

Minutes of In Committee Strategic Policy Committee 4 – Housing Meeting

Held on 29th March, 2018 at 11.00 a.m. in John's Green House

Present: Cllr. Andrew McGuinness, Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Maurice Shortall, Cllr. Fidelis Doherty, Yvonne Moriarty, Brian Dunlop.

Cllr. David Kennedy, Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Cllr. Patrick McKee, Cllr. Malcolm Noonan, Cllr. John Brennan, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Cllr. Breathnach.

In Attendance: Mary Mulholland, Martin Mullally, Joe Scully, Ted Cunningham, Mary Cashin.

Apologies: Cllr. Joe Malone, Cllr. Melissa O'Neill, Cllr. Breda Gardner, Mary Egan, Declan Murphy.

Chairperson Cllr. Andrew McGuinness welcomed Elected Members to special meeting of SPC 4 – Housing to be held in committee.

A minutes silence was observed as a mark of respect for the recent passing of the late Mrs. Margaret Butler, mother of Tim Butler, Director of Services and Mary Butler, Arts Officer.

1. Tenancy Agreement

Martin Mullally discussed the legal agreement between Kilkenny County Council and tenants by way of their tenancy Agreement. He advised that the Tenant Handbook provided information and support in a wider context than maintenance for tenants.

The matter of introducing a deposit system, currently in use in Monaghan County Council, was discussed which will be incorporated as a clause in the new tenancy agreements. Deposits paid by new tenants is a measure to safeguard the return of tenancies in better condition than is currently the case and would focus the attention of tenants to manage their tenancies in order to have deposits repaid. Deposit levels were discussed as follows;

1 or 2 bed apt/houses	€200
3 bed apt/houses	€300
4 bed apt/houses	€400

The following matters were also discussed:-

- Introduction of a uniform South Eastern Region tenancy agreement.
- Members were advised that the Tenancy Agreement is an executive function however the Housing Section was seeking input from members.

Contributions:-

- Cllr. Kennedy requested discretion regarding payment of the deposit by those in financial difficulty. Cllr. McKee requested that Clause 10 be amended to exclude reference to electrical works.
- Cllr. Doherty requested that Clause 7 be amended to include reptiles.
- Cllr. Noonan requested that a plain English Tenancy Agreement be made available.
- Yvonne Moriarty requested that Clause 29 be made compulsory for tenants to provide details of insurance acquired.
- Cllr. Fitzpatrick requested that Clause 22 be reviewed and queried protection afforded to tenants who are unhappy due to behaviour of adjoining tenant.

Actions:-

- It was agreed to review Clauses 7, 10, 11,12, 22 & 29 of the tenancy agreement.
- Draft Tenancy Agreement to be circulated for input/comments of Elected Members.
- Plain English Tenancy Agreement to be provided.
- Agreed that where tenant cannot provide the full deposit upfront an agreement will be entered into whereby a set sum per week will be added to the weekly rent until full deposit paid.

A Tenancy Agreement was provided to members in hard copy.

2. Housing Maintenance

Joe Scully provided an overview of maintenance calls received and advised of the impact reactive maintenance has on Kilkenny County Council's maintenance budget which prevents a strategy for planned maintenance. He also provided an overview of calls received and assessments undertaken further to maintenance requests.

Contributions:-

- Cllr. McGuinness requested that the first responder to a maintenance call does not make the decision to advise the tenant that the maintenance request is deemed tenant responsibility.

In reply to this contribution Mary Mulholland advised that there was a need to improve and develop a call centre approach and that data collection will assist in informing this approach. She also requested that Elected Members inform the maintenance staff of vulnerable tenants or tenants with specific circumstances that prevent them from carrying out works that fall within their responsibility.

- Cllr. McKee requested that housing in the Butt's area is prioritised if an audit of stock is undertaken.

In reply to this contribution Joe Scully advised that the Butts Area Retrofitting Programme was carried out at the same standard as all other retrofitting programmes and that the issue of mould may be attributed to household maintenance and not necessarily a technical issue.

- Cllr. Fitzpatrick requested a programme for chimney sweeping of stock. In reply to this contribution Mary Mulholland advised that chimney issues can sometimes be attributed to the burning of waste and that Chimney Sweeping will be promoted through the Estate Management Officer.
- Cllr. Breathnach requested that clarification re maintenance be given to tenants when they are signing their Tenancy Agreements.

Cllr. Andrew McGuinness requested that members e-mail any further queries in relation to Housing Maintenance to Martin Mullally.

3. Update on Housing Capital Schemes

Martin Mullally provided an update on Kilkenny County Council's Housing Capital Schemes highlighting target of 627 units to 2021 and itemised how delivery of 170 units for 2018 will be achieved.

Cllr. McGuinness requested that any questions in relation to the presentation be e-mailed to Martin Mullally or Eimear Cody.

Action: Motion proposed for SPC 4 to write to the Department raising concern over 10% deposit required for Home Loan and seconded by Cllr. McGuinness.

Copy of presentation provided in hard copy.

4. Disposal of Council Owned Private Sites

Proposed policy was circulated to all members and advised that such a policy needs to be in place in advance of the current sites to be sold from the excess lands not required under the Capital Building programme. Areas where private sites maybe become available were discussed.

5. Differential Rent Scheme 2018

Members were advised that a review of rents is generally undertaken on a yearly basis however the last rent review was undertaken in 2016. In order to carry out a differential rent review in 2018 it was necessary to harmonise the two schemes in existence, highlight and address any anomalies and remove the maximum rent limit still in existence for Kilkenny County Council tenants.

Cllr. McGuinness advised that Elected Members who are not SPC 4 committee members were welcome to highlight any issue with him and same will be brought for discussion at SPC 4.

6. Date of Next Meeting

7th June, 2018

Signed: _____

Date: _____

**Chairperson
SPC 4**