

Minutes of Strategic Policy Committee 4 – Housing Meeting

Held on 26th April, 2019 at 11.00 a.m. in John's Green House

Present: Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Andrew McGuinness, , Declan Murphy, Cllr, Fidelis Doherty

In Attendance: Mary Mulholland, Director of Services, Martin Mullally, SEO

Apologies: Brian Dunlop, Yvonne Moriarty, Cllr. Maurice Shortall, Cllr. Joe Malone, Noel Sherry

Item 1 Adoption of Minutes of meeting held 14th February 2019

Proposed : Cllr McCarthy

Seconded: Cllr A McGuinness

No Matters arising

Item 2 Incremental Purchase Scheme (IPS)

Mary Mulholland gave an update on the proposed Incremental Purchase Scheme (IPS). This scheme allows for both tenants and housing applicants to apply to purchase a number of Council built properties at a reduced cost and a percentage of these could be offered to tenants/applicants to purchase. This scheme encourages mixed tenure in estates and contributes to good estate management. Louth and Mayo Councils have implemented the scheme to date.

IPS Scheme was circulated to SPC members at the previous SPC meeting held on 14th February for review and comment. One submission was made by Cllr Shortall and reviewed by the SPC members. It was agreed to amend the draft scheme to remove the prescribed percentage of units set aside for IPS. Instead the membership agreed that the number of IPS units identified for sale will be decided on a scheme by scheme basis.

It was also agreed that the houses on offer should be limited to three and four beds only as there was a high demand for one and two bed units to meet current social housing need.

It was also explained that the scheme was not only targeting those households on the current housing list but also those households on low to middle incomes who do not qualify for inclusion on the waiting list on income grounds and who are not in a position to secure a loan elsewhere.

Contributions made by Cllrs M McCarthy, A McGuinness, F Doherty and Declan Murphy

Action 1: Agreed unanimously that the IPS Scheme progress to the May Council meeting for adoption with amendments.

Item 2 Scheme of Priority for Affordable Dwelling Purchase Arrangements

Members were circulated with a copy of Circular (APH 01/2019) and Regulations (SI 81 of 2019) together with the draft ***Scheme of Priority*** for discussion.

Mary Mulholland explained the need to reschedule the last SPC meeting to allow housing staff to attend a national workshop organised at short notice for 17th April by the Department on foot of new regulations issued on 22nd March commencing the affordable housing legislation.

Members were updated on new provisions especially;

1. **Regulation 3:** requires housing authority to advertise affordable purchase arrangements when a scheme becomes available.
2. **Regulation 4:** deals with the assessment of eligibility for affordable housing purchase arrangement – this will target lower to middle income households who are unable to purchase a property on the open market and that the repayment should not exceed 35% of their net income on direct housing costs. Further regulations and guidance are required to determine eligibility. These are due before year end.
3. **Regulation 5:** provides for the making of a scheme of priority that will determine the order of priority to be applied to eligible households who have applied to purchase an affordable dwelling.

Members were advised that the Council are

1. required to adopt a ***Scheme of Priority*** for the assessment of applications to purchase affordable housing before June 18th 2019 and that
2. A scheme of priority must be done by a local authority, even if a local authority does not have affordable homes.
3. Obligated to submit the draft Scheme of Priority to the Minister for comment

The adoption of the Scheme of Priority is a reserved function of the Council and members have discretion in relation to setting distances in relation to eligibility criteria for Class C households (educational institution) and Class D households(place of employment).

In summary, members were advised that the Regulations received in recent weeks only deal with the adoption of a Scheme of Priority for Affordable Dwelling Purchase Arrangements, eligibility criteria and payment arrangements have not yet been finalised and further regulations and guidance will issue before year end on these two aspects of the process.

It was also pointed out to the members that the Council cannot accept any applications at the moment.

Contributions were made by Cllrs M McCarthy, A McGuinness, F Doherty and Declan Murphy . Concerns were raised by members that the Council were been asked to adopt a Scheme of Priority without sight of eligibility criteria and houses were not available to purchase. However, the members accepted the executive's position that the deadline of 18th June was not negotiable by the Dept and noted that some Housing Authorities were considering not adopting a Scheme as instructed by the deadline set by the Minister.

Action 2: Agreed unanimously that the Scheme of Priority progress to the June Council meeting for adoption without amendment and

Action3: Mary Mulholland agreed to keep the scheme under review once the new regulations on eligibility become available and bring back to the Housing SPC for its recommendation.

Item 3:- Policy on Downsizing/Rightsizing.

Martin Mullally outlined the work that has progressed since last meeting on downsizing resulting in amendments to the draft policy. It was explained the focus of the current policy is to target Council tenants first to downsize where appropriate. At some future time the downsizing initiative might be extended to include private houses where elderly persons who own their private dwelling within the administrative area of Kilkenny County Council are seeking to downsize.

Contributions made by Cllrs M McCarthy, A McGuinness, F Doherty and Declan Murphy

Action 4: Agreed unanimously that the work on Downsizing Initiative should progress and feedback to inform policy going forward.

Action 5: Review policy on the appropriateness of keeping pets in apartments where there is no garden space. Contact suggested with local Auctioneers, voluntary housing bodies and Housing Authorities tenancy agreements.

AOB:

1. Cllr Fidelis Doherty requested clarification on acquisitions acquired in 2018.

Action 6: Agreed to circulate as part of the CE Report details of acquisitions by area

2. Cllr Andrew McGuinness thanked all members for their contributions and co-operation and extended his best wishes to all those members seeking re-election. He was joined by all other SPC Members thanking the executive for their work to date and especially on the outcomes on capital delivery. All members present thanked the Chair for his fairness and management of the meetings.

Mary Mulholland expressed her gratitude to the membership for assisting the Council in making worthwhile housing policy the effects of which are seen on the ground, especially in the area of homeless services.

Meeting closed

Signed: _____

Chairperson

SPC 4

Date: _____