

**MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING OF CORK CITY COUNCIL**  
**HELD ON MONDAY 10<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022**

<b>PRESENT</b>	Ardmhéara Comhairleoir C. Kelleher.
<b>NORTH EAST</b>	Comhairleoirí K. O’Flynn, J. Maher, T. Tynan, J. Kavanagh, O. Moran, G. Keohane.
<b>NORTH WEST</b>	Comhairleoirí T. Fitzgerald, M. Nugent, J. Sheehan, K. Collins, F. Ryan, D. Boylan.
<b>SOUTH EAST</b>	Comhairleoirí D. Cahill, L. Bogue, M.R. Desmond, K. McCarthy, T. Shannon, D. Forde.
<b>SOUTH CENTRAL</b>	Comhairleoirí M. Finn, D. Boyle, S. Martin, S. O’Callaghan, P. Dineen, F. Kerins.
<b>SOUTH WEST</b>	Comhairleoirí F. Dennehy, D. Canty, C. Finn, G. Kelleher, T. Moloney, E. Ryng.
<b>ALSO PRESENT</b>	Ms. A. Doherty, Chief Executive. Mr. B. Geaney, Assistant Chief Executive. Mr. P. Moynihan, Director of Services, Corporate Affairs & International Relations. Mr. F. Reidy, Director of Services, Strategic & Economic Development. Ms. A. Rodgers, Director of Services, Community, Culture & Placemaking. Mr. D. Joyce, Director of Services, Roads & Environment Operations. Mr. G. O’Beirne, Director of Services, Infrastructure Development. Mr. N. O’Donnabháin, Director of Housing. Mr. J. Hallahan, Chief Financial Officer. Mr. T. Duggan, City Architect. Ms. A. Murnane, Meetings Administrator. Mr. N. Carroll, Administrative Officer, Corporate Affairs & International Relations.

An tArdmhéara recited the opening prayer.

1. **LORD MAYOR’S ITEMS**

1.1 **VOTE OF CONDOLENCES**

An tArdmhéara proposed a vote of condolence to Comhairleoir G. Keohane and the Keohane family on the passing of Comhairleoir Keohane’s mother Mrs. Ellen Keohane.

An tArdmhéara proposed a vote of condolence to the families of those who died in the recent tornado in the City of Mayfield, Kentucky, U.S.A.

## 1.2 **COMMEMORATION FUND**

An tArdmhéara reminded An Chomhairle that the deadline for receipt of applications for the 2022 Commemoration Fund is 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022.

## 1.3 **MEETING OF AN CHOMHAIRLE**

On the proposal of An tArdmhéara, An Chomhairle unanimously agreed that the next meeting of An Chomhairle on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022 will be held online via Microsoft Teams.

## 1.4 **CIVIC AWARD**

An tArdmhéara advised An Chomhairle on his first nomination for the 2022 Civic Award as follows:-

Mr. Don O’Leary, in recognition of his contribution to education in Cork through his work with Cork Life Centre.

An Chomhairle considered and approved the nomination.

## 2. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S ITEMS**

No items raised.

## 3. **MINUTES**

On the proposal of Comhairleoir K. O’Flynn, seconded by Comhairleoir M.R. Desmond, An Chomhairle considered and approved the minutes of:-

- Ordinary Meeting of An Chomhairle held, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

## 4. **QUESTION TIME**

### 4.1 **RETROFITTING – PROPERTIES IN MIDDLE PARISH**

In response to the following question submitted by Comhairleoir P. Dineen, a written reply was circulated as outlined below:-

To ask the CEO if there are any future plans to add the Council properties in the Middle Parish in particular the Council properties situated on Gratton Street, Henry Street and Peters Street to the list for insulating and primarily Retrofitting in due course.

## **REPLY**

The Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage (DHLGH) has put in place an investment programme, known as the Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme (EERP), launched in 2021 for the retrofitting of social housing. An initial €65 million fund was announced early in 2021. Cork City Council has a number of projects currently planned and extensive stock across the city in need of upgrade.

Under this current round of the EERP Cork City Council was given approval to bring 123 properties up to the B2 BER/cost optimal standard. The first 110 properties are projected to be completed by Q3 of 2022. The current list of properties is spread throughout the City with a larger proportion of properties in the North West Area, concentrated in Churchfield. The properties in Churchfield were earmarked since 2019 under a previous programme, which didn't progress in 2020 as planned due to COVID restrictions and as such have been given priority.

The Council will take every opportunity to improve its suitable housing stock under this scheme should it be government funded on a rolling programme basis over the coming years. Such funding certainty would allow the Council to proactively plan a planned maintenance and investment programme on a priority needs basis across its housing stock and include for the Council owned properties referred to in the Middle Parish area.

Cork City Council will continue to work with the Department to progress the short and long term strategic role out of this important programme and any other possible alternative methods of accelerating the upgrade and retrofit of those Council owned properties most in need across the city.

Niall Ó Donnabháin,  
Director of Services,  
Housing.

## 4.2 **HAP INSPECTIONS**

In response to the following question submitted by Comhairleoir F. Kerins, a written reply was circulated as outlined below:-

Can the CE clarify if Cork City Council have outsourced inspections of properties where the tenant is receiving HAP?

## **REPLY**

HAP rentals form part of Cork City Councils responsibilities for private rental accommodation and all private rental inspections (PRI), including HAP, are carried out by the PRI Unit. HAP inspections are being prioritised. The PRI unit is currently made up of a direct inhouse team, and as of the 4th Quarter of 2021, a temporarily contracted external service provider also. The internal resourced team has been doubled in recent years and at full capacity can realise between 1,500 and 1,800 inspections per year. The 2022 target, as set nationally by government, is 5,200 properties to be inspected. Taking account for failure rates and follow-on inspections,

the numbers of inspections required in 2022 are expected to exceed 8,000. The assistance of an external provider was deemed necessary to meet the demands of the service in the short-term, while an appropriate methodology and team structure is defined, resourced and put in place.

Niall Ó Donnabháin,  
Director of Services,  
Housing.

#### 4.3 **ST. LUKES CHURCH**

In response to the following question submitted by Comhairleoir J. Kavanagh, a written reply was circulated as outlined below:-

Can the CE please provide an update on the current status and projected use of the St. Lukes Church?

Can the exterior surrounds be cleaned up and at what cost would the cleaning of the exterior Stone façade incur?

Are there plans to refurbish the interior, such as painting of the walls and what is the current status of implementing the original plans for the use of the rooms in the basement area for use?

#### **REPLY**

St. Lukes Church is a heritage building currently used for arts and cultural purposes. The building, including the rooms in the basement or ‘crypt’ is available for hire, free of charge, by cultural groups for events and activities open to the public, and for the creation and rehearsal of new work by artists in all disciplines. Application for use of the space is made directly to the Arts Office and use is granted subject to appropriateness of the activities proposed and evidence of appropriate insurances in place which indemnify Cork City Council.

The building has complex and extensive needs from a conservation point of view and much investment is needed for its continued maintenance. Essential works have been prioritised. Currently the building is temporarily closed to access while we carry out essential repairs to the alarm system. We have also recently upgraded the power supply to the building.

There are currently no funds available to carry out refurbishment beyond essential works. The long term plan for the building is to continue its use as a much needed arts and cultural resource and to review the best approach to the ongoing management and maintenance of the venue.

Adrienne Rodgers,  
Director of Services,  
Community, Culture & Placemaking.

#### 4.4 **OFFICE SPACE VACANCY**

In response to the following question submitted by Comhairleoir D. Boyle, a written reply was circulated as outlined below:-

To ask the City Manager the known level of office space vacancy as of year end 2021?

#### **REPLY**

Figures for Q4, 2021 are not yet available. The City Council's *Strategic Employment Locations Study 2021*, an input study to the Draft City Development Plan 2022 - 2028, includes data on office vacancy accurate to Q4 2020. The study showed that in Q4 2020 there was a total 13.8% vacancy rate for office space in Cork City. The full comprehensive report is available on the Council's website.

According to market intelligence, the office vacancy rate in the City in Q3, 2021 is 14.6%. That was in the context of an increase in supply of office space in Cork City in 2021, such as the c.6,500sqm Counting House at the former Beamish and Crawford Brewery. In addition, new office construction has commenced in a number of locations, including Mahon and Horgan's Quay. Market activity has seen take up of c.7,000sqm office space in the city up to Q3, 2021.

Fearghal Reidy,  
Director of Services,  
Strategic & Economic Development.

#### 4.5 **DISABILITY OFFICER**

In response to the following question submitted by Comhairleoir M. Nugent, a written reply was circulated as outlined below:-

Can the CE clarify if there is a role of 'Disability Officer' within the City Council and the responsibilities involved? If such a role does not exist what strategies does the Council employ in its absence?

#### **REPLY**

In 2002 Cork City Council adopted the Barcelona Declaration to promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities, to design and provide accessible services and to consult with people with disabilities and their advocates.

Subsequently, the passing of The Disability Act 2005 placed a number of requirements on public bodies (including local authorities and Government departments principally).

One of these was the appointment of an Access Officer. The role of the Access Officer is to provide or arrange for, and co-ordinate the provision of assistance and guidance to people with disabilities in accessing services provided by Cork City Council and generally to act as a point of contact for people with disabilities wishing to access such services.

Following on from the Act and the National Disability Strategy all directorates in Cork City Council have been actively and positively engaging with providers of services in the city for persons with a disability, The National Disability Authority and other national and local bodies and agencies to ensure greater access to and enjoyment of the city by all persons. The work which has been carried out in this area has been recognised with the receipt of both national and local awards.

On 14<sup>th</sup> July 2017 the Dept. of Justice and Equality published the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 which has 8 main strands. A whole of Government approach is being taken to ensure implementation of the Strategy which encompasses all state agencies and local authorities as well as Government Departments. Key objectives and actions have been identified and Cork City Council will implement any required actions within available resources and budgets.

Cork City Council will continue to promote the rights of people with disabilities through a very broad range of activities and supports, including employment initiatives, work placements, disability focussed programmes such as Make Way Day and facilities (eg libraries and playgrounds), housing adaptation grants and the promotion of the inclusion agenda for festivals and events. Provision has been made for persons with disabilities in our LECP and the draft City Development Plan.

Accessibility is a cornerstone of inclusion and Cork City Council will continue to take steps to improve accessibility for people with disabilities in fundamental aspects of city living.

Paul Moynihan,  
Director of Services,  
Corporate Affairs & International Relations.

#### 4.6 **ROAD IMPROVEMENTS SAFETY SCHEME**

In response to the following question submitted by Comhairleoir K. Collins, a written reply was circulated as outlined below:-

Can the CE report on what Cork City Council has applied for in relation to 2022 Road Improvements Safety Scheme.

#### **REPLY**

For the past number of years, the Department of Transport invites Local Authorities to apply for the funding of low-cost safety improvement works on regional and local roads. In accordance with the scheme, an application was made to the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport in October 2021 for funding under the Low-Cost Safety Improvement Scheme for proposals at nine locations that meet the criteria of the scheme, as detailed in the table below. The Department's decision on the awarding of funds is awaited and is typically communicated to local authorities in January or February.

Road Number	Location	Brief Description of Proposed Scheme
L-1005 / L-1053 junction	<a href="#">Junction of Ballinlough Road &amp; Belair Estate, Ballinlough</a>	Improve the junction layout and installation of safer crossing facilities for pedestrians is proposed.
L2211 (and adjacent L6321)	<a href="#">Coolroe Road, Ballincollig. At existing pedestrian desire line approx 180m from junction with R608 (And pedestrian path leading to L6321)</a>	It is proposed to install a formal pedestrian crossing in place of the ad-hoc uncontrolled crossing point.
R617/L2774 junction	<a href="#">St Ann's Road near Scoil Croi Iosa, Blarney</a>	The proposal includes the provision of improved footpaths in the area to the front of the school and provision of traffic calming features and improved signage on the road.
L2958 / L2980 junction	<a href="#">Skew junction of L2958 &amp; L2980 at "The Black Man" pub, Ballincollie Road, Dublin Hill Upper</a>	An improved junction layout is proposed, encompassing adjusted kerb lines and improved road markings and signage.
L6746	<a href="#">Bellevue Road, Grange Within 30km/hr zone 3 No. existing informal crossings/desire lines along the frontage of the Scoil Nioclais Primary School.</a>	Improvements to the existing uncontrolled pedestrian crossings outside the schools including improved footpaths either side of the crossings, drainage, signage and road markings.
R614 R616 L2980 junction	<a href="#">White's Cross A 4-cross-roads junction of :</a> <a href="#">- R614 Ballyhooly Road,</a> <a href="#">- R616 Upper Glanmire Road</a> <a href="#">- L2980 to Cork</a>	Improvements to the signage and road markings on the junction approaches to improve safety.
L1117 (near junction with L50971)	<a href="#">Colmcille Road, Churchfield, near Gerry O'Sullivan Park, Churchfield School/Family Centre and Churchfield</a>	Upgrading of the existing uncontrolled pedestrian crossing to zebra or controlled crossing is proposed.

	<a href="#">Allotments.</a>	
L5294/L5283/L5015 junction	<a href="#">Junction of Ardfallen Estate and Eglantine Park, Douglas</a>	Construction of new sections of footpath at the northern corner of the junction to eliminate the gap in the footpath network, and reconstruction of the footpaths on the southern corner of the junction to improve junction layout.
L1051	<a href="#">Albert Road, Ballintemple 50m west of the Victoria Road Roundabout.</a>	Improvements to the existing zebra crossing to enhance visibility and accessibility.

Liam Casey,  
A/Director of Services,  
Roads & Environment Operations.

#### 4.7 **FIRE INSPECTION OF WASTE FACILITY IN CHURCHFIELD**

In response to the following question submitted by Comhairleoir O. Moran, a written reply was circulated as outlined below:-

To ask the Chief Executive when was the last fire inspection of the waste facility at Churchfield, if there is a plan in place for responding to an emergency at the facility, and if air pollution monitoring (including of odours) is conducted in relation to the facility?

#### **REPLY**

The fire department has not undertaken a fire safety inspection at this location. The fire department has interacted with the site owner for the production of their internal emergency plan. The fire department has a range of equipment for dealing with incidents at sites such as this, additionally, this site has been added to the operational fire pre incident planning list which includes familiarisation visits by operational crews

Cork City Council have not carried out any air pollution monitoring in relation to the facilities at Churchfield. Apart from the fire in April of 2021, the facilities licenced by Cork City Council would be considered to have low levels of air pollution.

Cork City Council do carry out annual inspections of these facilities and the facilities are permitted with conditions.



Adrienne Rodgers,  
Director of Services,  
Community, Culture & Placemaking.

Liam Casey,  
A/Director of Services,  
Roads & Environment Operations

4.8 **FIREFIGHTER NUMBERS IN 2015 AND 2022**

In response to the following question submitted by Comhairleoir E. Ryng, a written reply was circulated as outlined below:-

To ask the CE:

How many Firefighters were working full time in:

the 'Old' Cork City Council area in 2015,

and

How many are working full time in:

the current area covered by Cork City Council in 2022?

**REPLY**

The Operational Fire Brigade consists of a number of ranks from Firefighter to Chief Fire Officer.

In 2015 the establishment was 144 members for Cork City Fire Brigade. They provided fire cover to the Cork City area and areas of Cork County adjacent to the City under the City County Service Level Agreement which has been in place for many years.

In 2022 the establishment was 154 members for Cork City Fire Brigade which includes 10 members of the retained Fire Service in Ballincollig which joined Cork City in 2019 following the boundary extension.

Competitions are underway to fill current vacancies in both the fulltime and retained services. The closing date for expressions of interest for the retained service in Ballincollig is 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2022 and it is expected that any current vacancies for full time fire fighters will be filled by early in quarter 2 of this year subject to successful interviews and physical tests.

Adrienne Rodgers,  
Director of Services,  
Community, Culture & Placemaking.

4.9 **JUNCTION LAYOUT PLANS FOR DENROCHES CROSS**

In response to the following question submitted by Comhairleoir C. Finn, a written reply was circulated as outlined below:-

Can I ask the CE for an update on the junction and footpath layout plans for Denroches Cross?

**REPLY**

Public realm improvement works for Deanroche's Cross were part of a permitted SHD development for student accommodation, accessed at Bandon Road, close to Deanroche's Cross.

SHD development ref: 307096-20. Condition No. 17 of the Board Order for this permitted SHD states the following:

*17. The road improvements at Deanroche's Cross (Glasheen Road/Bandon Road/Magazine Road junction) as outlined in the drawings submitted with the application, shall be carried out in full by the developer at his expense. A final design shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of the development. The final design shall comply with the provisions of Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and include the recommendations of the Stage 1/2 Road Safety Audit. A Stage 3/4 Road Safety Audit shall be agreed and discharged with the planning authority.*

*Reason: To facilitate safe pedestrian and vehicular access to the proposed development.*

The construction of this development has commenced and has substantially progressed and the provision of the public realm improvement works will be required as part of this permitted development.

Adrienne Rodgers,  
Director of Services,  
Community, Culture & Placemaking.

4.10 **REDEVELOP RESERVOIR AT HARBOUR VIEW ROAD**

In response to the following question submitted by Comhairleoir T. Fitzgerald, a written reply was circulated as outlined below:-

To ask the CEO to coordinate a plan as a community space to redevelop the Reservoir at Harbour View Road, refurbish the pump station, including surrounding lands at Ardculen Hollyhill involving Irish Water, ESB, Cork City Council and local community groups in consultation with local residents.

**REPLY**

An assessment of the lands adjacent to the reservoir at Harbour View Road including the lands at Ardculen will be undertaken in Q1 2022 to establish what improvements are required to enhance its suitability as a community space and improve its visual appearance.

Liam Casey,  
A/Director of Services,  
Roads and Environment Operations.

## 5 **STATUTORY ITEMS**

### 5.1 **PROPERTY DISPOSALS**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the reports of the Chief Executive, dated 30<sup>th</sup> December 2021 on the following property disposals:-

1. Disposal of the freehold interest in the property situated at 20, St. Annes Drive, Montenotte, Cork, to Muireann O'Neill, c/o JRAP O'Meara, Solicitors, 89/90, South Mall, Cork, for the sum of €122.00 together with costs in the sum of €550.00 plus VAT.

On the proposal of Comhairleoir O. Moran, seconded by Comhairleoir J. Kavanagh, An Chomhairle approved the disposal.

2. Disposal of the leasehold interest in a plot of ground (31.2m<sup>2</sup> approximately) situated to the rear of No. 4, Windsor Cottages, Ballyhooley Road, Cork to Sarah Moynihan, c/o Kevin Crowley & Co. Solicitors, 22, Marlboro Street, Cork for the sum of €550.00 plus costs in the sum of €1,500.00 plus VAT.

On the proposal of Comhairleoir K. O'Flynn, seconded by Comhairleoir J. Kavanagh, An Chomhairle approved the disposal.

3. Disposal of the freehold interest in an area of ground (18.6 square metres approximately) together with grant of wayleave on land situated at Harbour View Road Reservoir Site, Harbour View Road, Hollyhill, Cork to ESB Wilton, Cork for the sum of €1.00.

On the proposal of Comhairleoir S. Martin, seconded by Comhairleoir M. Nugent, An Chomhairle approved the disposal.

4. Disposal of the freehold interest in an area of ground (18.8 square metres approximately), together with grant of wayleave on land situated at Shanakiel Reservoir Site, Shanakiel, Sundays Well, Cork to ESB Wilton, Cork for the sum of €1.00.

On the proposal of Comhairleoir K. Collins, seconded by Comhairleoir K. McCarthy, An Chomhairle approved the disposal.

## 6. **CORPORATE POLICY GROUP – 4<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022**

An Chomhairle noted the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group from its meeting held, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

### 6.1 **LORD MAYOR'S ITEMS**

An Chomhairle considered and unanimously approved the nomination of Mr. Don O'Leary for a Lord Mayor's Civic Award 2022 in acknowledgement of his work in the Cork Life Centre under Lord Mayor's items at No. 1 of the agenda.

7. **ROADS & TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE – 20<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021**

An Chomhairle noted the minutes of the Roads & Transportation Strategic Policy Committee from its meeting held, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

7.1 **LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BRIEFING NOTE**

An Chomhairle considered and noted the report of the Director of Services, Infrastructure Development Directorate, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021 regarding the Light Rail Transit Briefing Note.

7.2 **MOTIONS**

7.2.1 **E-CHARGING POINTS**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Roads & Environment Operations Directorate, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘Following on from my motion on E charging points on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020. Can we get a list of how many E car-charging points there are across Cork City and where they are. How many are fast charging points. How many are planned in the coming months and years? Where are they being installed?’

(Proposer: Cllr. T. Moloney 21/372)

The report stated that given that ownership of EV charge points to spread across public bodies, privately owned facilities and private property, an investigation of existing EV charging points will need to be carried out to determine the number, location and type of charging points in the City.

The CCMA EV Charging Working Group published a draft of the Local Authority Electrification of Fleet and EV Charging Guidance Document in July 2021. The document outlines that as a first step, each LA should consider the development of an EV and an Electrical Vehicle Charge Point (EVCP) strategy for the deployment of EVs as part of their fleet and to assess the optimum locations of public EVCPs within their city and county boundaries. Cork City Council are in the process of preparing a strategy in line with this document for Cork City.

7.2.2 **SCHOOL TRAFFIC WARDEN SCHEME**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Roads & Environment Operations Directorate, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That this Council’s school traffic warden scheme be reviewed on an annual basis with wardens being allocated to those schools where traffic levels are highest, and where greatest risk exists.’

(Proposer: Cllr. D. Boyle 21/408)

The report stated that a review of the school traffic warden scheme would require the appointment of a consultant to assess every school in the city (approx. 120 schools) using pre-determined weighted criteria such as location of crossing points, type of road, level and speed of traffic at the location, number of children crossing, road safety issues. Traffic counts and speed surveys may also need to be carried out. To plan and programme this work, a budget would need to be provided. There is no such provision in the 2021 or 2022 budget.

### 7.2.3 **TRAFFIC LIGHTS IN CORK**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Roads & Environment Operations Directorate, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘On behalf of group of blind and vision impaired people living in Cork.

1. That all new lights in Cork are accessible with audible indicators.
2. That all traffic lights without audible indicators should be retrofitted as soon as possible.
3. Council will consider extending the duration of the time allocated for pedestrians when crossing the road.
4. Council will establish an online portal to enable citizens to report inaccessible or malfunctioning traffic lights, and to suggest locations requiring the installation of new traffic lights.’

(Proposer: Cllr. T. Moloney 21/431)

The report stated that Cork City Council in partnership with the NTA is actively improving facilities for vulnerable road users including the installation of Pedestrian demand pushbuttons with audible indicators and reconfiguring junction layouts based on CMATS via Design and Infrastructure projects. In 2021, Cork City Council were provided with a specific NTA grant allocation to undertake pedestrian pushbutton upgrades, with inspection works currently underway with installation works to commence in Q1 2022. The continuation of grant support from the NTA is required to fully renew the network into the future as there is an absence of internal capital funds to undertake these works. The Customer Relations Management (CRM) system in Cork City Council (accessible by ringing 021-4924000 9:00am to 5:00pm weekdays or emailing [servicecentre@corkcity.ie](mailto:servicecentre@corkcity.ie)) is available to members of the public who wish to log faults/observations in relation to any traffic signal sites which are then relayed to the relevant section for action.

### 7.2.4 **PRIORITISATION OF PEDESTRIANS AND VULNERABLE ROAD USERS**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Roads & Environment Operations Directorate, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That the CE will enforce within the planning rules the prioritisation of pedestrians and vulnerable road users in the transport adjustments for essential road works.’

(Proposer: Cllr. C. Finn 21/434)

The report stated that where temporary traffic management measures are necessary for works carried out in the City by both the City Council and private contractors, these measures must be provided in accordance with the Traffic Signs Manual. The need to provide for pedestrians and cyclists are provided in this guidance. Any sites/locations where it is alleged to be insufficient provision for pedestrians and/or cyclists, this can be reported to the Customer Service Unit (accessible by ringing 021-4924000 9:00am to 5:00pm weekdays or emailing servicecentre@corkcity.ie) and will be dealt with by the relevant department.

#### 7.2.5 **FUNDING TO IMPROVE WALKING AND CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Committee noted the report of the Director of Services, Infrastructure Development Directorate, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That the CE will examine funding streams available for quick wins to improve existing walking and cycling infrastructure.’

(Proposer: Cllr. C. Finn 21/435)

The report stated that in recent years, the City Council has significantly expanded the capital works programme for projects incorporating new or improved cycling and walking infrastructure. Over the past twelve months this included works on the refurbishment of Dalys Bridge, upgrade of Passage Greenway (Phase 1 Marina-Mahon), new cycle facilities at South Mall, Albert St, Mc Swiney Quay, Victoria Rd, Schoolboy Lane and Melbourne Rd, upgrade of the Curaheen off road pedestrian/cycle path, upgrade of the Carrigrohane off road pedestrian/cycle path, pedestrian improvements at Skehard Rd, Blarney Rd, Wellington Rd, Vicars Rd, Ringmahon Rd, Dublin Hill and Alderbrook. It also includes the development of a pipeline of new schemes for commencement including MacCurtain St PTI, Grange to Tramore Valley pedestrian/cycle bridge, Glanmire Road Improvements, South Douglas Road Junction as well as the progression of design/planning/land acquisition for required improvements at locations such as Knapps Square, Lehenaghmore, Donnybrook, Ballybrack, Grand Parade/Beamish and Crawford, Ballyvolane, South Quays, Marina, Curaheen, Mahon etc These schemes are mainly funded by way of grants secured from the National Transport Authority and to a lesser degree the Department of Transport and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage with local authority support. In line with national policy it is expected that the level of funding for such works will continue to increase and this will enable the development of a larger work programme with projects ranging from small schemes which can be delivered quickly to multimodal transport schemes with significant civil works. The development of all new proposals and progress in the delivery of approved schemes will continue to be discussed with and reported to Members at LAC and Council meetings, as appropriate.

## 7.2.6 **PARENT AND BABY PARKING SPACES IN CITY OWNED CAR PARKS**

The Committee noted the report of the Director of Services, Roads & Environment Operations Directorate, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That Cork City Council will install parent-and-baby car parking spaces in city-owned car parks.’

(Proposer: Cllr. O. Moran 21/439)

The report stated that when the car parks are being re-lined, the need and feasibility of providing parent and child parking spaces will be assessed and any works deemed appropriate will be carried out.

## 8. **STRATEGIC, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTERPRISE & PLANNING STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE – 20<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021**

An Chomhairle noted the minutes of the Strategic, Economic Development, Enterprise & Planning Strategic Policy Committee from its meeting held, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

### 8.1 **TOWN AND VILLAGE RENEWAL SCHEME**

An Chomhairle considered and noted the report of the Director of Services, Strategic & Economic Development, dated 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

### 8.2 **ELIZABETH FORT – PERFORMANCE SPACE**

An Chomhairle considered and noted the report of the Director of Services, Strategic & Economic Development, dated 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

## 9. **HOUSING STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE – 21<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2021**

An Chomhairle noted the minutes of the Housing Strategic Policy Committee from its meeting held, 21<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

### 9.1 **HOUSING PROGRESS REPORT**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Housing on Housing for October 2021.

### 9.2 **DISABLED PERSONS GRANT PROCESS**

An Chomhairle considered and noted the report of the Acting Director of Services, Housing, dated 15<sup>th</sup> October 2021 on the Disabled Persons Grant process.

### 9.3 **RETROFITTING IN SOCIAL HOUSING**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Housing dated 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021 on Retrofitting in Social Housing.

## 9.4 **MOTIONS**

### 9.4.1 **UPDATE CHOICE BASED LETTING SCHEME**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Housing, dated 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘Update and make changes to the CBL to have the most relevant up to date information showing on it.

It would be excellent if a person was able to log back into their expressions of interest and see what they have bid on.

If the previous weeks housing was still available to view, even if a person cannot bid on.

On the properties update section have the most recent allocated properties updated in this section on the first page and the older ones pushed back in the system.

Have a section for people who are interested in swopping – I know we are currently piloting another project at the moment but consider this with all other suggestions.

These are just four suggestions; I would be aware that other Councillors and the public would have suggestions for making the site better and more user-friendly.’

(Proposer: Cllr. T. Moloney 21/090)

The report of the Director of Services advised that the Strategic Housing ICT Programme Board under the aegis of the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) is currently considering the extension of CBL in line with the stated intention in “Rebuilding Ireland - Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness” to “introduce and implement, as early as possible, across all local authorities, a choice-based or equivalent allocation system” and it was agreed in May 2021 at a Heads of Information Systems meeting that a national solution is preferable; a project initiation document (PID) is in progress as a result.

Given limited resources, both financial and human, it is not envisaged that any significant redevelopment of our local solution will be undertaken while the national assessment is ongoing. It is unlikely that funding would be available to implement the significant changes to our existing CBL system outlined above while the PID is still in progress. It should be noted that, as over 80% of those accessing CBL are applicants rather than tenants, it would not be a suitable system for facilitating mutual exchanges among existing tenants. As the Homeswapper pilot is on-going, no decision has yet been made nationally on the most suitable solution to facilitate inter-transfers in the future

### 9.4.2 **POLICY TO RETURN LOST YEARS FOR HOUSING APPLICANTS**

An Chomhairle considered and approved report of the Director of Services, Housing, dated 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-



‘That the Housing Directorate form a policy to facilitate the return of years for housing applications who have lost years on the waiting list due to historic non-receipt of forms from Council.’

(Proposer: Cllr. F. Ryan 21/108)

The report of the Director of Services advised that it should be noted that there is no legal or statutory requirement for Cork City Council to offer a credit time review for any application, even though we regularly facilitate requests from applicants to do so. In many cases, credit time reviews are requested by applicants where their files have been closed for non-response to a periodic statutory review (previously known as a Housing Needs Assessment; now called a Summary Social Housing Assessment). These reviews are conducted by all local authorities in Ireland under the direction of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Every local authority is obliged to prepare a summary of social housing assessments for their own administrative area, as required under Section 21 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. The individual summaries from each local authority are collated by the Department to identify the level of national housing need, and to provide ‘live’ current data to inform the development of housing policy nationally. In order to fulfil the requirements of this process, Cork City Council must contact all qualified households identified as being in need of reassessment, to confirm that they remain qualified for social housing support based on the household’s current circumstances, including current accommodation, current income and current household composition.

When an applicant fails to respond to the review request, or fails to provide the required proofs to allow an assessment to be completed, the guidelines issued by the Department advise that the application be closed with the proviso that applicants can subsequently re-apply once the necessary information is provided.

Accordingly, the letters issued with the review forms very clearly outline the importance of submitting the review form, the implications of not returning the form, and of the closing date for the return of the form and documents to allow time for the assessment process to be completed.

It is fully appreciated that a considerable number of applicants on the City Council’s list go through challenging experiences, facing complex personal circumstances and insecure housing tenures but make enormous effort to maintain their files with us throughout. If an applicant contacts us within a reasonable period of time after their file is closed to explain why they failed to engage with us, their application will be re-opened. The issue of restoration of credit time or otherwise to such applicants would clearly have implications for the large number of applicants who have engaged with the City Council on each occasion they were requested to engage for the SSHA and on every occasion that their personal circumstances may have changed such that their housing application required an update. Such diligence and engagement ensures a person’s application remains live and updated from when they initially applied to the City Council. In such circumstances people would have an expectation that they were getting closer to being housed on a daily basis from any queries they would have had with the City Council regarding properties that they may have bid on.

For an applicant to “parachute” in, perhaps ahead of them, would have to be for extenuating circumstances only. It is for this reason that I will put in place an appeals process independent of the Housing Allocations Section to examine requests received for credit time reviews.

It is critical that such an appeals process is robust, transparent and fair and stand up to scrutiny from audit, the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman for Children, etc. As such the appeal process will be similar to that which is in place for review of tenancy warnings.

- A person may request a credit time review in writing to the Senior Executive Officer, Housing (Systems Development & Change section)
- The review request shall outline the grounds upon which the applicant is seeking the credit time review setting out, in detail, the background to their housing situation, the reasons why their application wasn't kept up to date, filling in the gaps for the periods of time that their application(s) was/were closed.
- The request must be accompanied by relevant supporting documentation which should include:
  - i. Proof that the person was residing in the Cork City Council jurisdictional area and/or the extended boundary transition area, if appropriate for the duration of the relevant time the review request relates to e.g. letter from the Department of Social Welfare to confirm the person was in receipt of social welfare at Cork City addresses for the relevant period,
  - ii. Letter(s) from landlord(s) or copies of tenancy agreement(s) or utility bills for the relevant period,
  - iii. Letter of support from medical professional where the request cites medical reasons for not being in a position to keep the housing application up to date,
  - iv. Letter of support from other advocate(s) acting on the applicant's behalf, where relevant and where it relates to the reasons for the person not being in a position to keep their housing application up to date.

Once a valid request is received, the person assigned to carry out the review shall examine the request as if the matter were being decided for the first time and on the basis of the information available to him or her.

The reviewer will make such enquiries and/or make such further requests for documentation that they require, and meet with any person, including the applicant if he or she considers it appropriate and necessary in the circumstances. The reviewer will endeavour to complete his/her review within 20 working days of receiving the last piece of documentation or conducting the last meeting as the reviewer has determined necessary. If the reviewer refuses to grant the credit time review request, it will be open to the applicant to appeal the decision to the Director of Services, Housing.

#### 9.4.3 **TASKFORCE TO TRACK INCREASING RENTS IN PRIVATE MARKET**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Housing, dated 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That Cork City Council create a taskforce to track the increasing rents in the private market in Cork City and pursue landlords who circumvent the rent pressure zone annual increase threshold.’

(Proposer: Cllr. F. Ryan 21/213)

The report of the Director of Services advised that the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) play an important and central role in the area of Rent Pressure Zones and as such are best placed to track increasing rents in the private market given their regulatory status and enforcement powers.

A Rent Pressure Zone (RPZ) is a designated area where rents cannot exceed general inflation, as recorded by Harmonised Index of the Consumer Price (HICP), or 2% per year pro rata, where HICP inflation is higher. This applies to new and existing tenancies (unless an exemption is being applied). Rent Pressure Zones are located in parts of the country where rents are highest and rising, and where households have the greatest difficulty finding affordable accommodation. They are intended to moderate the rise in rents in these areas and create a stable and sustainable rental market that allows landlord and tenants to plan financially for their future.

The Residential Tenancies Board has an Investigation and Sanctions unit dedicated to investigating certain potential breaches by a landlord of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004. The breaches of the RTA 2004 that the RTB can investigate are referred to as “Improper Conduct”. Improper Conduct includes where a landlord does not comply with the RPZ rent increase restrictions.

#### 9.4.4 **BUILDINGS AT NORTH MAIN STREET TO BE DESIGNATED FOR SOCIAL HOUSING**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Corporate Affairs & International Relations, dated 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That Cork City Council would designate buildings recently 'Compulsory Purchased Ordered' (CPO) at 62-65 North Main St for social housing purposes looking at options for same.’

‘Go n-úsáidfeadh an Comhairle na foirgnimh ar an bPríomhsráid Thuaidh, ó 62 go 65, chun tithíocht shóisialta a sholáthar agus go ndéanfaí plean conas seo a bhaint amach.’

(Proposer: Cllr. M. Nugent 21/355)

The report of the Director of Services advised that these properties are not currently vested in Cork City Council. Cork City Council issued notice of its intention to compulsorily acquire the properties at 62-65 North Main Street on 4th June 2021. However, objections were received from relevant parties. As is statutory process, the consent of An Bord Pleanála to the acquisition has now been sought.

The indicative timescale for An Bord Pleanála to determine the case is January 2022. Prior to commencing the statutory process for compulsory acquisition under the

Derelict Sites Act, a business case analysis was undertaken which included an assessment of potential uses for the site. Currently, the site is zoned City Centre Retail. The uses at the site should reflect the city centre retail zoning and improve the fabric and vibrancy of the North Main Street. Key issue relating to uses, is that they are viable and deliverable.

In that regard, commercial uses would reflect the historic function of the North Main Street. Living over the shop will be explored at the site.

#### 9.4.5 **REPORT ON OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN INVESTIGATION**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Housing, dated 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘Can the Chief Executive provide a full report following the statutory investigation from the Ombudsman for Children’s Office and provide an urgent detailed timeframe for implementation of the key 10 recommendations’

(Proposer: Cllr. F. Ryan 21/247)

The report of the Director of Services advised that significant progress has been made in relation to addressing the issues and recommendations outlined in the Ombudsman for Children’s Office (OCO) report. The executive continues to engage with the OCO and has formally corresponded with the Office at the end of October, again in November and had its 6 month review with the OCO in December.

The OCO report was provided to the Council in late May 2021 and it is important to note that the City Council’s comprehensive engagement with all of the traveller families involved was delayed for a number of weeks during the summer as many residents of the halting site were not available to engage as they went travelling outside the city with their families, which is the norm.

The report went on to state that in any event, significant progress has been achieved, and an update is provided as follows:

#### **Meaningful Community Engagement:**

Cork City Council has established a team including external service providers to prepare and carry out an engagement with the community to identify all relevant issues both social and technical to identify and implement a sustainable solution to improve the quality of lives of the children and their community, as soon as possible. This is a big challenge and a difficult project to see through, but the Director stated that he was glad to report that our lead engagement team has been accepted by the community and other stakeholders and at this stage after months of family in person meetings, phone calls etc. (despite the pandemic restrictions), we can see trust being restored in the City Council’s relationship with the community.

## **Summary of Actions with regard to OCO Recommendations:**

**Recommendation 1** - *Due to the significant and prolonged adverse impact on children living on this site, the oversight for the implementation of these recommendations must be held at CEO level to ensure accountability and a ring-fenced budget.*

The Chief Executive has prioritised this matter and has taken specific measures to have appropriate oversight on the implementation of the recommendations of the report. A bi-weekly meeting takes place with the Assistant Chief Executive to update on progress made. The annual revenue budgets and capital budgets relating to the provision of Traveller Accommodation are currently ring-fenced.

**Recommendation 2** - *The Local Authority should immediately review the housing applications and complaints made by the 11 families. If there were any administrative errors that may have adversely impacted them and their children, then redress should be provided, including an acknowledgement of same.*

Following a review of the housing applications, the City Council's Internal Audit Section have confirmed that all relevant information and procedures were followed in the review and processing of the said applications. It is the City Council's opinion that no errors were identified that would have adversely impacted the applicants' success in bidding for social housing on the Choice Based Letting (CBL) system. The Internal Audit Section have suggested process improvements in their report that may assist in managing the system on behalf of the Travelling Community. The Council will work to implement relevant suggestions as soon as possible.

**Recommendation 3** - *The Local Authority should, without delay and in co-operation with the residents (including children), undertake a risk assessment of the named site with a view to taking immediate action to address the health and safety risks identified. Particular consideration should be given to the connection of all mobile units to plumbing and sewerage, the refurbishment of the welfare huts, the removal of fire safety hazards, the clearing of children's passage to school and the consistent provision of waste management, pest control, electrical and other maintenance. The matter of illegal dumping on the site must also be addressed as a matter of priority.*

A risk assessment, supplied to the OCO, has been carried out by an experienced Consulting Engineer and a number of mitigation measures have and are currently being put in place to address concerns raised and deliver short-term solutions.

These include the following main items:

- Upgrading of potable water & water distribution network
- Replacement & refurbishment of existing welfare facilities
- Review & safe improvement of existing electrical supplies
- Embankment structural safety/ stabilisation works
- Regularisation and improvement of the existing school access pathway
- Extensive sewer surveys carried out to eliminate issues and weekly visits by a Drain Clean company until permanent solution implemented

- Enhanced response maintenance system at the site with a dedicated phone line including out of hours service for emergency repairs

The City Council plans to refurbish/redesign the original 10 bays at Spring Lane for the families that wish to remain, which will include the welfare units, electrics, water, and sanitary services in parallel with the delivery of a group housing scheme at Ellis' Yard, next to the site. A dedicated Project Implementation Team has been established to aid the delivery of this work. In the intervening period, temporary welfare pods are being provided and this work is on-going. There have been major difficulties in obtaining such units due to current supply chain delays for construction related equipment, which are well documented, but matters are in hand and under control.

With regard to the clearing of the children's passageway to school, the City Council has agreed with residents on the north-eastern area of the site to reduce the risks with the existing embankment and place a temporary footpath that will enable children access the local school. A new footpath is also being planned from the public road through the site in response to the risk assessment. The first phase of the embankment work is almost complete but delayed due the need for the ESB to relocate two electricity poles at the top of the embankment. The Council is bringing all pressures to bear to resolve this current delay.

Cork City Council provides an industrial sized skip service to the site which is collected now on a twice weekly basis. Pest control services are in operation at the site.

**Recommendation 4** - *Due to deficiencies in the current TAP 2019-2024, the local authority should, without delay and in cooperation with the residents (including children), set out in particularised form how it will address the accommodation needs of the site residents in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 (including annual targets). The risk of failing to address the needs of this group which is experiencing severe housing deprivation is too great to allow the current paralysis in the system to continue.*

A comprehensive assessment in conjunction with the residents, Traveller representative bodies and the Traveller Accommodation Unit (TAU) is being finalised. The City Council engaged the services of external professional Stakeholder Engagement Experts to meet with each individual household and assess their accommodation requirements. This intervention has provided the City Council with a clear assessment of the numbers of households that will accept standard local authority housing, has identified those that wish to remain in a refurbished Spring Lane Site, those that wish to move to the group housing scheme at Ellis Yard or a group housing scheme at another location.

This assessment will set out a strategy for addressing the accommodation needs of Spring Lane residents for each year from 2021 to 2024 inclusive.

The City Council's ability to deliver on expectations will of course be contingent on availability within existing housing stock, the demands of the growing social housing support waiting list (currently circa, 4,500 approved households) and willingness of the residents of Spring Lane to be flexible regarding the type and location of supports they are willing to accept to meet their housing needs.

**Recommendation 5** - *The Local Authority should conduct an audit of all social housing applications from the families on this site, including those for local authority housing, group housing and halting sites. The audit should be completed independent of the Local Authority and inform accommodation planning under Recommendation 4.*

*It should also consider whether the current allocation system is appropriate in ensuring equal access to social housing for these families with due regard to the findings of this investigation.*

*Consent should be sought from residents participating in the audit. Where that consent is refused, that data should be excluded in line with GDPR.*

As outlined above, the City Council has engaged external Stakeholder Engagement Experts who have held a series of in person meetings with each household in Spring Lane.

The results are being used to inform the accommodation planning to be carried out under recommendation 4.

The Applied Social Studies Department in University College Cork is carrying out an equality review of the Choice Based Letting (CBL) system. This work will be concluded by year end.

The Council will endeavour to improve and simplify the current system for use by the Traveller Community once the results of the equality review (to be carried out as a result of finding 5) are available. In the interim, any client who requires assistance in the use of the CBL system can contact the Housing Allocations Team or the TAU for support, either by phone or personally visiting City Hall.

**Recommendation 6** - *The Local Authority should consider how travellers who experience severe housing deprivation may be assisted proactively in navigating the Housing CBL system and the HAP scheme.*

*The Local Authority should devise and share their Traveller specific policy, setting out the same.*

*The specific implementation of this policy should be included in the Monthly Management Reports to Council Members.*

There are supports already available to all vulnerable clients on the social housing waiting list to access and use CBL and HAP effectively.

The City Council will await the findings of the Equality Review to be carried out under Recommendation 5 above and, should it call for the establishment of a Traveller specific policy, this will need to be designed, approved, implemented, and shared without delay.

**Recommendation 7** - *The Local Authority should review the purpose, function and operation of the Traveller Accommodation Unit. The review should consider the capacity, resources and staff composition of the unit to ensure the following:*

- 1. Strategic planning for the development of Traveller Accommodation going forward.*
- 2. That a system is in place to ensure that routine and emergency maintenance works and upgrade works are addressed in a timely manner and that contracts with external service providers are proactively managed.*
- 3. Support to families with their individual housing needs, with particular regard to well documented psycho-social challenges faced by the Travelling Community.*
- 4. That structures are established through which regular engagement can take place with residents of halting sites and Traveller Representative Groups.*

The City Council has carried out a full review of the Traveller Accommodation Unit. This review has encompassed the purpose, function, staffing, resources, training, and operation of the Unit. The recommendations are being implemented.

The Council has engaged a project management engineering company to put in place an updated maintenance system with a dedicated phoneline to ensure routine and emergency maintenance and upgrade works are carried out efficiently. A maintenance log is being kept for transparency and engagement purposes. The Project Managers are working to an Action List for major works, some of which are well underway. Maintenance works are currently underway on the site in response to an assessment of each unit of accommodation.

The City Council is establishing a structure to facilitate regular engagement between Halting Site residents and Traveller Representative Groups. This will be put in place as soon as possible following consultation with residents and Groups.

**Recommendation 8** - *The Local Authority should establish a specific complaint handling mechanism within the Traveller Accommodation Unit or, as an alternative, amend the current complaint process to ensure that it is easily accessible and effective in managing complaints such as those raised in the course of this investigation.*

The City Council is establishing a specific complaint handling mechanism within the TAU and will ensure that the Traveller Community and Traveller Representative Groups are made aware of the system and how to access it. As outlined above, a dedicated phone line has been put in place to address routine and response maintenance requests.

**Recommendation 9** - *The Local Authority should engage with other key agencies that have specific responsibilities for the health and welfare of children such as the HSE social inclusion unit, Tusla, local youth services and local schools.*

*This child centred multi agency approach should focus on improving the lives of the children living on the site through dedicated actions such as access to youth services, educational supports and mental health services. Children should be active participants in this work. The Local Authority should consider utilising the local Children and Young People's Services Committee to support this.*

Cork City Council is a member of the local Traveller Interagency Group which includes the HSE Social Inclusion Unit, An Garda Síochána, TUSLA & Cork



Education & Training Board (ETB). The Council engages with these agencies to develop actions to improve the lives of children on Spring Lane.

The Council will also engage with local children and young people's services to support this initiative.

**Recommendation 10** - *The Local Authority should in consultation with children residing on the site, take measures to ensure the provision of safe dedicated play areas and activities and should commit to reviewing this on an ongoing basis.*

Measures to ensure the provision of safe dedicated play areas are being considered in conjunction with the refurbishment/redesign of the 10 bays on Spring Lane, the development of the Group Housing Scheme at Ellis Yard and any other required traveller specific accommodation.

Stage 1 Funding approval has been obtained from the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage for the Group Housing Scheme at Ellis Yard and the necessary assessments, surveys and designs to inform the Part 8 process is being prepared.

The Council is determined to address in full the recommendations of the OCO report and implement the measures outlined in the current Traveller Accommodation Programme for the benefit of all the residents especially the children at Spring Lane.

The Council is confident that despite the serious and complex challenges involved, this new approach together with continued efforts of the staff in the Council, the co-operation of other agencies and a focus of all parties to work collaboratively with the families and representative groups can improve the lives of the children at Spring Lane and achieve a satisfactory outcome in as short a timeframe as possible.

#### 9.4.6 **OPPOSING LONG TERM LEASING OF PROPERTIES**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Housing, dated 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That Cork City Council:

- opposes the practice of long-term leasing of social housing to local authorities by for-profit, private investment, vulture, and cuckoo funds
- agrees social housing should be a not-for-profit venture focused on local authorities providing adequate and appropriate housing to low-income families and individuals
- agrees not to enter into any long-term leasing arrangements on social housing stock with for-profit, private investment, vulture or cuckoo funds.’

‘Go gcuirfidh Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí in aghaidh léas fadtéarma tithíocht shóisialta d'údaráis áitiúla ó chistí infheistíochta, príobháideacha, bultúir agus cuaiche.

Go n-aontaíonn an Chomhairle gur cheart go mbeadh tithíocht shóisialta ina fiontar neamhbhrabúis dírithe ar údaráis áitiúla ag cur tithíocht shásúil agus oiriúnach ar fáil do theaghlaigh agus daoine aonair ar ioncam íseal.

Go n-aontaíonn an Chomhairle gan comhaontú fadtéarma léasa a dhéanamh ar stoc tithíocht shóisialta le haon chiste infheistíochta, bultúir nó cuaiche.’

(Proposers: Cllr. M. Nugent, Cllr. F. Kerins 21/327)

The report of the Director of Services advised that a core function of the Executive is to implement government policy. The policy for long term leasing, as set out in Rebuilding Ireland, included entering into long term leasing agreements, where available, to increase the supply of social housing units for social housing support applicants. Cork City Council has entered into a number of legally binding agreements which remain to be delivered but will fulfil this policy objective.

No further agreements will be entered into once these have been completed; this is in accordance with new government policy. In its new policy document, Housing for All, which aims to provide 90,000 social housing units by the end of 2030, the government confirmed the cessation of leasing properties for social housing and moving exclusively to direct build. The long-term leasing target set by the Department for Cork City Council, including Approved Housing Bodies, for the period 2022-2024 is 202 and the City Council is on track to meet these targets.

#### 9.4.7 **INCREASE HOUSING APPLICANTS EXEMPTION THRESHOLD**

An Chomhairle considered the report of the Director of Services, Housing, dated 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That Cork City Council acknowledges the high cost of living in the city especially the tremendous cost of rentals and purchase of properties by seeking permission from the department of housing to increase the housing applicant’s exemption threshold from €36,000 to €50,000. This would ease somewhat the criteria of the application process for the applicant given the difficulties most applicants are in at present.’

(Proposer: Cllr. K. O’Flynn 21/290)

The report of the Director of Services advised that a core function of the Executive is to implement government policy. The income threshold for social housing support applicants is set by Government. It is a matter for Government to examine the thresholds and if they deem it appropriate to make changes and notify Local Authorities of same for future implementation.

On the proposal of Comhairleoir O. Moran, seconded by Comhairleoir K. O’Flynn, An Chomhairle agreed to add “Cork City Council will write to the Minister for Housing on this matter” to this motion.

#### 9.4.8 **PRACTICES & PROCESS FOR UPDATING OF HOUSING APPLICATION RECORDS**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Housing, dated 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That Cork City Council will introduce additional practices and processes in relation to the updating of housing application records and in its communication with social housing applicants in an effort to eliminate instances of applicants losing credit time on housing waiting lists because of breakdowns in the current communication channels.’

(Proposers: Cllr. D. Forde, Cllr. G. Kelleher 21/388)

The report stated that Cork City Council, together with all local authorities across the country, is required by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to prepare a summary of social housing assessments in the City Council’s administrative area on an annual basis, as required under Section 21 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009.

The Summary Social Housing Assessment (SSHA) 2021 is the continuation of the ongoing process of annual assessments of national housing need, commenced with the 2016 summary, in line with the commitment contained in ‘*Social Housing Strategy 2020 – Support, Supply & Reform*’. The purpose of the process is to identify the current level of national housing need, and to provide vital data to inform the ongoing development of housing policy. The key output of the summary is the net need figure which is the number of qualified households on each local authority housing list who remain eligible for social housing support and whose housing need has not been met.

In order to fulfil the requirements of the SSHA 2021, Cork City Council contacted, by post enclosing the review form that required completion, all qualified households identified as being in need of reassessment. On submission, each application is subject to a full reassessment based on the household’s current circumstances, including their current accommodation, their household composition and the total household income under the current national household means policy.

To try to ensure engagement from applicants, information messages were placed on the City Council’s Choice Based Letting website and at the Housing Counters in City Hall (when open) reminding applicants of the importance of submitting the review form, the implications of not returning the form, and of the closing date for submission of updated information. Cork City Council’s website was also utilised to raise awareness.

Due to the introduction of the Social Housing Assessment (Amendment) Regulations 2021 and the Household Means Policy 2021 in April, this year’s process was more onerous for both applicants and City Council staff, as significant changes to assessment of income now apply to determine eligibility on income grounds. Previously, acceptable proof of income to be submitted with the SSHA review form was 6 recent payslips or a P60/P21 (for those in employment) or a recent payment slip or statement of payments from the DEASP (for those in receipt of social welfare)

Under the Household Means Policy 2021, the determination of whether an applicant household meets the income criteria is now based on a calculation of their preceding 12 months' net average income. The intention of this change is to ensure that the most comprehensive picture of a household's current and previous income is available at the point of carrying out the assessment.

This requirement meant that the majority of households had to obtain additional documentary evidence as outlined below:

For households who are currently in employment or who have been employed in the last 12 months, the revised requirements necessitate documentary evidence of annual income through a combination of a Statement of Liability **and** Employment Detail Summary for 2020, plus proof of the household's current income (e.g. payslips for the intervening period from January 2021 to date **or** a Pay and Tax Summary–(Year to Date) for 2021).

For households who are currently self-employed or who have been self-employed in the preceding 12 months, they must submit a minimum of 2 year's accounts with an Auditor's Report and a Notice of Assessment and/or Self-Assessment Acknowledgement letter for the preceding 12 months.

For households in receipt of Social Welfare payments in the preceding 12 months, a recent statement from the Department of Social Protection detailing all welfare payments received in the preceding 12 months and commencement of receipt of such payments must be submitted. If a household is in receipt of social welfare for less than 12 months, a Statement of Liability and the Employment Detail Summary for the preceding year and, where applicable, payslips for the outstanding time period or a Pay and Tax Summary – (Year to Date) must also be provided.

The requirement to access information from the Revenue Commissioners, particularly as the review of the Local Property Tax was ongoing at the same time, did appear to cause difficulties for several applicants, and Cork City Council accommodated late submission of applications impacted on that basis. For applicants who have not yet submitted a completed review form, Cork City Council will provide additional opportunities for such clients to submit the required information in 2022.

Regarding the 2022 SSHA process, we are aware that our counterparts in Galway County Council are launching an online portal for housing applicants in January 2022 to facilitate clients submitting online applications for housing (including completion of HMD1 form for assessment of medical/disability priority) and potentially to conduct the Summary of Social Housing Assessments (SSHA) annual data collection online. As Galway County Council are the first Local Authority to go digital for social housing applications, their experience will be very informative and we intend to liaise with them to seek feedback on potential advantages and pitfalls of moving further services online. Other options we intend to investigate are the potential for text or e-mail based reminders to engage with applicants, while being mindful of our obligations under GDPR and data security concerns.

However, it is also important to maintain a paper-based system to ensure that vulnerable clients who may experience difficulties with online systems are still engaged in the process.

#### 9.4.9 **VACANT PROPERTIES ACQUIRED TO BE USED FOR HOUSING**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Housing, dated 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That all vacant properties acquired by this Council over the past five years be worked upon to provide new housing units.’

(Proposer: Cllr. D. Boyle 21/408)

The report of the Director of Services advised that it is the intention of the City Council’s Housing Directorate that properties acquired are delivered as soon as possible. Vacant properties acquired via the open market are generally refurbished and made available for tenancing on an ongoing basis. Derelict and vacant sites acquired via the Compulsory Purchase Order process are generally subject to more extensive works and are required to go through the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage stage application/approval process to secure funding for same to deliver the new homes.

#### 9.4.10 **FREEZING OF HOUSING APPLICATIONS/INCOME LIMITS**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Housing, dated 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That Cork City Council notes:

- That income limits for Social Housing have remained unchanged for 10 years, at a time of inflation including other costs.
- That recent circulars issued by the Department of Housing have had the effect of disqualifying applicants that had accumulated time on Housing Lists.
- That the flexibility regarding income thresholds that can be applied by the Council is limited,
- That many applicants can spend 10 years or more on the housing list before an offer but that where someone goes over the limit, they have to start with no credit time whatsoever if they reapply at a later date.

And,

- That many people can see a spike in income for a period of time that will not be permanent.

Therefore, this motion calls on Cork City Council to put in place a policy whereby a housing application can be frozen in a situation where an applicant goes over the income limit, and that it can remain frozen for a period of up to three years. This would mean that the applicant could reactivate their application with the credit of their time accrued should they suffer loss of income within the suggested time period.’

(Proposer: Cllr. E. Rynng 21/417)

The report of the Director of Services advised that the Social Housing Assessment

(Amendment) Regulations 2021 came into force on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The updated assessment process allows local authorities to determine the most appropriate housing support for an applicant household while, at a broader level, providing indicators to the local authority as to how its housing supply programme should be planned. An accurate assessment of need at the household level feeds into a broad county and national picture which allows local authorities to make the right decisions in relation to which households should be given priority.

The Members will be acutely aware of the current unprecedented demand for social housing support, and Cork City Council's obligations to implement government policy. The income threshold for social housing support applicants is set by Government, and it is a matter for Government to examine the thresholds and, if they deem it appropriate, to make changes and notify Local Authorities of same for future implementation.

Under the updated Household Means policy introduced in April, the determination of whether an applicant household meets the income criteria is now based on a calculation of their preceding 12 months net average income prior to the date of receipt of application. This ensures that the most comprehensive picture of a household's current and previous income is available at the point of carrying out the assessment, in order to ensure that they are eligible for social housing support. It is intended that the new assessment process will actually assist households where income fluctuates on a seasonal or short term basis by assessing average weekly income over an extended time period; previously a four to six week window was the basis of the income assessment.

While we are aware that a number of social housing applicants on Cork City Council's list have been found to be ineligible under the new means policy, it remains open to any applicant to re-apply within a reasonable period of time if their income returns below the threshold, or if the increase was due to a temporary change in circumstances. A number of clients who have been in a position to submit updated financial information have since been re-opened with their credit time restored, since the new regulations were introduced.

Members should note that any decision to allow applicants to freeze applications for social housing support would need to be placed on a statutory basis, as current regulations do not include a mechanism to facilitate this. The Members should also be aware that the new regulations remove a previous cap on percentage increases for each household member aged less than 18 years. This was previously an issue impacting larger families, whose sole income derives from Department of Social Protection (DSP), who found themselves being determined as ineligible for social housing support due to the fact that increases in the threshold are linked to family size, but are capped at four children. Removing the cap on percentage increases for children eliminates this anomaly to ensure vulnerable families solely in receipt of social welfare payments can access social housing supports to meet their housing need.

For applicants where the household income remains at a level which deems them ineligible for social housing support, they may find other initiatives which need their housing need. In 2021, the Government introduced a comprehensive Affordable Housing Act; the Help to Buy incentive was extended and increased to €30,000; and

the first Cost Rental Scheme homes were opened around the country. Cost Rental is a new form of public housing in Ireland. This is targeted at people who are above the social housing income limits, and who wish to rent or are unable to buy their own home. Under this tenure rents charged only cover the cost of developing, financing, managing and maintaining the homes. It also offers long-term security of tenure. Cost Rental will be targeted to achieve rents that are at least 25% below what they would be on the private market. The Government plans to provide an average of 2,000 Cost Rental homes per year during the lifetime of Housing for All.

The “Housing for All” programme has a number of significant measures aimed at people who are currently unable to meet their housing needs but who, with help, could purchase their own home; there may be other options available more suitable to clients who become ineligible for social housing supports.

10. **ENVIRONMENT, WATER & AMENITY STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE – 6<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021**

An Chomhairle noted the minutes of the Environment, Water & Amenity Strategic Policy Committee from its meeting held, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

10.1 **MOTIONS**

10.1.1 **REGREEN PUBLIC AREAS IN THE CITY**

An Chomhairle considered and noted the report of the Director of Services, Roads & Environment Operations, dated 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That this Council instigate a programme of greening public areas in the city, identifying areas where concrete and asphalt can be dug up then replanted.’

(Proposer: Cllr. D. Boyle 20/450)

The report of the Director of Services stated that the concept of greening of Cork City and enhancing biodiversity and green public spaces therein is being examined as part of the present review of the City Development Plan. This review includes the completion of a Green and Blue Infrastructure Report which will inform this aspect of the Development Plan review. The implementation of any interventions which would deliver greening projects would be subject to the availability of funding.

10.1.2 **NOTIFY PARKING USERS OF STREET CLEANING TIMES**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Roads & Environment Operations, dated 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021 on the following motion:-

‘Where the mechanised street cleaners have regular areas of cleaning, street parking users should be notified regularly to move their cars between an hour window (10am – 11am/11am – 12pm/1pm – 2pm and so on), depending on the time the cleaners are expecting to be in the area. Also, signs be posted in the areas informing of the times of street cleaning. The street cleaner would then have a clear run to clean the area

properly without obstacles blocking their path leading to an increased area being covered, and a more comprehensive job being done in.’

(Proposer: Cllr. T. Moloney 21/342)

The report of the Director of Services stated that Cleansing management will investigate the feasibility of installing signage on the street where mechanical sweeping is carried out. Current operations highlight streets will be swept on a day but not between hours. A 1-hour window may not be practical due to factors such as traffic.

### 10.1.3 **CITYS SEWERAGE SYSTEM**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the report of the Director of Services, Roads & Environment Operations, dated 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That this Council engage in a PR campaign highlighting what items should not be flushed into the City’s sewerage system.’

(Proposer: Cllr. D. Boyle 21/361)

The report of the Director of Services stated that the matter was referred to Irish Water and the following reply was received:

“Two public awareness campaigns, Think Before You Flush and Think Before You Pour, highlight the problems associated with flushing sanitary products and other inappropriate items (like Fats, Oils and Greases) into the toilet and drain. By flushing inappropriate items down the toilet, or pouring inappropriate items in the sink, plumbing problems can happen in our homes, our wastewater network and our marine environment. The Think Before You Flush and Think Before You Pour campaigns are operated by Clean Coasts (An Taisce) in partnership with Irish Water.

Links to the campaign websites are here: [Think Before You Flush](#) and [Think Before You Pour](#)

Just last weekend, the Think Before You Flush campaign had a sponsored feature in the Beauty Supplement of the Irish Examiner (see attached).

If Cork City Council is planning to run a campaign to raise awareness of problems associated with flushing inappropriate items in Cork City, please contact Irish Water who would be happy to collaborate on the campaign. Irish Water’s Asset Operations and Communications teams would be delighted to support the campaign and can be contacted via our Local Representative Support Desk at [localreprsupport@water.ie](mailto:localreprsupport@water.ie). “

### 10.1.4 **REVIEW POLICY ON PUBLIC SEATING**

An Chomhairle considered the report of the Director of Services, Roads & Environment Operations, dated 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That this Council review its policy on public seating and street furniture.’



(Proposer: Cllr. D. Boyle 21/363)

The report of the Director of Services stated that this motion should be referred to the Strategic & Economic Development & Planning Strategic Policy Committee for consideration and reply.

An Chomhairle agreed to refer this motion to the Strategic, Economic Development, Enterprise & Planning Strategic Policy Committee for consideration.

#### 10.1.5 **POLICY FOR PROVISION OF PUBLIC SEATING**

An Chomhairle considered the report of the Director of Services, Roads & Environment Operations, dated 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021 on the following motion:-

‘That Cork City Council will develop a policy for provision of public seating in the city.’

(Proposer: Cllr. O. Moran 21/396)

The report of the Director of Services stated that this motion should be referred to the Strategic & Economic Development & Planning Strategic Policy Committee for consideration and reply.

An Chomhairle agreed to refer this motion to the Strategic, Economic Development, Enterprise & Planning Strategic Policy Committee for consideration.

#### 11. **CLIMATE ACTION COMMITTEE – 13<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021**

An Chomhairle noted the minutes of the Climate Action Committee from its meeting held, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

#### 12. **FINANCE & ESTIMATES COMMITTEE – 4<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022**

An Chomhairle noted the minutes of the Finance & Estimates Committee from its meeting held, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

#### 12.1 **FINANCE RELATED REPORTS**

##### 12.1.1 **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO END OF NOVEMBER 2021**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the Financial Statements to end of November 2021.

#### 13. **CORRESPONDENCE**

An Chomhairle noted correspondence received.

14. **CONFERENCE/SEMINAR SUMMARIES**

None received.

15. **SECTION 141 REPORTS**

An Chomhairle noted section 141 reports received.

16. **CONFERENCES/SEMINARS**

None received.

16.1 **CELTIC CONFERENCES HOUSING FOR ALL**

An Chomhairle retrospectively approved the attendance of Comhairleoir K. O’Flynn at the Celtic Conferences Housing For All conference, held in Carlingford, Co. Louth, 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

16.2 **LAMA AND AILG CONFERENCES AND TRAINING**

An Chomhairle agreed to approve attendance of any Elected Member to attend all LAMA and AILG conferences and training events during 2022.

17. **TRAINING**

None received.

17.1 **AILG TRAINING PROGRAMME MODULE 2**

An Chomhairle retrospectively approved the attendance of Comhairleoir S. Martin at the AILG Training Programme Module 2, Elected Members Mental Health & Well-Being and Briefing on the National Office for Suicide Prevention held at the Clayton Hotel, Monivea Road, Ballybrit, Galway, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

18. **MOTIONS REFERRED TO COMMITTEES**

An Chomhairle noted the motions on Appendix 1, that have been referred to the relevant Committees as determined by the Meetings Administrator, due notice of which has been given.

An Chomhairle agreed that motion number 17 in Appendix 1 ‘Horse Project in Cork City’ 22/016 would be referred to the Community, Culture & Placemaking Strategic Policy Committee.

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

On the proposal of Comhairleoir T. Moloney, seconded by Comhairleoir F. Dennehy, An Chomhairle agreed to suspend Standing Orders to continue the meeting past 8pm.

19. **MOTIONS**

19.1 **ASD SPECIFIC CLASSES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the following motion:-

‘That Cork City Council calls (& writes) on the Minister for Education Norma Foley to immediately address the need for the creation of special classes for autism within second level schools across Cork City with particular focus in Ballincollig, there are still no secondary school special class places available in this locality. The first cohort of local sixth class children whose lives have been changed by the provision of an education in special class setting in Baile an Chollaigh primary schools now urgently require placement in a similar secondary school setting, locally. We call on the Minister of Education to immediately put in place the resources and teachers needed to set up special classes for autism within second level schools starting next September. To direct all secondary schools within Cork City to set up ASD specific special classes immediately, and take away the optional basis on which this works thus enhancing the opportunities for every child to access mainstream education, which is the stated desired outcome from the department of education.’

(Proposer: Cllr. T. Moloney 22/009)

19.2 **CHILDREN WITH SPINA BIFIDA**

An Chomhairle considered the following motion:-

‘That Cork City Council notes there are 82 children with Spina Bifida and/or Hydrocephalus currently requiring urgent orthopaedic intervention.

That this was brought to the attention of the Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly in December 2020 (1)\*.

However, no action has been instigated by the Minister to resolve this matter and these children continue to deteriorate.

Cork City Council further acknowledges that;

- Lack of surgical intervention has caused their limbs and bodies to become deformed and maimed.
- That some of these children legs are now so badly affected that the soles of their feet permanently rub together causing open sores and bleeding.
- That children who have the ability to walk are losing or have lost that ability due to the absence of timely surgical management while others who are manual wheelchair users, due to the same issue, are unable to self-propel themselves effectively leaving them immobile.
- That lack of timely surgical intervention means that effectively these children end up requiring more complex surgeries and failing that amputation of limbs.

Finally, that this motion calls on Cork City Council to;

1. Write to the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly and fast track these children for surgical review as a matter of urgency.
2. To call on the Minister for Health to ensure that provision of services is made to Disabled Children within elective Hospital settings as well as acute hospital settings to avoid a repeat of this situation in the future.

Reference to 1.

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2020-12-16/17/>

(Proposers: Cllr. E. Ryng, Cllr. K. Collins, Cllr. F. Kerins 22/033)

An Chomhairle agreed for the proposers of motion 22/033 and motion 22/034 to agree a composite motion for issuing to the relevant Minister/Department by the Meetings Administrator. It was further agreed that the composite motion would be circulated to members for information.

### 19.3 **AUTISM CLASSES AT SECONDARY LEVEL IN BALLINCOLLIG**

An Chomhairle considered and approved the following motion:-

‘That Cork City Council notes;

- that there is no provision for an Autism Class at Secondary Level in the Ballincollig area for the 2022/2023 academic year presently.
- that there is a significant demand for such provision in the area and surrounds.
- that the age profile of the area is very young and the population is growing at a fast rate.
- that the lack of certainty is causing anxiety and stress for pupils, parents and families.

And further notes;

- that the Department of Education has the authority to step in the make such arrangements as seen previously in similar circumstances.

Therefore, this motion calls on Cork City Council to write to the Department of Education and the NCSE to request urgent attention be given to this issue.’

(Proposer: Cllr. E. Ryng 22/034)

An Chomhairle agreed for the proposers of motion 22/033 and motion 22/034 to agree a composite motion for issuing to the relevant Minister/Department by the Meetings Administrator. It was further agreed that the composite motion would be circulated to members for information.

This concluded the business of the meeting

**ARDMHÉARA**  
**CATHAOIRLEACH**