including an appraisal of any emerging challenges.
- Acknowledged that there were challenges but that a good working arrangement was in place between both organisations.
- The provision in the County Development Plan for the provision of sewerage treatment on site where mains sewerage was not available did allow for some element of flexibility.
- Comments raised in relation to the Treatment Plant in Gaoth Dobhair were noted, and it was confirmed that there was engagement with Úisce Eireann in terms of infrastructural deficits at that location. Calls for a specific application by Donegal County Council to the Department for a Treatment Plant were also noted.

- Attention was drawn to the fact that there was a facility on the website where interested parties could register an interest in instances where particular lands were available for sale. Basic details it was confirmed were required and after that any proposal would be reviewed in conjunction with the Roads and Planning Sections, with any issues arising addressed before funding was applied for.
- Ongoing meetings with the Construction Industry Federation since 2017/2018 at which they are briefed on various housing projects and the mechanisms of delivery. Confirmed that a meeting was scheduled with the Construction Industry Federation on the 10th April.
- Recognition that the lack of staged payments was an issue for the C.I.F and that this was something that could only be sorted out at Departmental level.
- Turnkey process must be done on a competitive basis and based on the relevant criteria. There are ongoing discussions with developers in terms of costings which are reviewed by the Council, an independent quantity surveyors and by the Department.
- Members would receive further detail on the Ballyconnell Estate proposal.
- Briefing note to be circulated on the utilisation of Timber Frame housing.
- Further options to be explored in terms of increasing the land bank in Letterkenny.
- Information to be provided on the projects in train and the staff working on same.
- Visit has taken place to Dundalk to view the 3D printing method employed by Louth County Council and that contact has been made with the company concerned in order to get further detail.
- All viable modern methods of construction to be looked at.

Mr Eamonn Brown, Area Manager, Housing & Corporate responding to queries on the homelessness issue outlined the fact that the Homeless Action Plan 2023 -2028 had advocated the move away from B&B vouchers with the preferred option being hostel type accommodation. This, he said, was now being piloted and regular updates would be provided through the Housing SPC and the Special Meeting process.

In relation to Anti-Social Behaviour, there was, he confirmed a policy in place which was worked through as specific situations arose. A budget was now in place, he stated, for the employment of Housing Liaison Officers and job descriptions were being finalised to ensure that their work did not overlap with existing Housing roles. It was hoped, he said, that these would be in a position to get involved an early stage before anti-social behaviour got a chance to materialise. It was anticipated, he added, that a HLO would be based in each Area Office. He noted the comments in relation to the employment of social workers but said that

it was intended to get the HLOs in situ and to monitor their impact after which the involvement of social workers could be looked at again.

Mr Brown alluded to the fact that a smaller allocation had been received in 2025 in respect of the Energy Retrofit Programme even though Donegal had been particularly successful in delivering the programme to date. Contact had been made with the Department in relation to addressing the issue, he added, and indications had been that the Department were willing to look at addressing same. Works had commenced in the Letterkenny/Milford MD and the Donegal MD, he advised, and it was hoped that the Department would be amenable to providing additional funding.

Affordable Housing was being delivered, he confirmed, in Donegal through the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, the First Home Scheme, the Help to Buy Scheme together with the Local Authority Housing Loan Scheme. He alluded to the fact that the Affordable Housing Scheme had been piloted in the Glenties MD but that there had been little or no uptake.

The Council it was noted had engaged with Údarás na Gaeltachta in relation to affordable housing and serviced sites and that further clarification was to be sought regarding Údarás na Gaeltachta's position on lands that they owned and their policy if any in relation to housing.

It was confirmed that there was regular contact with the Approved Housing Bodies in Donegal and that the general rule was that they approached the Council first, with any prospective proposal being examined in the context of the overall social housing need in any given area.

Members were informed that the "Tenant-in-Situ Scheme was in the process of being amended and that specific changes were being made to certain aspects of the scheme with €365 million being made available nationally. Donegal, he said, would not receive a stated amount and would have to avail of a capital allowance thus putting the onus on the Local Authority to get as much as it could from the stated allowance.

In terms of what the local authority could pay, he underlined the fact that cost was not the overriding factor given that in Donegal the permitted threshold for the authority was €242,000 yet the median market price was in the region of €180k.

Mr Patsy Lafferty, Director Housing, Corporate & Cultural Services, said that it would be possible to invite the Construction Industry Federation into the next Special Plenary meeting on the 28th April.

He noted that the AHB delivery mechanism had been in place for years with changes to the CALF Scheme in 2024 giving more impetus to this

method of housing provision. There would, he advised, be continued interaction with the AHBs and the HSE in terms of housing provision, group homes etc.

Concluding Mr Eamonn Brown, Area Manager, Housing & Corporate, advised that there was ongoing consultation with the HSE in relation to Group Homes. The Housing & Corporate Area Managers, had, he noted, regular contact and meetings with the HSE in terms of housing need. The Council, was, he confirmed, proactive in delivering as many Group Homes as it could but needed the assistance of AHB sector to progress same.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Cathaoirleach: _____

Dated: _____