

## **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 Laifearaigh**  
Riarthóir Cruinnithe

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## **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 – 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

<b>MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD ON THE 24<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2025</b>
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C/76/25

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

C/77/25

**OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE**

John Mc Laughlin, Chief Executive, Patsy Lafferty, Director of Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services, Meetings Administrator Liam Ward, Director Community Development & Planning Services, John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, Housing Capital, Eamonn Brown, Divisional Manager, Housing & Corporate, Claire Burke, Senior Executive Architect, Housing Design, Donal Walker, Senior Engineer, Housing Capital, Jim Boner, Senior Executive Engineer, Housing Design, Gillian Dempsey, Senior Executive Engineer, Donna Mc Groarty, Area Manager, Housing Design, 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/78/25

**LAMA AWARDS 2025**

The Cathaoirleach informed members that Donegal County Council had been nominated in nine different categories at the Local Authority Members Association's All-Ireland Community and Council Awards in Cork on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February and had received the Council of the Year Award at the event.

It was noted that the Council had been nominated in the following categories:

- The Civic Dollars Project - Best Mental Health Initiative
- Spraoi agus Spórt - Best Business working with the Community
- ii Inovation Hub - Best Enterprise & Start-Up Category
- Donegal Town Diamond – Outdoor Public Space Scheme - Best Town or village Regeneration Category
- Cuirt an Troisc – Exemplary Age Friendly Housing - Best Housing & Urban Planning Category
- Food Coast Donegal - Best Tourism Initiative Category
- Lionra Leitir Ceanainn - Best Irish Language Initiative
- Love Donegal - Best Communications Initiative

The Cathaoirleach paid tribute to all staff involved, acknowledging the effort, dedication and commitment that had gone in to all of the projects

concerned. It was, she confirmed a fantastic achievement and well deserved.

C/79/25

**TO APPROVE THE CARRYING OUT OF WORKS WITH REGARD TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF 20 NO SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS INCLUDING ALL ASSOCIATED SITE DEVELOPMENT WORKS AT ARD NA GLAISE (PHASE 2), KILMACRENNAN, CO DONEGAL**

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

On the proposal of Cllr Blaney, seconded by Cllr Mc Garvey, it was resolved to approve the carrying out of works with regard to the construction of 20 No Social Housing Units including all associated site works at Ard na Glaise, (Phase 2), Kilmacrennan, Co Donegal in accordance with Part XI of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and Part 8 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001(as amended).

C/80/25

**ATTENDANCE OF THE CATHAOIRLEACH AT A DIASPORA FUNDRAISING EVENT IN CELTIC PARK, GLASGOW ON THE 28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025**

On the proposal of Cllr Blaney, seconded by Cllr Mc Garvey, it was resolved to approve the attendance of the Leas-Cathaoirleach at a Diaspora Fundraising event in Celtic Park, Glasgow on the 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2025.

C/81/25

**HOUSING CAPITAL UPDATE**

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, provided an overview of the Inhouse Design projects referencing those recently completed and those currently on site.

Ms Claire Burke, Senior Executive Architect, informed members that the bill of quantities and the contract documentation was being prepared for the following schemes with a combined total of 111 units:

- Lifford Common (60 units)
- St Johnston (30 units)
- Rosebud Place, Stranorlar (8 units)
- Mulroy View (Phase 2) Tamney (10 units )
- Massiness, Creeslough (3 units)

She further advised that tender reports were being prepared for the appointment of Architect Led Design teams to progress 4 No Housing Schemes at Glencolmcille (5), Kilcar (5), Laghy (2) and Glenties (3) through detailed design to completion.

An overview of the projects to be completed under the Part 8 process was provided including detail on the current status of the following:

- Ard na Glaise, Kilmacrennan (Phase 2) (20)
- Oldtown, Letterkenny (16)

- Old Fintra Road, Killybegs (16)
- Fintown (15)
- Rosgarrow, Milford (12)
- Ballyhaskey, (Newtowncunningham) (40)
- Derrybeg (12)

Ms Gillian Dempsey, Senior Executive Engineer, gave an update on the Ballymacool and High Road Social Housing Projects.

Ms Donna Mc Groarty, Area Manager, Housing Capital outlined the status of turnkey acquisitions and confirmed that 130 units were to be provided with 18 complete and the balance onsite. She informed members that a total of 307 turnkey acquisitions were projected for the period 2022 to 2026 representing an overall projected investment of €84m. It was noted that departmental approval had been received for 8 projects encompassing 210 units some of which were to be delivered by the end of 2026 with a further proposal for 35 units in the pipeline for submission. She said that one to one meetings were ongoing with developers. A video of the recently completed Phase 1 turnkey acquisition at Convoy was then viewed by members.

Mr Donal Walker, Senior Engineer, Housing Capital advised that there were a number of Design & Build projects ongoing, and that Stage 4 Departmental approval had been received for projects at Barrack Hill, Carndonagh (21 units ), Malin (9 units) and Gleneely (10 units). He proceeded to update members on the status of S.I. projects at Urris, Clonmany, Letterkenny and Ballyliffin and confirmed that departmental approval had now been received for each of these. Work was ongoing, he advised, in relation to the associated land transfers and the tendering process progressed in respect of each project.

Concluding Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, Housing Capital gave a progress report on the key updates since the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025 and an overview of the key upcoming deliverables.

Mr Patsy Lafferty, Director Housing, Corporate & Cultural Services said that there were 40 projects ongoing at present all of which required considerable time and effort and all with a dedicated process in place for completion. Inevitably, he said, there were blockages and challenges associated with such a wide range of projects and continued engagement was needed with contractors, the Department and other utilities to allow works proceed. He acknowledged the ongoing efforts of the housing team and said that it was an important milestone that Stage 1 approval had been granted for the Ballymacool Social Housing Project.

A lengthy debate ensued with members advising of the following:

- Issue with the names of Housing Estates in Gaeltacht areas and the fact that these are in English. Advised that this was

disrespectful to the people of the Gaeltacht. Concern that in some cases where Irish names had been used the correct spelling had not been utilised.

- Derrybeg site can accommodate additional units, and case needs to be made to the Department for additional funding to facilitate sewerage works so that additional housing units can be built.
- Independent living options must be explored at Derrybeg.
- All estates going forward should accommodate independent living options with the relevant wraparound services in place.
- Thresholds for social housing applicants need to be increased as many people are unable to get a mortgage and are often just over the threshold for social housing.
- Suggested that the provision of social housing through the Approved Housing Bodies option was not a success and that the emphasis going forward should be on design and build.
- No mention of the Islands where social housing is non-existent.
- Important that there is adequate public consultation in respect of the Ballymacool Project so that it can be delivered in line with the needs of the local community, with the proper infrastructure in place and fit for purpose. Roads Section need to be involved also in terms of general access to the town given that the additional traffic will create problems unless a dedicated plan is put in place. Needs to be public consultation for the whole county as this development is adjacent to one of the main access routes into Letterkenny.
- More S.I Housing needed in rural areas, and ongoing effort required to process the applications on hand in a timely manner. Conveyance process for S.I.s is lengthy and drawn out. Policy should be reviewed by the Housing & Corporate SPC especially where applicants are being turned down because of the presence of a specific housing scheme in their locality.
- Power outages are impacting on the Air to Water heating systems in social housing units. Consideration needs to be given to looking at alternative options in these types of situations and also at the planning stage of any development.
- Accessible showers should be the norm in social housing developments.
- Concern that new developments are relying heavily on timber fencing which has a limited lifespan. Other options need to be explored.
- Welcome for the developments in Kilmacrennan and Milford but noted that the 42 units in the pipeline represented only 17% of the need in the Milford Electoral Area. Advised of the need to keep the momentum going.
- Acute housing need in the Ramelton, Kerrykeel and Carrigart areas.
- Independent living options should be an integral part of the overall housing programme.

- Potential for additional housing provision through greater collaboration with the Approved Housing Bodies.
- Concern expressed in relation to the condition of the houses in the Ard na Guaille Duibhe development in Moville and St Patrick's Park in Carndonagh.
- Turnkey option identified as being the quicker delivery option with less impact for the local authority.
- Need to identify sites for housing development in Termon and Churchill.
- Growing demand for housing which warrants the use of new technologies and a ramping up of building in Donegal. Noted that the 3 D method had proved to be a viable method and that it was something that the Council should explore going forward.
- Clear and immediate deadline needed for the introduction of a remediation scheme for social housing together with urgent interim measures.
- Need to look at what can be done to ensure that vacant properties become homes given that 9% of residential properties are still vacant. New targeted campaign needed to encourage owners to bring these properties back into use and look at the utilisation of addition incentive or enforcement measures.
- Imperative that everything possible is done to ensure that all houses built in the county are built with blocks free from deleterious materials.
- Caution urged in terms of the methods of construction used and lessons need to be learned from options undertaken in the past.
- Opportunity now to be innovative in terms of the provision of Group Homes and to the fore in terms of disability and mental health issues. Early engagement needed with the HSE in relation to the provision of same in the High Road and Ballymacool sites.
- Concern that development and construction is not as prevalent in the wider Letterkenny area. Progress at Killylastin, Oranhill and Windy Hall has been slow.
- Little or no provision for social housing on our Islands.
- Delays with the Tenant Purchase Scheme especially where houses have to be tested. This needs to be reviewed.
- Need to look at the reasons why people are being turned down for S.I Housing.
- Unfair that tenants living in properties affected by defective concrete blocks should be subjected to a rent review.

### **Questions**

- What is the situation in relation to one-off housing and what will happen in 2026?
- Query as to why the only Irish Company in a position to install Air to Water Heating Systems has not been contracted by this Council.

- Update sought in relation to the Cluid development in Letterkenny.
- What is the situation in relation to the 29 vacant houses in Carndonagh and what is being done to progress the matter?
- Is enough being done to progress the turnkey option?
- What progress if any had been made in relation to the Cloondara project?
- Has there been any progress in relation to housing provision in Portnason in Ballyshannon?
- What has been done to promote and progress the serviced site initiative?
- Are there any plans to include group homes in the overall delivery programme?
- In terms of housing provision at present how much of this is adapted for wheelchair use and for those with special needs? Can a percentage be built to accommodate same?
- What is the latest correspondence from the Department with regard to the Social Housing Remediation Scheme?
- Has there been engagement with the HSE in relation to the provision of group homes in the High Road and Ballymacool sites?

### **Follow-up**

- ❖ Report requested in relation to the recent meeting with Udarás na Gaeltachta and the proposed land swap.
- ❖ Update needed urgently in terms of the remediation options for social houses impacted by defective concrete blocks. Minister's office must be contacted and options for the remediation of social housing stock clearly outlined with a definitive plan in place.
- ❖ Request that the Council liaise with companies that engage in modern methods of construction.
- ❖ Update needed in terms of the status of ongoing turnkey discussions.
- ❖ Cognisance must be taken of the current state of the housing programme and an effort made to identify the challenges and streamline the overall process.
- ❖ Need to look at the competitive dialogue procurement process which is making it difficult for people to build houses.
- ❖ Request that correspondence issue to the new Housing Minister outlining the conditions and pressures that people are living with and citing the urgent need for a Social Housing Remedial Scheme.
- ❖ Welcome for the development at Malin Garda Station and it was suggested that the Council should look at other possible sites in smaller towns and villages.

Mr Patsy Lafferty, Director Housing, Corporate & Cultural Services said that the executive shared members frustrations in relation to the Social Housing Remediation Scheme. Any specific programme, he advised,



required departmental approval and funding. The scale of the issue at hand, he said, was way beyond the Council's capability and that to proceed without the relevant approval and funding would be not be prudent. He said that there was continued engagement with the department and that an updated meeting had been requested.

Members were informed that there was ongoing engagement with other agencies in terms of independent living, group homes etc and that this would continue in the long term. This involved, he added considerable interagency collaboration especially with the HSE. The Council, it was noted, liaised with the Department of Housing, Heritage & Local Government in terms of construction cost, while the HSE sought approval for the running costs from the Department of Health.

The Housing and Corporate SPC would, he said, look at a number of the policy issues raised. Concerns surrounding the Air to Water heating, he said, were taken on board but noted that this was something that would have to be sorted at national level.

Mr Eamonn Brown, Divisional Manager, Housing & Corporate advised members that in relation to the Ardrawer Scheme a meeting had taken place with the Chief Executive of Cluid, together with the Regional Delivery team back on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Housing Capital staff and a representative from the Letterkenny/Milford MD had also been in attendance, it was confirmed. This, he advised, afforded an opportunity to convey the concerns raised by members, the overall project management of the project and key issues in relation to the nomination of the properties. It was confirmed that there had also been a discussion on the adverse test results on the property and the timelines involved in sharing same. It was noted that additional testing had been commissioned and that the results of same would be relayed to the Housing Section when available.

Responding to Cllr Mc Monagle's query that some tenants had been nominated for housing within this development, he said, that this was a cause for concern and that the Area Manager in Letterkenny was seeking clarification on the matter. Without the test results referenced previously, he said it was unlikely that the project would be completed by the end of April. Members would, he confirmed, be kept updated on the matter.

Mr Brown said that a meeting had taken place with Ms Mary Mc Groarty, General Manager, Disability Services as that it was essential that HSE support was in place regarding ongoing housing projects. There was a resource implication for the HSE, he added, in that each Group Home had running costs in the region of €650k per annum. Agreement had been reached, he said to compile a combined list of schemes for the county for a period of at least five years. The HSE staff he said were meeting on a one to one basis with Area Managers and looking at the overall need for potential schemes across the county

after which a list would be created in terms of what was practical to deliver. Group Homes, he advised, were one method of delivery but there was also the potential for general housing and accessible accommodation to meet the needs of those with a disability.

Mr John Gallagher, Senior Engineer, said that the success in delivering land acquisition was an important aspect in terms of future proofing housing delivery. He noted that there were challenges in certain towns and villages where it was not possible to source land by consent.

In relation to Air to Water systems, he said, that performance requirements were developed around the requirements of the building regulations with specific reference to Part L. This was something, he said, which could be reviewed and looked at again.

In terms of accessible showers, he said that there was ongoing contact with the various areas in terms of access issues and disability access. It would be possible, he said, to raise the points referenced by members with the Department Inspector who was due to visit Donegal in the coming week and to keep members informed on the matter. He said that the issue of boundary fencing could be looked at again and that there were a number of options that could be looked at such as concrete posts etc with the aim of creating overall balance but taking into consideration the durability issue.

Mr Gallagher advised that there was Department consultation on every scheme in the county and that all projects went out to public consultation. This, he advised, would also happen with the Ballymacool project.

In relation to the Turnkey process, he noted, that there had been considerable interaction with developers county-wide. He said that the Council were open to talking to any developer and encouraged members to assist with this engagement where possible.

The Cathaoirleach acknowledged the efforts of the Housing team.

She said that it was hoped to send a delegation to meet with Sligo County Council in April or May to discuss matters of mutual interest.

This was proposed by Cllr Kennedy and seconded by Cllr Mc Monagle.

The Chief Executive referred to the ongoing collaboration between Derry City & Strabane District Council, & Omagh and Fermanagh District Council and said that it was hoped now to extend same to the wider Northwest. Further detail, would, he confirmed, be provided at the March Plenary Meeting.

C/82/25

**DATE FOR NEXT MEETING**

It was unanimously agreed to hold the next Special Plenary Housing Meeting at 10am on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Cathaoirleach:\_\_\_\_\_

Dated:\_\_\_\_\_