

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL
TO CONSIDER AN UPDATE ON SOCIAL HOUSING
HELD ON MONDAY, 11TH JULY, 2016 AT 10.00 A.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
COUNTY HALL, RIVERSIDE, SLIGO**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Councillor Baker,
- Councillor Bree,
- Councillor Casserly,
- Councillor Clarke,
- Councillor Gormley,
- Councillor Henry,
- Councillor Keaney,
- Councillor Kilgannon,
- Councillor Lundy,
- Councillor Maguire,
- Councillor MacManus,
- Councillor Mulvey,
- Councillor O'Boyle,
- Councillor O'Grady,
- Councillor Taylor.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

- Mr. Ciarán Hayes, Chief Executive
- Mr. Bartley Gavin, A/Director of Services
- Mr. Joe Murphy, Senior Executive Officer
- Mr. Michael Ryan, Senior Executive Engineer
- Ms. Pamela Andison, Administrative Officer
- Mr. Kevin Colreavy, Meetings Administrator
- Ms. Orlagh Campbell, Staff Officer
- Ms. Karen Gallagher, I.S. Technical Support Officer
- Ms. Jo-Anne McGonigle, Assistant Staff Officer

CATHAOIRLEACH:

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Hubert Keaney, presided.

APOLOGIES:

Apologies were received from Councillor T. Healy and Councillor T. MacSharry.

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PRESENTATION – SOCIAL HOUSING UPDATE:

Chief Executive, Mr. C. Hayes, advised the Members that Housing is currently the number one priority for the Government. It was appropriate to give a full outline as to the proposals of Sligo County Council. A lot of work had gone into the presentation as it was felt necessary and important. This presentation would inform the Members' discussions afterwards.

Mr. Hayes then handed over to Bartley Gavin and Joe Murphy for their presentation as follows:

Mr. Murphy, S.E.O., furnished the Members with the following details -

BACKGROUND – SOCIAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2020:

- The Social Housing Strategy was launched by Government in late 2014.
- A multi annual approach underpins the delivery in two phases.
- Phase 1 covering the period 2015- 2017 sets national targets under the Capital Programme of 18,000 additional housing units and under the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP) of 32,000 HAP/RAS units.
- Phase 2 covering the period 2018- 2020 sets national targets under the Capital Programme of 17,000 additional housing units and under SHCEP of 43,000 HAP/RAS units.

THREE PILLARS TO THE STRATEGY:

- **Pillar 1** Provision of new social housing supply - It sets a target of providing 35,000 new social housing units over a 6 year period between 2015 and 2020.
- **Pillar 2** Provision of new Housing supports through the Private Rented sector - It commits to supporting up to 75,000 households through an enhanced private rental sector and
- **Pillar 3** Reform of social housing supports to create a more flexible and responsive system through HAP, new framework for rents and new tenant purchase scheme, monitoring and governance issues etc.

IMPACT ON SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL:

- Targets set for the delivery under the Capital and SCHEP Programmes.
- Introduction of HAP.
- Putting in place Housing Services Plans and Action Programmes to lead to higher delivery of new social units.
- New Tenant Purchase Scheme.
- New Rent Scheme.
- Housing Needs Assessment (to become annual from 2016)
- Choice Based Letting Option – more options for applicants
- Focus on Adaptation/Grants Schemes – Scheme open so will inform level demand
- Strengthen management of stock including anti-social behaviour - will assist greatly in regulation and management of stock.

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SOCIAL HOUSING UPDATE:

- **Capital Work Programme**
- **SCHEP Programme**
- **Other Work Programmes**

CAPITAL WORK PROGRAMME:

- Sligo County Council target 2015-2017 is 101 housing units.

The above target could be met through

- Construction
- Acquisition
- Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) and
- Return of Void Properties to productive use.

Totals to date

- **Construction – 2016**

Deliver: 1 No. rural.

Progress: Fr. O'Flanagan Terrace

22 number houses to commence September (est.) and 1 No. further rural to commence December 2016

- Acquisitions delivered - 15 no. (2015)
Acquisitions tenanted/allocated - 15 no. (2016) with a further 20 to be allocated later this year
- Proposed acquisitions (est.) - 10 no. to 20 no.
- Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) -10 no. (2015) -18 no. (2016-est.)
- Recent Call for Proposals from Approved Housing Bodies for construction and acquisition proposals for the provision of accommodation for all target groups & acquisition proposals for the provision of accommodation for people in congregated settings, e.g. Cloonamahon and Cregg House.

- **Return of Void Properties to Productive Use**

2014 - 29 No. at a cost of € 311,648.00

2015 - 39 No. at a cost of €439,924.00

- 2016-Allocation of €742,300.00 for 54 units
- Sought additional funding for a further 15 No. at an estimated cost of €168,818.00

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Capital Work Summary-Target 101

2015 - 64 No.

2016 (est) -110 No.

PROGRAMME OF RETURNING VACANT STOCK TO PRODUCTIVE USE:

- Terms of Scheme: Funding provided up to a max of €30,000/unit
- up to €16,250 for Energy related works
- up to €13,750 for other necessary works e.g. kitchens, electrical, plumbing, joinery, painting etc.
- Units to be vacant for a minimum of 6 months-applicable in 2014 and 2015
- Following discussions with the Department, Sligo County Council has been successful in having this condition relaxed for 2016. As a house becomes vacant, it can now be renovated immediately under the Voids programme for reallocation.

SOCIAL HOUSING CURRENT EXPEND PROGRAMME (SHCEP):

- Sligo County Council target 2015-2017
- 200 units
- This target could be met through Leasing 68 Units, Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) 132 Units

Delivered to date (Target 68)

- Leasing 2015 - 5 No.
2016 - 2 No.
- Targets can be met up by leases through Approved Housing Bodies - being explored at present.
- Targets set by Department unrealistic, based on existing progress.
- Not attractive for landlords in Sligo.
- Leasing contracts in place to date = **46**

- Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) - Target 132
2015 - 62 No. new contracts
2016 to date - 21 No. new contracts and
8 No. transfers and 5 No renewals
- Contracts in place to date – **478**
- Challenges in supply and rent caps

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SHCEP Summary-target 200

2015 67 No.

2016 est. 50 No.

LONG TERM VACANT/DERELICT SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS PROGRAMME:

It is expected that a Scheme will be announced shortly as follows:

- Government considering a targeted programme
- Cost of repair exceeds €30,000.00
- Housing Need
- Economic viability to be examined
- Transfer to an A.H.B. an option
- 10 units

OTHER PROGRAMMES:

ENERGY EFFICIENCY RETROFITTING PROGRAMME – PHASE 1

- Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme
- **Phase 1** – minimum cavity wall and attic insulation in all stock.
- **Phase 2** – Fabric upgrade work in remaining dwellings with solid/hollow block wall construction.

Funding under phase 2 is conditional on all phase 1 stock works completing.

- 2013 – 194 units completed, €366,000
- 2014 – 263 units completed, €315,000
- 2015 – 624 units completed, €652,028
- 2016 - 538 units (Remaining houses), €570,000 & 57 units, Estimated overall value €700,000
- No Council contribution.

ADAPTIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO LOCAL AUTHORITY STOCK:

- 2015 – €284,001.50 - adaption to 58 houses - once off €226,363.33 - extensions
- 2016 €116,699.00 - Initial Allocation
- This Programme is 10% funded from Council's own resources
- Adaption to a number of houses and works to 2/3 extensions in the current year - subject to specific approval in respect of the 2016 allocation and staff resources.
- Adaption Grant Scheme for Older People and People with a disability.
- 2015 - Grants approved in the sum of €1,322,546 (228 no.)
- 2016 - Combined Capital Allocation - €1,272,741.00 of which €254,548 is to be provided from the Council's own resources.
- 2016 - €762,000.00-Value of applications approved to date.

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HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENT (HAP):

- Key Government priority and a major pillar of the Social Housing Strategy 2020.
- New form of Social Housing Support.
- Live in Sligo 16th November 2015.
- 2016 target is 4 households per week. 109 no. to date.

Applications and allocations:

- Applications year to date - 220
- Allocations year to date - 53
- Accepted - 43
- Refused - 10

HOMELESSNESS:

- Homeless accommodation in Maryville, Ballytivnan Hostel and Shalomar.
- Every effort is made to respond effectively and appropriately to those who present as homeless.
- 2015 - 262 presentations.
- 2016 - 127 presentations.
- Single clients in the main.
- Repeat presentations.

OTHER:

Private Residential Tenancies Board (P.R.T.B.)

- 2016
173 no. Inspections
68 no. Improvement Notices issued
- Repair requests
2016 - 1294 number.

- Maintenance Programme for Council Houses Budget €715,000
- Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme 2016 – information issued to all Tenants.
Some applications have been received and are being processed.

STOCK PROFILE:

- Total occupied/allocated Stock at May 2016 – **2042**
- Vacant stock – 95

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Sligo Municipal District - 51 No (33 vacant for more than 6 months).

- Areas of choice

Area of choice (as per Social Housing application form)	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Area A	17	12 (Cranmore area)
Area B	1	
Area C	5	1
Area D	8	6
Area E	2	2
Area F	4	2
Ballinfull	2	2
Ballintogher	1	1
Ballyfree (Halting site)	1	
Ballisodare	2	1
Carraroe	1	
Cliffoney	2	2
Collooney	1	1
Grange	4	3
Total	51	33

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- Cost per unit to repair- €15,000.00 est. and €40,000.00 in the Cranmore Regeneration Area.
- Majority available for reallocation later this year.
- Funding sources –
 - Void Programme (34 No.),
 - Cranmore Regeneration Programme (12 No.) and
 - Proposed Long term Vacant/Derelict Social Housing Programme (5 No.)

Ballymote/Tubbercurry Municipal District-Vacant - 44 No. (38 No. vacant for more than 6 months).

- Areas of Choice

Area of Choice	Vacant	Vacant more than 6 months
Aclare	2	2
Ballinacarrow	2	2
Ballinafad	1	1
Ballymote	8	7
Bunninadden	2	2
Coolaney	2	2
Enniscrone	1	1
Geevagh	1	1
Gurteen	4	1
Skreen	1	1
Tubbercurry	20	18
Total	44	38

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- Cost per unit to repair- €15,000.00 est.
- 12 no. - hard to let.
- Up to 32 no. available for reallocation this year.
- Funding sources- Void Programme (26 No.) Insurance (1 No.) and proposed Long term Vacant/Derelict Social Housing Programme (5 No.)

Households on Housing List:

No. of Households approved for Social Housing Support at 31 st May 2016	900
No. of Households approved for a Transfer at 31 st May 2016	188
Total	1088

Basis of need:

Disability Requirement Intellectual	141
Disability Requirement Mental	36
Homeless, Institution, Emergency Accommodation	63
Disability Requirement Physical	10
Concluded that the Mortgage is unsustainable	12
Disability Requirement Sensory	2
Currently dependent on rent supplement	6
Involuntary Sharing	65
Overcrowded	10
Unfit	8
Unsuitable Medical or Compassionate	28
Unsuitable Particular Household Circumstance	519
Total	900

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Age Profile:

Up to 25	94
26 – 30	136
31 - 40	271
41 - 50	178
51 - 60	122
61 – 70	66
71 and over	33
Total	900

Category of need:

General	623
Enduring Health Impairment	191
Aged 65 years or More	27
Traveller	26
Exceptional medical need	1
Homeless	32
Total	900

Geographical demand (based on first 'Area of choice' only):

Sligo Town & Environs – Carraroe, Ballisodare, Collooney, Strandhill, Carney,	593
Rest of the County	307
Total	900

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CONNOLLY PARK REGENERATION, TUBBERCURRY:

It was noted that a meeting has been arranged with the new Architect Advisor of the Department later this month. It is hoped that will allow for progress on this Estate.

Members welcomed the information that the Architect Advisor had already visited the area.

Mr. Gavin further advised the Members that the Department would not agree to demolish units there. There had not been any demand for houses in Connolly Park and if units were renovated, you then had to secure their rental. The Council's proposal always was to demolish and come back when demand had built up. The Department may now be prepared to allow the demolition of the units and it is hoped to then get movement on Connolly Park.

CHALLENGES:

Challenges facing Sligo County Council were outlined to the Members as follows:

- Resources.
- Staffing.
- While Private sector input will assist in meeting housing demand – supply and quality will be an issue plus rent caps.
- Lack of supply of Private rented or private schemes/units for purchase.

It was further noted that it is essential that private sector building would recommence in the Sligo town area to assist with the lack of supply available at present.

UPDATE ON SCHEMES:

Mr. B. Gavin, A/D. O. S., updated Members on the current stage of various Schemes. Details were outlined to the Members, accompanied by the relevant designs and location maps on display.

FR. O'FLANAGAN TERRACE:

Members were advised that this Scheme of 22 Units is at the final phase of procurement. The projected start date is September 2016.

KNAPPAGH ROAD:

This Scheme of 28 Units (comprising 6 one-bed, 16 two-bed and 6 three-bed units) has received approval for Stage 1.

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There is a submission with the Department at present for Stage 2.

The preliminary cost is estimated at €7.6 million.

Mr. Gavin indicated that it is his hope to bring a "Part 8" to the October Meeting of the Council. This, however, is dependent on the Department's input.

ROSSES POINT ROAD:

A preliminary, estimated cost for this Scheme has been set at €4 million. A submission is currently with the Department for this 12 to 14 unit Scheme (of one and two bed units).

COLLOONEY:

A submission is with the Department at present for Stage 1 of this Scheme of 11 units (3 two-bed, 6 three-bed and 2 five-bed). This Scheme includes "special needs" and "Traveller" accommodation.

CARROWBUNNAUN, STRANDHILL:

Stage 1 approval has been received for an initial stage of 20 houses. The aim of Sligo County Council is to seek approval for the full development of 40 houses. This requires some land acquisition and road improvement works.

Stage 1 approval for this Scheme is €3.1 million.

OTHER POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES:

Other potential opportunities, subject to Departmental support, were outlined as follows:

- *Maugheraboy*
 - Potential for circa 60 units.
 - Site is in the Strategic Land Reserve.

- *Carney*
 - Preliminary design work undertaken.
 - Possibly 35 to 40 units.

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- *Finisklin*
 - No design work undertaken to date.
 - Site is in the Strategic Land Reserve.

- *Grange*
 - No design work undertaken to date.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVE PROJECTS:

Scheme	Stage
Fr. O'Flanagan Terrace	Stage 4 approval received
Knappagh Road	Submission for Stage 2 approval with the Department
Rosses Point Road	Submission for Stage 1 approval with Department
Collooney	Submission for Stage 1 approval with Department
Carrowbunnaun, Strandhill	Stage 1 approval received

REGENERATION – PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC:

Mr. Gavin advised Members that the Cranmore Regeneration Project is now at Stage 5 of the stages listed hereunder

- Stage 1 - Social and Economic Appraisal
- Stage 2 – Physical Appraisal
- Stage 3 – Ideas for Masterplan
- Stage 4 – Building on feedback and refining the Masterplan
- ***Stage 5 – Final Masterplan***

The Acting Director of Services indicated that he hopes to bring the Masterplan to the September Meeting for the Members' consideration.

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Physical Regeneration:

- Spaces for Community Facilities
- Improve Access to Amenities and Open Spaces
- Improve Housing Quality
- Improve Quality of Roads Streets and Urban Spaces
- Improve Access and Links
- Vacant and Potential Sites
- Develop Historical Assets
- Explore Options for Sustainable Energy

SUMMARY OF CRANMORE PROJECTS:

- Housing Improvements – focus on improved energy efficiency
- Environmental improvements e.g. unused alleyways, areas subject to anti-social behaviour
- Address Residents Security Concerns
- Housing at Centre Block
- Housing at Geldof Drive
- Improvements to Cranmore Road
- Improvements to Devins Drive

Mr. Gavin advised the Members that all projects are subject to capital appraisal.

NATIONAL RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME:

Members were advised as follows in relation to the National Resettlement Programme”:

- Ireland committed to taking 4000 persons
- Sligo anticipates circa 100 persons; commencing circa year end
- Sligo County Council to source and provide accommodation
- Accommodation to be in small clusters
- Sligo County Council to coordinate resettlement at community level
- Department of Justice will fund a resettlement worker for a short initial period (through an outside agency).

SUGGESTIONS TO DEPARTMENT:

Following formation of current government, Minister Coveney sought suggestions from Local Authorities for boosting supply of social and private housing.

The following suggestions have been put forward for Sligo County Council:

- Social Housing Capital Schemes (*Knappagh Road, Carrowbunnaun, Rosses Point Road, Collooney, Cranmore Regeneration, Maugheraboy, Finisklin*).
- Private Housing - Browne’s Field (Cranmore).

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- Private Housing - Rathquarter.
- Opportunities for Social Housing Development on other Agency land.
- Lands at Adelaide Street in the ownership of the Housing Agency.
- Lands at Clarion Road in the ownership of the H.S.E.
- Obstacle to delivery – this was highlighted as Staff and Finance.

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT – FINANCIAL PLAN:

The Meeting was advised that reduced staff numbers is a central plank of the Financial Plan. This has resulted

Declining Team

- Significant staff reductions. Housing Team (Technical and administrative) down by 12 staff
- Staff on leave not replaced.

Expanding Programme

- Capital Investment Programme.
- Voids and Fabric Upgrade Programme.
- Inspection and Enforcement – Standards in Private Accommodation.
- New HAP scheme, incorporating property inspections.
- Increase income collection; assist those with loan/mortgage arrears.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Cathaoirleach, Councillor H. Keaney, thanked Mr. Murphy and Mr. Gavin for the comprehensive overview of the Housing situation in Sligo and said this Presentation was the most comprehensive document the Members had received to date on this area.

Councillor S. MacManus agreed with the Cathaoirleach's comments and said that, as the Member who had proposed that this Meeting take place, he also wished to thank the Members and Staff for attending a Special Meeting on this topic.

Members thanked Mr. Murphy and Mr. Gavin for their excellent Presentation. Councillor O'Grady added that Members had to be mindful of the time that goes into the preparation of reports and presentations and this was appreciated and noted. It was also acknowledged that the Staff in Housing, despite the constraints they were working under, still treated people with the dignity and respect they deserved. Mr. Gavin thanked the Members for their numerous comments acknowledging the work of his staff.

Members sought clarification on a number of areas and these were replied to by Mr. Murphy and/or Mr. Gavin. Areas raised by the Members included

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- *Cranmore Masterplan* – Members indicated that, after a number of years planning the works, the Residents now wished to see product on the ground.
- Commencement date for *Knappagh Road* works and, in the interim, it was requested that the site would be tidied with the entrance to the site in particular requiring attention. Mr. Gavin said that a draft Plan had been put to the Department. It is hoped to go to Planning stage between August and October. The commencement date the Council are working towards is September 2017. This, however, is dependent on the Department's input. When the go-ahead has been given, queries may still be raised by them and this can delay the process further. As requested, the site and entrance to same would be tidied up in the meantime.
- Timeline in relation to the *Carrowbunnaun* (Strandhill) Scheme as this query had been received from some Applicants living in the general Ransboro/Strandhill area. Mr. Gavin outlined the background to this Scheme where a Plan had been put together in May 2015. Members were advised that the Council's main interest was to develop sites where there are loans on the land bank. This was resisted by the Department as they wished to develop sites where they would incur a lower cost. There is a need to acquire further land at this location and negotiations are ongoing with the landowner at present. It is hoped to reach a resolution rather than necessitate a C.P.O. to acquire the necessary portion. If this land acquisition is resolved, the works could then commence in the first quarter of 2018.
- *Dorrin's Strand* units obtained under "Part 5". Clarification was sought as to the handover date for these properties. Mr. Murphy advised the Members that letters had issued in recent days and this should be a two to three week process.
- Locations included in the "*Strategic land reserve*" including Maugheraboy. Mr. Gavin advised the Meeting that the current Draft County Development Plan has a provision in it that lands contained in the strategic land reserve for social housing can be developed. This proposal would be put to the Department so that the Council are ready to move on it.
- Members welcomed Mr. Murphy's comments in relation to the proposed timeframe for the turnaround of *Voids/Vacant properties* where it is intended that by year end or early 2017, the 95 properties currently listed as vacant will be reallocated.
- *Tenant Purchase Scheme* – further details were sought in relation to this Scheme with Members raising queries regarding the income/payments taken into account and also the sum of €7,500 having to be "earned income". It was agreed that Members would receive an update at their September or October Meeting. To date, approximately 40 applications had been received under this Scheme and these were being processed.
- Some Members enquired regarding the possibility of houses being reallocated and permitting the new *Tenants to carry out repairs or decorating* the property. Mr. Gavin outlined difficulties this could cause and that had been experienced in the past when this had been done, e.g. difficulties with insurance, possible conflicts due to condition of house, etc. The procedure where the County Council oversees the renovation ensures that all properties are brought to the same high standard before being allocated.
- Timeline for building of *new homes in Grange*. Mr. Gavin advised the Members that, to date, no work had been undertaken on the land in Grange. At present, the

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priority areas being worked on are Maugheraboy, Finisklin with Grange to follow.

- In relation to the reducing *team to carry any Housing works*, the Acting Director of Services advised Members that the Department have been advised that it is necessary to grow that team. The key issue is that of the Financial Plan with reducing finances and reducing staff numbers. If the sites in the strategic land reserve with large loans were to be developed, this could reduce costs. Discussions on this matter are ongoing. In reply to a further query, Mr. Gavin confirmed that the only commitment received to date is the appointment of a Clerk-of-Works for the Fr. O'Flanagan Terrace Scheme.
- Mr. Gavin confirmed that Sligo County Council cannot claim back any *payment of V.A.T. by the local authority*. A Housing Body can, therefore, deliver units at a lower cost. The Department's view appears to be that they should, therefore, deliver more units.
- The Policy on *anti-social behaviour* is a difficult area to deal with as evidence can be hard to gather to back up the process. The law and definition are very narrow and if the situation does not fall under this definition, it is hard to deal with. However, Mr. Gavin requested Members to contact the Section if there are any particular cases they are aware of. The Acting Director of Services assured them every effort would be made to assist with the matter.
- Councillor Bree sought clarification on whether the HAP Tenants will have to comply with the County Council's Tenancy Agreement in regard to anti-social behaviour. Mr. Murphy said his understanding, in this instance, is that it would be a matter between the Landlord and the Tenant.
- Situations relating to *Housing transfers* were raised by some Members and Ms. Campbell suggested that the policy would be circulated to the Members for their information. Transfer requests varied from those wishing to downsize their home to overcrowding or where special adaptations were required. In relation to a specific query raised, Mr. Murphy confirmed this transfer is in train but he did not wish to make further public comment on it.
- In reply to a query regarding Phase 2 of the "*Energy retrofit*", Mr. Ryan advised the Members that this will involve insulation to solid block walls, attic insulation and in some cases windows and doors. 57 houses are included in this Scheme with works due to commence later this year or early in 2017. Mr. Ryan further advised the Members, in reply to a query, that the Department will not fund solid fuel type heating.
- It was noted that the provision of *extensions to houses* is severe on the Council's resources. It is far more productive to assign the local authority's limited resources putting units into supply through building or purchases.
- In reply to a query from Councillor O'Boyle regarding *Tenants living in Fr. O'Flanagan Terrace* at present, Mr. Gavin confirmed that this development will take place in two stages. When Phase 1 is completed, the existing Tenants will move to their new homes and then Phase 2 will commence.
- It was confirmed to the Members that Sligo County Council would not have any knowledge of any *NAMA* involvement in the sale of properties they may be

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HELD ON MONDAY, 11TH JULY, 2016 AT 10.00 A.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
COUNTY HALL, RIVERSIDE, SLIGO**

purchasing. Some properties being sold through Receivers could have a NAMA involvement but this is not something that would be made known to buyers.

- Mr. Gavin confirmed that properties purchased under the Tenant Purchase Scheme and thereby removed from the *Council's Housing stock* would not be replaced once they are sold.
- In reply to a query from Councillor Henry regarding *HAP limits* and whether they are adequate enough for the market, Mr. Gavin confirmed that this is a national scheme and the limits were found to be too tight. These limits had been increased from the 1st July. It is hoped the new rates would fare better to match what Landlords are demanding with a degree of discretion over and above for certain areas. The Department wished to phase out the RAS Scheme which had been more favourable to Landlords. The new rates might now put the HAP Scheme ahead of RAS. The new rates would be circulated to the Members for their information.
- Councillor Bree referred to the 100 persons due to be resettled in Sligo under the *National Resettlement Programme* and given the difficulty in sourcing accommodation for people on the Housing list, will it be able to source and provide accommodation for them. A further query was raised as to whether these persons will be accommodated in private or County Council estates.

Mr. Gavin advised the Members that no additional resources will be given to the Council for this Programme who will be provided with a list of families and details of their needs. It will then be a matter for the Council to put a plan in place to house those families in four or five family clusters. It is most likely that they will be housed in local authority estates. This will then impact on the availability of houses that might be allocated otherwise. At present, information is scant enough. It is not progressing as fast as they had thought and it may be six or nine months more but as soon as details are made available, they will be forwarded to the Members.

- In relation to Voids, Mr. Gavin confirmed that the Department intend to fund Voids for a short period only. This finance may be available next year but thereafter local authorities who have voids will be penalised. The Council have tried to concentrate resources where they can make the greatest return.
- Councillor Baker referred to the Improvement in lieu Scheme and expressed the hope that this Scheme would return. It is far more costly for the Council to undertake works where this Scheme would allow the works to be carried out at a lesser cost. It was also requested that some leeway could be given on the condition of grant schemes regarding age where an applicant had to be over 65 to qualify for works on windows or a roof.
- Councillor Clarke requested that the Members would be furnished with a report on the Council owned land in Dromore West. Mr. Gavin agreed that this would be quantified and the need in the area examined.
- In reply to the numerous comments by Members regarding the work being carried out by the Housing staff, the Acting Director of Services thanked the Members.

The Cathaoirleach wished to be associated with the thanks extended to Mr. Gavin, Mr. Murphy and all their staff in the Housing Section. Councillor Keaney requested details of

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the numbers of those offered a home but had refused the offer and whether there were any consequences of doing so.

Mr. Murphy advised the Meeting that of 53 offers made, ten had been refused. Following two refusals, an Applicant is off the Housing list for one year.

Councillor Keaney also expressed surprise at the number of Housing Associations that are in place in Ireland. Mr. Murphy indicated that he would advise the Members of the exact number of these Bodies, with possibly up to 30 in place. Some of these Bodies are Community Schemes and they continue to manage and maintain their own units. These Bodies receive approval at Departmental level, not from the local authority. The Department sees them as another way of delivering housing.

CONCLUSION OF DISCUSSION ON SOCIAL HOUSING:

Mr. C. Hayes, Chief Executive, said that the engagement had been quite good. It had been the intention to demonstrate to the Members the complexity of the system. There is no one, single solution but a myriad of smaller solutions. The Chief Executive said the Council's Programme is quite ambitious bearing in mind the issues of resources and staffing. The Council has sought additional staff and are in the process of putting a further submission together. The support of the Members would be welcomed for this submission. The Members previously requested that a Deputation would meet with the Minister and it was hoped that this would feature at that meeting. It had been highlighted that other local authorities had received staffing resources to deal with their workload. In Sligo, however, there are significant restrictions in terms of staffing resources. Sligo County Council has shown it has the ability to deliver on these issues with staff and expertise. It no longer has enough staff and will be stretched to achieve the targets set out. This Council has both the land and the expertise and Mr. Hayes reiterated that the Members' support would be welcome in relation to the request for more staff.

Mr. Gavin thanked the staff and, in particular, Mr. Murphy for compiling the comprehensive information.

It was then **proposed by Councillor S. MacManus**
Seconded by Councillor D. Bree

AND AGREED

"That Sligo County Council contact the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government to request funding to initiate a scheme similar to the "Laying the Foundation" C.P.O. Pilot Project in County Louth".

Members also wished to record their appreciation for the work the staff members in Housing are undertaking. The Members noted the pressure these staff are under due to the severe constraints imposed in the Financial Plan.

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FLYING OF FLAG AT CITY AND COUNTY HALL:

Councillor MacManus, with the permission of the Cathaoirleach, referred to a motion agreed at the Council's Ordinary Meeting on 4th July

"That Sligo County Council resumes the flying of our National Flag at both County Hall and City Hall during opening hours and on national holidays".

During the discussion on this item, Councillor MacManus said he had made reference to the flag flying outside City Hall that time. It was not his intention to cause any offence to those involved in achieving the Purple Flag status for Sligo, particularly those in the B.I.D. who are working for the betterment of Sligo.

Councillor MacManus wished to withdraw his remarks and apologised for any offence they had caused.

END OF MEETING:

The Meeting concluded at 12.35 p.m.