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**MIONTUAIRISCÍ NA CRUINNITHE SPEISIALTA TITHÍOCHTA DE COMHAIRLE  
CONTAE CHIARRAÍ A THIONÓLADH I SEOMRA NA COMHAIRLE, ÁRAS AN  
CHONTAE, TRÁ LÍ, AR AN LUAIN 25 EANAIR 2016.**

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL HOUSING MEETING OF KERRY COUNTY  
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE,  
TRALEE ON MONDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2016.**

**PRESENT/I LÁTHAIR**

**Councillors/Comhairleoirí**

R. Beasley	J. Brassil	M. Cahill
P. Connor-Scarteen	B. Cronin	J.J. Culloty
T. Ferris	J. Finucane	S. Fitzgerald
J. F. Flynn	N. Foley	M. Gleeson
D. Grady	D. Healy-Rae	J. Healy-Rae
N. Kelleher	M. Kennelly	S. Locke
P. McCarthy	J. Moloney	N. Moriarty
D. Nolan	T. O'Brien	B. O'Connell
M. O'Shea	L. Purtill	D. Quigg
J. Sheahan	G. Spring	

**IN ATTENDANCE/I LÁTHAIR**

Ms. M. Murrell Chief Executive	Mr. J. Breen, Dir. Sust. Comm./Q of L.
Mr. M. Scannell A/D. Job Cr./Sust. ED	Ms. A. McAllen, Head of Finance
Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Dir. Op., Health & S.	Mr. O. Ring, Director IW Operations
Mr. M. O'Donoghue, A/Dir. Corp. Serv.	Mr. G. Riordan, SE Operations
Mr. B. Looney, Head of IT	Mr. T. Sheehy, SE Capital Infrast. Unit
Mr. G. O'Brien, Meetings Admin.	Mr. O. O'Shea, Media & Communic. Officer
Ms. K. Moriarty, A/SEO Housing	Ms. B. Conway, AO Housing
Ms. K. Curtin, AO Housing	Ms. B. Reidy, SSO Corporate Support
Ms. J. Dillane, SO Housing	Mr. T. O'Connor, SO Housing
Ms. D. Griffin, SO Housing	Mr. I. Siali, Exec. Architect Housing
Mr. S. O'Sullivan, SO Housing	Mr. M. Griffin, EE Operations
Mr. S. McCarthy, Housing Liaison Off.	Mr. M. McCannon, Housing Liaison Officer
Mr. E. Cunningham, A.S.O. Housing	Ms. O. O'Shea, CO Corp. Support

The meeting commenced at 2.05pm.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. P. McCarthy took the Chair.

### **Appointment of new Media and Communications Officer**

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Mr. Owen O'Shea who has taken up the position of Media and Communications Officer with the Council. He wished him well in his new role.

All members stated they wished Mr. O'Shea well for the future.

### **Vote of sympathy**

Cllr. J. Brassil extended his sympathy to Cllr. Aoife Thornton on the tragic death of her brother Roibeard. He extended his deepest sympathy to Roibeard's wife, parents and family.

Cllr. N. Foley stated she wanted to be associated with the vote of sympathy to Cllr. Thornton and her family on their tragic loss.

Cllr. D. Grady extended his condolence to Cllr. Thornton on the death of her brother.

On behalf of the Labour Party, Cllr. T. O'Brien extended his sympathy to Cllr. Thornton and her family on their sad loss.

On behalf of the Sinn Féin Party, Cllr. R. Beasley offered his sympathy and condolence to Cllr. Thornton and her family on the death of her brother.

On behalf of the Fine Gael Party, Cllr. J. Finucane also extended his sympathy to Cllr. Thornton and her family on the tragic death of her brother Roibeard.

On behalf of Cllr. J. Healy-Rae, Deputy M. Healy-Rae and the Healy-Rae family Cllr. D. Healy-Rae sympathised with the Thornton family on the death of Roibeard.

Cllr. B. Cronin stated he also wanted to be associated with the vote of sympathy to Cllr. Thornton and her family on the tragedy that befell them and his thoughts and prayers are with them at this difficult time.

On her own behalf and on behalf of all staff the Chief Executive extended her sympathy to Cllr. Thornton and her family on the tragic death of her brother Roibeard. She welcomed Mr. O'Shea to the staff and she looked forward to working with him in the future.

The Cathaoirleach extended his sympathy to Cllr. Thornton and her family on their sad loss.

### **Approval for the opening of Tenders**

Mr. G. O'Brien informed the meeting that approval was required for the opening of tenders for the Maintenance Dredging & Disposal at Sea Fenit Harbour – Closing date: Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2016 at 4pm.

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. R. Beasley, SECONDED by Cllr. M. Gleeson it was agreed to approve the opening of tenders for the Maintenance Dredging & Disposal at Sea Fenit Harbour – Closing date: Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2016 at 4pm.

#### **16.01.25.01 Date for the February Council Meeting**

Mr. G. O'Brien informed the meeting that the Count afresh for the Listowel MD would commence on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> February and the February CPG Meeting is scheduled to be held on the 9<sup>th</sup> February. In view of this it is recommended that the February Ordinary meeting would be held on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2016.

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. M. Gleeson, SECONDED BY Cllr. B. Cronin it was agreed that the February Ordinary Meeting would be held on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2016.

In view of this change of date Mr. O'Brien informed members that the closing date for receipt of Notices of Motion would be Monday 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2016 at 10am.

#### **16.01.25.02 Context**

##### **(a) Review of 2015 Housing Programme**

Mr. J. Breen stated Kerry County Council manages in excess of 4,000 houses and there are in excess of 5,000 qualified applicants on the housing waiting list. 2015 was the first full year of the combined housing service. Housing is about people and his Department operates on the ethos of help and humanity. The refusal rate is 10% which is below the national average and this is because staff do a lot of work in liaising with applicants when houses are being allocated. New structures were put in place to deliver the social housing programme and it is very difficult to secure properties to purchase. The new Central Bank lending rules mean more people are now applying for social housing. The condition of vacated houses is also an issue. A number of senior staff are present to brief members on the reports circulated in advance of the meeting. Mr. Breen then called on Ms. K. Moriarty to brief the meeting on this item.

Ms. Moriarty briefed members on the Review of the 2015 Housing Programme as follows:

##### **“House Purchase Programme**

<b>Target</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>30 houses</b>
<b>Purchased</b>		<b>35 houses</b>

The Council completed the purchase of 35 houses by the end of December 2015 as part of the Housing Construction and Acquisition Programme 2015 – 2017, which was in excess of our house purchase target for 2015 of 30 houses.

The breakdown by Municipal District is as follows :

10 houses in Tralee, 9 in Killarney, 6 in South and West and 10 in Listowel.

The DOECLG revised the House Purchase Thresholds in June 2015 and generally, the upper ceiling for purchase of a 3 bedroom house is €160,000 and a 4 bedroom house is €210,000 in the county, these are maximum limits and we are guided by market values in the particular area. Any purchase being considered outside of these limits needs DOECLG approval. In general houses being considered should be suitable for immediate occupancy and require only minor adaptation in accordance with DOECLG criteria.

The target for purchase for 2016 is 40 houses and we continue to seek suitable houses for purchase in the County.

### **Housing Allocations**

The Council made a total of 146 Council housing allocations in 2015. 10% of formal offers made to qualified applicants were refused. Current regulations provide that where 2 refusals of reasonable offers are made, the applicant is suspended for a 12 month period from the Housing List and this may also affect payment of their rent allowance.

### **RAS/Leasing**

<b>Target</b>	<b>260 RAS/Leasing/Voluntary</b>
<b>Delivered</b>	<b>261 units</b>

In addition, a further total of 231 contracts and allocations were secured through the RAS and Leasing Schemes during 2015 and we continue to seek suitable properties for lease.

### **Voluntary Housing**

We also continue to work closely with Voluntary Housing Bodies and a total of 40 housing units throughout the county were secured in 2015 for accommodating qualified housing applicants through the Voluntary Bodies. 6 units were secured in Killarney, 7 in Kenmare, 6 in Dingle, 15 in Tralee and 6 in Killorglin. Allocations to some of these houses are currently in train.

### **Returning Vacant Housing Properties to Productive Use**

<b>Target</b>	<b>75 houses</b>
<b>Funded</b>	<b>126 houses</b>

Works to a total of 126 houses were funded through the Voids Programme and the RAS Reserve in 2015. The aim of this programme was to return vacant properties to productive use in order to meet the needs of qualified housing applicants.

## **Energy Efficiency Programme**

The Council carried out energy efficiency improvement works under this Programme in 2015 to 351 houses across the 4 Municipal Districts, thus improving roof, wall and cavity insulation and the overall energy efficiency and fabric of Council houses. Total expenditure was €457,892 claimed from DOECLG.

The breakdown of houses across the 4 municipal districts is as follows:

South & West	96 houses
Killarney	121 houses
Listowel	65 houses
Tralee	69 houses

It is hoped that there will be a continuation of this Programme in 2016.

## **Planned Maintenance Programme**

A specific house improvement programme was funded in Budget 2015. This enabled carrying out of housing improvements to 90 Council Houses across the 4 Municipal Districts.

Works carried out include gas boiler replacements, range replacements, upgrading heating systems, chimney repairs. This Programme highlights the need for a planned approach to housing maintenance based on need and will be informed further as the conditional stock survey gets underway in 2016.

In Budget 2016, €200,000 has been provided for a specific improvement programme and this is currently being developed.

## **Housing Grants**

In 2015, the Council issued 396 grant allocations under the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability Grant Schemes totalling €2.09 mn. A total of 436 grant applications were made to the Council in 2015, reflecting an approval rate of 90%.

This 396 Grants allocated is broken down across the 3 types of grants as follows

Mobility Aids Grants	- 161 issued - €660k
Housing Aid for Older People	- 142 issued – €389 k
Housing Adaptation Grants	- 93 issued - €1.042 mn

## **Housing Maintenance**

The Council currently has a rented housing stock of 3,957 units as detailed on the Table below.

A total of 4,317 housing maintenance requests were received in 2015, 96% of these requests were completed by year end. The breakdown of requests received across the 4 Municipal Districts is as follows:

<b>Municipal District</b>	<b>% of Overall Housing Stock</b>	<b>% of Housing Maintenance Requests Received</b>
South & West	25%	24%
Killarney	17%	22%
Listowel	23%	18%
Tralee	35%	36%
Total	100%	100%

### **Adaptation Works to Council Houses**

Work was carried out to 35 properties such as bathroom adaptations, stairlifts, ramps etc during 2015 with a total expenditure of €152,014. Funding under this Scheme is welcome as it allows tenants to remain in their homes with minor adaptations.”

Mr. J. Breen stated there were extensive outputs in 2015 and grants amounting to €2m were allocated which benefitted the local economy.

### **(b) Social Housing Strategy 2020 – Support, Supply, Reform Structure of Housing and Social Support Department**

Me. J. Breen briefed the meeting on this item as follows:

#### **“Social Housing Strategy 2020**

*The extensive work of the Housing and Social Support Section of Kerry County Council, is carried out within a policy framework as set out in the Social Housing Strategy 2020. This policy document published in November 2014 sets out the Policy Direction and overall Housing Strategy for the years from now up to 2020. This strategy is now supported by the allocation of funding and the provision of ambitious targets under the Social Housing Investment Programme to meet the proposals in the Housing Strategy.*

*This report will give an overview and context for the Strategy and to highlight the main elements therein and their potential impact on Housing Services in Kerry.*

*The document contains 37 Actions along with time scales and are summarised on pages 65 – 72 of the Strategy document.*

*The Strategy sets out an ambitious target to “**provide more than 35,000 new homes to meet Social Housing needs by 2020 and in addition to deliver 75,000 units of long term quality accommodation through Local Authority Housing support Schemes for Tenants**”.*

*The strategy is supported by an investment of €1.5 billion from 2015 to 2017 including a new €300 million in a Housing Public Private Partnership Fund and €400 million in a new Housing Finance Entity to leverage further substantial private investment.*

*There are 3 pillars to the Housing Strategy:-*

***Pillar 1 – Provision of new housing supply.***

***Pillar 2 – Providing housing supports through the private rental sector.***

***Pillar 3 – Reform creating more flexible and responsive housing supports.***

*I set out hereunder the main items under each Pillar.*

***Pillar 1 – Supply***

- *Funding Mechanisms to Finance a proposed €3.8 bn, Programme to 2020.*
- *Delivery by Local Authorities & Approved Housing Bodies.*
- *Development of off balance sheet financing mechanisms.*
- *Significant enhancement of role of AHBs, particularly from 2018 onwards.*
- *Enhanced Governance Regulation for AHBs.*
- *Development of multi annual funding programmes.*

***Pillar 2 – Housing Supports***

- *Expansion of number of RAS units per annum.*
- *Development & roll out of Housing Assistance Payment Scheme.*
- *Integration of employment & housing supports through the HAP Scheme.*
- *Development of a cost rental segment for the Housing market to ease demand for Social Housing.*
- *Development of innovative measures to modernise the rent supplement Scheme (half of all rents paid to private landlords are paid by the state).*
- *Manage transition of Buy-To-Let properties in conjunction with Central Bank.*
- *Creation of more mixed tenure developments in Urban Areas of high demand.*

### ***Pillar 3 – Flexible & Responsive Social Housing Supports***

- *Development of mechanisms that can respond to current needs & improvements in their circumstances.*
- *Enhanced Leadership & Co-ordination role by Local Authorities in facilitating and enabling Social Housing delivery by other providers.*
- *A new Tenant Purchase Scheme to be put in place.*
- *A new framework for rents & related charges for Local Authority Housing will be introduced.*
- *Expansion of powers to counter anti-social behaviour.*
- *Progression for Choice Based letting allocation process.*
- *Improved Regulation for the AHB Sector.*

*The strategy sees a significantly enhanced role for the Voluntary Housing sector & we have actively engaged with the Voluntary sector to assist them in gearing up for the enhanced role for the Approved Housing bodies and to develop their capacity to deliver. We have a small number of AHB's presently operating in Kerry and will remain dependant on their ability to deliver construction projects, house purchase, leasing arrangements & Part V developments with developers to be at the level of housing provision required and envisioned in the Strategy. A Pilot Programme on cost rental will be carried out with the AHBs and the Local Authorities. The Strategy sets out a formal review mechanism in 2017.*

### **Conclusion**

*The Strategy sets out an ambitious Programme for the provision of Housing and a very strong enhanced role for the approved Housing bodies into the future. The strategy determines the policy context in which all of the work of the Housing and social Support section of Kerry County Council is carried out presently and for the foreseeable future. The strategy envisages a continued direction in sourcing private accommodation through the RAS & Leasing Schemes and the HAP Scheme for the future.*

### **Note :- Cost Rental**

*Housing Provider raises finance and provides housing and charges rents to cover Capital costs and ongoing Management & Maintenance. This model is predicated on an economic assumption that cost rents will increase slower than market or profit rents."*

### **Structure of Housing and Social Support Department**

Ms. K. Moriarty, A/SEO Housing and Social Support briefed members on this item as follows:



***“The objectives of the Housing Dept are to maximise provision of suitable accommodation for those who are unable to provide their own, utilising the various social housing options, to manage and maintain our housing stock and to facilitate the development of sustainable communities.***

**Activities:**

*The Housing Dept. manages a stock of 4,074 (including demountable units) housing units, actively manages 490 loan accounts and approx 3,900 rent accounts, 773 RAS and 104 leased houses. Total rent collection in 2015 was €11 mn approx and loans collection was €1.1 mn approx. Total number of qualified housing applicants are 5,073.*

*The Housing Department manages the Homeless service, Traveller Services, Disability Services and provides tenancy/estate management and support. Development of Housing Policy in partnership with the SPC is also central to the work of Housing as well as devising and implementing the Housing Construction and Acquisition Programme 2015 – 2017.*

**Senior Staff:**

Director of Service: John Breen, Tel (066) 7183912, Mobile (087) 8291782

Senior Executive Officer: Kathleen Moriarty, Tel (066) 7183667, Mobile (087) 6941043

Currently there are 2 Distinct Areas in Housing under the direction of each of the Administrative Officers:

**Kathleen Curtin AO** – Areas of Responsibility: Tenancy Management:

Contact No (066) 7183933, Mobile (087) 9305777

- Tenancy/Estate Management and Enforcement,
- Rents Collection and Management,
- Loans Collection and Management.
- Housing Maintenance

Key Staff in Tenancy Management Unit:

Sean McCarthy/Mike McCannon – Tenancy/Estate Management

Judith Dillane/Davina Griffin – Rents/Loans

**Brenda Conway AO** – Areas of Responsibility – Social Housing Options:

- Housing Applications and Allocations, Vacant House Management
- RAS/Leasing,
- Housing Grants,
- Homeless/Travellers/Disability Services

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Contact No (066) 7183932, Mobile (087) 6898866

Key Staff in Social Housing Options Unit:

Teddy O'Connor – Grants/Allocations/Voids

Ian Brick – RAS/Leasing

Derry O Sullivan/Ciara Keenan – House Purchases, Leasing, Part V

### **Housing Capital Programme**

A specific unit within Housing is being developed to deliver the Social Housing Programme 2015 to 2017 to advance Voluntary Housing Projects, Leasing Programme, House Purchases, Part V, Building Programme in conjunction with Capital Infrastructure Unit, RAS/HAP in order to maximise opportunities for delivering social housing options in accordance with Government Strategy.

### **Operations Division**

Housing Maintenance, works to Vacant Houses, Planned Maintenance Programme, Energy Efficiency Programme, Extensions/Adaptations are carried out by Operations across the 4 Municipal Districts on behalf of and in conjunction with Housing.

Senior Engineer: Gerry Riordan

Municipal District Engineers: PJ Galvin, Aidan Harty, Mike Griffin

### **Capital Infrastructure Unit**

Advancement of the House Building Programme and Voluntary Housing is carried out by the Capital Infrastructure Unit of the Council on behalf of and in conjunction with Housing.

Senior Engineer: Tom Sheehy

Senior Architect: Isa Sialí

### **2(c) Housing Applicants Demographic Profile**

Ms. K. Moriarty, briefed members on this item as follows:

“There are currently 5,073 households in Kerry assessed as having a housing needs at the present.

A breakdown of these applicants as per the type of property required is as follows:

50%	1 Bedroom
22%	2 Bedroom
13%	3 Bedroom
9%	4 Bedroom
6%	5+ Bedroom

In terms of activity levels, a total of 688 new housing applications were received in 2015. 2015 was the first full year in which a consolidated County-wide housing service was provided in Kerry.

Of the above new applicants in 2015, 31 applications were disapproved for various reasons and not included on the housing waiting lists.

Under the Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011, a household may choose up to 3 areas of choice within the county, with each selection having equal weighting.

Of the total 5,073 qualified households, a combined total of 7,132 areas of choice have been selected.

29% of the applicants have an Area of Choice in the Killarney MD  
18% of the applicants have an Area of Choice in the South & West MD  
44% of the applicants have an Area of Choice in the Tralee MD  
9% of the applicants have an Area of Choice in the Listowel MD

The age profile of our qualified housing main applicants shows that the majority are in the 25-40 year old age group (50%) and that 7% of the main applicants are over the age of 60 years. This trend remains consistent with recent years.

74% of qualified housing applicants are classed as being unable to meet their accommodation needs themselves without a form of financial support (e.g. rent supplement) due to their particular household circumstances. The next highest basis of need is households with a disability requirement i.e. 14%. The other categories of basis of need are Overcrowded, Involuntary Sharing, Homeless, Unfit, Elderly, Unsuitable – medical or compassionate grounds, which between them make up the remaining 12% of qualified households.

The majority of the qualified housing applicants (76%) rely solely on social welfare as their only source of income. 15% have a combination of social welfare and part time employment and 9% are in full time employment.

Single person households continue to make up the largest household type (50%), followed by single adults with a child or children (22%) with the remaining 28% being made up of two or more adults with or without children.

Approximately 5% of the overall number of qualified housing applicants has a specific accommodation requirement on the grounds of a physical disability.”

Mr. J. Breen stated a copy of the Kerry Strategic Plan for Housing Persons with Disabilities was circulated to all members.

**(a) Housing Provision Programme Update**

Mr. Breen outlined Local Authority Construction & Acquisition 2015 – 2017 as follows:

Local Authority Construction & Acquisition 2015 – 2017					
Approved Projects currently being progressed					
Project Name/Address	Number of Units delivered in years:			Total Estimated cost of Project	Current Status January 2016
	2015	2016	2017		
The Park, Killarney		20		€3,167,000 (Est)	Approval to go to Tender received 19 January
Ardmoniel, Killorglin		12		€1,366,675 (Est)	Preliminary Appraisal to be forwarded to DOECLG February 2016
Single Rural Dwellings		3		€420,000 (€176k claimed 2015)	2 completed/almost completed, 1 Awaiting Dept. approval to go to Tender
House Purchases – Tralee, Killarney, Killorglin	30			€4.1 mn , claimed 2015 (€500 k to be claimed in 2016 for adaptation works)	Delivered
Specially Adapted Traveller Accommodation		3		€465,750	Being advanced
Voids Programme	102			€884 k claimed 2015	Exceeded Target of 75 for 2015
Bill Kinnerk Road		4		€699,161 (Est.)	Approval to go to Tender received 19 January
Ras/Leasing	261	170	170		Met Target for 2015 (260 Units) Non-Capital Funding
Mitchels Regeneration	4	12	7	€5,240,625 (Circa 600 k claimed 2015)	4 units for 2015 nearing completion, €599,523 claimed 2015
<b>Others :</b>					

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RAS Reserve Units – 5 Purchases	5			755,305	Purchases Completed
RAS Reserve -	24			395,265	Being Refurbished
<b>Totals =</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>17,509,211</b>	<b>2015 Target was 365 – Total Claim €5,78 mn</b>

**New Proposals to meet the LA's Housing Need to end 2017**

<b>Project Name/Address (In order of Priority)</b>	<b>Proposed number of Units to be delivered in years:</b>			<b>Estimated Cost of the Project</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>		
1.Disabled Specific Housing Tralee & Killarney		12	12	€3,726,000	Being advanced
2. Voids Programme		80	85	€4,125,000	Dependant on Voids Funding
2.Lixnaw		4		€621,000	Approval to go to Tender to be forwarded to DOECLG end January 2016
3.Killeen, Tralee		21		€1,863,000	Approval to go to Planning received 19 January
4.Infill Sites, Listowel Town		10		€3,182,930	Revised from 16 units, Approval to go to Tender to be forwarded to DOECLG end April 2016
5.Lohercannon, Tralee			50	€9,600,000	CDP Variation to be published - Preliminary Appraisal to be prepared and sent to DOECLG March 2016
6.Infill Sites, Milltown		10		€3,630,000	Revised from 16 units, Approval to go to Tender to be forwarded to DOECLG end March 2016
7.House – Purchases – Tralee, Killarney		40	40	€12,400,000	Being progressed

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8.Rathmore/Barraduff		20		€3,440,000	Revised from 16 units, Preliminary Report to be prepared and sent to DOECLG Mid-February 2016
9.Kenmare		20		€3,630,000	Approval to go to Tender to be forwarded to DOECLG end February 2016
10.Single Rural Dwellings		6	6	€1,863,000	Programme being developed
<b>Totals =</b>		<b>222</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>48,080,930</b>	

<b><u>Capital Assistance Scheme</u></b>				
Project Name/Address and Approved Housing Body	No. of Units to be delivered in years:			<u>Current Status:</u>
	2015	2016	2017	
1. Armagh House, Killarney		6		In discussions with DOECLG
2. Kerry Emigrant Support, Castleisland		4		Re-design of Scheme underway
3. Camphill Community, Dingle	6			Delivered
4. Novas, Milk Market Lane, Tralee	1			Delivered
5. Kerry Autism, Ballyseedy	12			Units complete, Right of Way Issues, Tenancies being discussed
Totals =	19	10		
Project Name/Address and Approved Housing Body <b><u>(In order of Priority)</u></b>	Proposed number of Units to be delivered in years:			<u>Current Status:</u>
	2015	2016	2017	
6. 2014 CAS Glencairn		3		Awaiting DOECLG approval
7. 2015 CAS Woodlee, Tralee		1		DOECLG approval received 21/1/16, being progressed
8. 2015 CAS Caherciveen Social Services		5		In discussions with DOECLG
9. 2015 CAS Newgrove Housing		3		In discussions with DOECLG

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10. 2015 CAS Cluid Voluntary Housing, Mitchels, Tralee			19	Being advanced with Mitchels Regeneration	
11. 2015 CAS Kingdom Voluntary Housing			18	Being advanced with Mitchels Regeneration	
Totals =		12	37		



Mr. Breen stated approval to proceed to tender for the houses at The Park, Killarney was received on the 19<sup>th</sup> January. The plans for Ardmoniel, Killorglin must be amended to provide for the construction of 12 houses.

**(b) Choice Based Letting System**

Mr. Breen stated this report is included with Item 4(a).

**(c) Voids – Process changes and outputs**

Ms. B. Conway, AO Housing and Social Support briefed the meeting on this item as follows:

**“Vacant Houses Update Report**

**CONTEXT**

Houses being returned by tenants of the Council normally require repairs before being let out to another tenant. The opportunity may also be taken by the Council to upgrade the electrical wiring etc in older properties as they are returned to the Council. During 2015 a total number of 116 such properties were repaired by the Council. From our total stock of 4,074 units this represents a vacancy rate of 2.8% of stock. The return of properties to the housing authority is a continuous process and indeed in the weeks leading up to Christmas we had 33 properties returned to the housing authority in this period alone.

The Voids program is funded by the Department of Environment Community and Local Government to a certain level and there are Dept guidelines which set out the upper limit of funding available for each individual void and the components therein e.g. kitchens, cleaning out, decoration, electrical works etc. Any costs in excess of these guidelines must be met from our own funding resources.

**OUTCOMES**

A full cost analysis and process review was undertaken between June and August 2015 in consultation with the Operations Department. All the costings for vacant houses on hands at the time were revised following the implementation of the new specification. A revised repair and fit-out specification was put in place in September 2015 to address the costs issue which has resulted in the majority of voids being returned within the Department Grant Guidelines. This analysis involved the assessment of all aspects of the work required on a house being returned to Kerry County Council to turn it around for the next tenant. Accordingly we have revised our specification for items such as kitchens and fittings and these specifications, turnaround times and service improvements will be kept under continuous review during 2016.

For example, a review of a sample of the costs for 12 houses was undertaken. In all cases, the revised repair figures were reduced downwards. The revised costs have been reduced by €80,000 for the return of these 12 houses to stock.

We will continue to monitor the standards and our performance during 2016 such that turnaround times continue to improve and that costs are kept to a minimum.

We have developed new targets, in conjunction with the Operations Department, for the turnaround times of void properties dependant on the extent of work required to properties being returned. These revised timelines are set out in the table below and are being implemented from the second quarter of 2016 onwards.

<b>Estimated Repair Cost</b>	<b>Turnaround Time for Works</b>
<10,000	4 weeks
10,000 – 20,000	8 – 10 weeks
>20,000	10 + weeks

## **STATUS REPORT**

Number of voids repaired during 2015	116
Expenditure	€1,535,353
Ongoing repairs due to be completed January/February	41
Recent vacancies due to be commenced:	33

## **FUNDING**

As outlined above, we have repairs presently underway to 41 properties with a further 33 properties having been surrendered and returned to the housing authority towards the year end 2015. We have not been informed to date of any allocation for void properties for 2016 and accordingly any repairs to be carried out will have to be considered in the context of whether this national funding will be available or whether we will be required to provide the funding from our own Housing budgetary resources which will have an inevitable impact on other areas.”

### **3(d) Refugee Housing Update**

Mr. J. Breen briefed the meeting on this item as follows:

“The Refugee Resettlement Programme.

The resettlement support worker has been in place since the first week in December. This position is to ensure that the resettled refugee families move into their new homes and new environments as effortlessly as possible. The support worker makes sure that the families are linked with local service providers and that they have a point of contact / support person if issues and or concerns arise.

A key aspect of the work is for the resettlement support worker in conjunction and consultation with the local implementation group and the interagency group help cultivate a series of initiatives to encourage the resettlement and integration of the refugee families in Kerry.

To date, 10 families have settled in Kerry, 2 in Killarney and 8 families in Tralee. When the last two families arrive in the next 2-3 weeks, the group will consist of 23 adults and 20 children under the age of 12. All school going children have been registered and started in school.

The first group of families arrived in Tralee on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November, with a further two families arriving into Killarney on Wednesday 2nd December. On Monday Dec 11, 2 further families arrived into Tralee.

Out of the first group of refugee families allocated to County Kerry, two further families will be arriving within the next 2-3 weeks. The houses have been identified and allocated based on the needs of the families.

Phase 1 of the Refugee Resettlement Programme consisted of,

- Ensuring that each house was ready for occupation and making sure on the day of arrival that a welcome food hamper was presented to the families.
- Ensure that the running of each appliances and heating system was explained and monitored
- Link all families into local service providers such as the DSP, GP's, Tralee International Resource Centre, KASI, Mosques and Churches.
- Provide all families with essential information on emergency numbers, hospitals, out of hour's doctors, An Garda Siochana etc.
- Linking in with the local ETB with regard to English language provision and ensuring that all childcare is in place. In the interim period, both TIRC and KASI are providing English language classes until the formal ones are established by the ETB.
- Register all school going children
- Establishment of Local Area Implementation Groups in Killarney and Tralee. This local inter agency group will work in consultation with workers on the group and identify any issues and or concerns the families may be experiencing and be solution lead. This in turn will be fed back to the Refugee Resettlement Interagency Steering Group. To date, four local area meetings have been held, two in Tralee and two in Killarney.
- Establishment of local area clinics in Tralee and Killarney, this will commence within the next 2-3 weeks.

It is proposed that the second group of families of which there are 17 will arrive sometime in April 2016. Various accommodation properties will need to be sourced for the families in Kerry."

**(e) Housing Revenue collections**

Ms. K. Curtin, AO Housing and Social Support briefed the meeting on this item as follows:

**“Collection figures - 1st January 2015 to 31st December 2015**

	Leasing	RAS	Rents	Totals
Net Opening	€ 6,628.00	€ 44,586.00	€ 678,714.00	€ 729,928.00
Invoices	€ 228,995.00	€1,785,884.00	€ 9,216,271.00	€ 11,231,150.00
Receipts	€ 229,829.00	€1,791,677.00	€ 9,184,206.00	€ 11,205,712.00
Net Closing	€ 5,794.00	€ 32,757.00	€ 660,516.00	€ 699,067.00
% Collected 94.13%				

**“Comparison Figures – Rents, RAS, Leasing, Loans**

		201500 / 201513				
<b>Rents and Annuities</b>						
	Arrears	Accrued	Total for collection	Collected	Arrears	
2014	€ 620,644.00	€10,876,345.00	€11,455,344.00	€10,725,419.00	€729,925.00	94%
2015	€ 729,928.00	€11,231,150.00	€11,904,778.00	€11,205,712.00	€699,067.00	94.13%
<b>Housing Loans</b>						
	Arrears	Accrued	Total for collection	Collected	Arrears	
2014	€ 197,211.00	€ 1,239,001.00	€ 1,435,855.00	€ 1,184,687.00	€251,168.00	83%
2015	€ 251,168.00	€ 1,205,308.00	€ 1,455,527.00	€ 1,167,359.00	€287,854.00	80.20%

Ms. Curtin informed members that there is a dedicated loans unit within the Housing Department and they work with people who are in difficulty. 2015 was the first year the Council engaged in the MARP process which is a very long slow process. The Loans Unit work with outside agents like MABS and she hoped there would be a substantial increase in activity in this area in 2016.

#### **16.01.25.04 Challenges**

##### **(a) Housing Needs Assessment 2016**

Ms. K. Moriarty briefed the meeting on this report which was circulated as follows:

“In accordance with Section 21 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, each housing authority must prepare a Summary of the housing needs in their area. This Housing Needs Assessment is due to be carried out in 2016 and the prescribed date is normally set as at 30<sup>th</sup> April. The last assessment was carried out in 2013.

All applications for housing are required to be assessed in accordance with the 2011 Social Housing Assessment Regulations which represent a uniform set of qualification criteria for social housing assessment for all local authorities.

The Housing Needs Assessment will provide an important insight into the level of needs for social housing support across the county and can be compared to the 2013 assessment in terms of changes to housing requirements and patterns emerging.

It is therefore an important aid to planning ahead for future need and will guide the requirements for the Social Housing Programme 2015 – 2017 and beyond implementation of that Programme.

The headline figure required from each housing authority for the purposes of the Housing Needs Assessment is the Number of households who are qualified for social housing support within the housing authority, for which the authority does not currently have accommodation to meet their need. Following submission of required information to DOECLG, a Report will be produced for the Minister by the Housing Agency.

In terms of the Overview and the information to be returned to DOECLG, Authorities are required to provide the:

- Number of households who have been assessed
- Number of households who have applied but where an assessment has not yet been completed
- Number of households not to qualify
- Number of households that qualify
- Number of households suspended from the List for refusing 2 offers of accommodation within a 12 month period
- Number of households who are only qualified for certain forms of social housing support

While we await detailed guidance from the DOECLG in relation to carrying out the assessment, the format is not expected to change greatly from the last Assessment carried out.

The Housing Department will be carrying out this work over the coming months and will be in contact with Housing Applicants as required in order to update their records so that accurate information is returned to DOECLG reflecting Housing Needs in Kerry.

In an attempt to address housing needs two specific targeted approaches were taken by the Housing Dept. in 2015 for Tralee and Killarney housing applicants. In Tralee, we carried out a Choice Based Letting Process for a number of houses in Shanakill and received a positive response. It is expected these houses will be tenanted in early February 2016. In Killarney, a large proportion of qualified applicants have selected Killarney Town as their only area of choice. Due to difficulties in the Council securing additional housing units in Killarney, we requested applicants to extend their areas of choice to other adjoining areas. Following this, 17% of applicants have extended their areas of choice."

#### **4(b) Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2014 – Implications**

Ms. K. Curtin briefed the meeting on this report which was circulated as follows:

##### **"Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2014**

##### **Main Provisions - Explanatory Summary**

##### **General**

The main purpose of the Act is to provide for the following—

- issuing of a Tenancy Warning by a housing authority where there has been a breach of the tenancy agreement for one of its rented dwellings and a review of such a warning.
- a revised procedure for a housing authority to recover possession of a dwelling where there has been a serious or repeated breach of a condition of the tenancy agreement, where the dwelling has been abandoned by the tenant or where there is no tenancy in the dwelling and the dwelling is occupied by a person who has no lawful authority to reside there.

**Part 2:** Termination of local authority tenancies, etc. (Sections 6 to 20) This Part provides that a housing authority may issue a Tenancy Warning in respect of a breach of the terms of a tenancy agreement, notably relating to anti-social behaviour and non-payment of rent arrears. This Part also makes provision for a **review**, on request by the tenant concerned, of a Tenancy Warning to be conducted by a local authority official of higher rank than the official who issued the Tenancy Warning. Included in this Part are revised procedures for housing authorities to secure possession of their dwellings where—

- there has been a serious or repeated breach of a condition of the tenancy agreement.
- the dwelling has been abandoned by the tenant.

- there is no tenancy in the dwelling and the dwelling is occupied by a person without lawful authority.

These procedures will replace the summary procedure set out in Section 62 of the Housing Act 1966. The revised procedures in the Act involve an assessment by the District Court (and the Circuit Court on appeal) of the merits of the proposed repossession in cases where there is a dispute about the breach of the tenancy agreement concerned. This Part also amends the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997 to strengthen the powers of housing authorities in relation to securing excluding orders where there is anti-social behaviour in their housing stock.

A recurring provision in this Part is that a housing authority shall have regard, in exercising specific functions, to protecting the identity of persons who inform the authority of breaches of tenancy agreements and who might be intimidated if their identities became known. Under general courts legislation, any District Court decision made under this Part is appealable to the Circuit Court and any issue on a point of law may be referred to the High Court.

**Section 7:** provides for the issue by a housing authority of a Tenancy Warning to a tenant where he or she, or a household member, has, in the opinion of the authority, **breached a term of the tenancy agreement prohibiting or aimed at preventing anti-social behaviour**. The warning must specify, among other things, the term of the agreement that has been breached, the nature, occasion and effect of the breach, requirements in regard to cessation of the breach and the action the authority may take in the event of continuation or repetition of the breach, the circumstances in which the housing authority may proceed to apply for a possession order under Section 12 in respect of the dwelling and the tenant's right, under Section 10, to request a review of the warning.

**Section 8:** provides for the issue by a housing authority of a Tenancy Warning to a tenant who breaches **a rent-related obligation** – relates to payment of rent and/or a term of rescheduling arrangements between a household and housing authority in relation to payment of rent arrears. The Section sets out the content of the Tenancy Warning, including the circumstances in which the housing authority may proceed to apply for a possession order under Section 12 in respect of the dwelling and the tenant's right, under Section 10, to request a review of the warning.

**Section 9:** provides for the issue by a housing authority of a Tenancy Warning to a tenant where he or she, or a household member, has, in the opinion of the authority, breached a term of the tenancy agreement other than a term to which Section 7 or 8 relate. The Warning must specify, among other things, the term of the agreement that has been breached, the nature and occasion of the breach, requirements in regard to cessation of the breach, the action the authority may take in the event of continuation or repetition of the breach and the tenant's right, under Section 10, to request a review of the warning.

**Section 10:** provides, on request by the tenant, for an internal review by a housing authority of a Tenancy Warning issued to him or her under Section 7, 8 or 9. A review request must normally be made **within 10 working days of the issue of the warning outlining** the grounds for the request and indicating whether the tenant or a household member wishes to make oral representations. Provision is made for extension of the period for making a review request in extenuating circumstances but the extended period shall not in any case exceed 20 working days from the date of issue of the warning.

The Chief Executive will appoint a local authority official to carry out the review who was not involved in the issue of the warning and is senior to the official who decided to issue the warning. The reviewer will review the decision as if the matter were being decided for the first time and on the basis of the information available to him or her at the time of the review, including any information furnished in writing or orally by the tenant, a household member or any other person. The reviewer will normally have to decide on the review request within 20 working days or, if the process involves meeting the tenant or a household member, within 30 working days.

**The reviewer may decide to confirm, vary or annul the Tenancy Warning, giving reasons. Except in the case of clerical errors, a reviewer proposing to vary a Tenancy Warning shall consult the tenant before varying the warning.**

A tenant may withdraw a review request but a reviewer may, nonetheless, continue with the review where he or she considers it is in order to do so.

Where there is intimidation, the reviewer may accept as evidence a statement by a Garda or local authority official that he or she believes that a person is or has been engaged in anti-social behaviour.

**Section 11:** provides that a Tenancy Warning comes into effect on the second working day after the expiration of the period within which a review request could be received. A Tenancy Warning that is reviewed comes into effect on the second working day after the reviewer's decision is sent to the tenant, except where the Tenancy Warning is annulled. Provision is also made for the coming into effect of a Tenancy Warning where a review request is withdrawn by the tenant.

**Section 12:** empowers a housing authority, in the case of a breach of the **tenancy agreement or a rent-related obligation**, to apply to the District Court for an order **for possession of the dwelling**, stating the grounds on which the application is being made and, at the authority's discretion, including information on oath by an official of the authority. The housing authority will generally give the tenant at least 10 working days' notice of the Court hearing of its possession application but, in a case where the breach of the tenancy agreement had or is having a significant or persistent detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality of the dwelling, the housing authority must give a copy of the



possession application to the tenant not later than the time it applies to the court for the possession order. SubSection (4) sets out the matters to be covered in a possession application.

A Tenancy Warning under Section 7, 8 or 9 will normally precede a possession application but, where a housing authority decides that the **seriousness of the breach justifies dispensing with a warning**, its possession application must include a statement as to why the authority **did not issue** a Tenancy Warning. Where a housing authority makes a possession application in respect of a breach of a tenancy agreement similar to that to which a Tenancy Warning that is under review relates, the application must **include a statement** as to why the authority is proceeding while the Tenancy Warning is under review.

The Section provides that, where the tenant does not, without due cause, appear at the hearing of the possession application, the District Court may grant the order where there is a prima facie case for doing so. The Court is empowered to adjourn the hearing as it sees fit, with or without conditions.

- **SubSection (9)** provides that the Court shall make the possession order if it is satisfied that the housing authority has grounds for the recovery of possession and the Court considers it reasonable, in all the circumstances, to make the order. This provision sets out matters to be taken into account in determining the reasonableness of making an order, including the proportionality of making the order, having regard to the grounds for the possession application.
- **SubSection (10)** provides that the housing authority will have the right to repossess the dwelling within a period starting on a date specified in the court order, which period shall be not less than 2 months and not more than 9 months. Enforcement of the order will have the effect of terminating the tenancy on the date of possession.

**Section 13:** applies to a dwelling where there is no tenancy in circumstances other than where the tenant has died (see Section 17), or a dwelling that has **been abandoned by the tenant and the dwelling is illegally occupied by another person**. A housing authority is empowered in such a case to apply to the District Court for an order for possession of the dwelling, stating the grounds on which the application is being made and, at the authority's discretion, including information on oath by an official of the authority. The housing authority must give the occupier at least 10 working days' notice of the Court hearing of the possession application. Where the occupier does not, without due cause, appear at the hearing of the possession application, the District Court may grant the order where there is a prima facie case for doing so. The Court is empowered to adjourn the hearing as it sees fit, with or without conditions.

- **SubSection (8)** provides that the Court shall make the possession order if it is satisfied that the housing authority has grounds for the recovery of possession and that an order is a proportionate response to the person's occupation of the dwelling and the Court considers it reasonable, in all the circumstances, to make the order.
- Under **SubSection (9)**, a housing authority will have the right to repossess the dwelling from a date specified in the court order, which date shall not be more than 6 months after the date the order is made.
- **SubSection (14)** replaces Section 62(7) of the Housing Act 1966 and provides that it is an offence, except in specified circumstances, to enter, use or occupy a dwelling in which there is no tenancy or that has been abandoned by the tenant.

**Section 14:** empowers a housing authority, in specified circumstances, to enter a dwelling that has been abandoned by the tenant and there is risk of significant damage to the dwelling due to vandalism or the operation of any utilities in the dwelling or steps are necessary to prevent access by trespassers. A housing authority may enter such a dwelling with the consent of the tenant or under a District Court warrant. In a case where an abandoned dwelling is being damaged by vandalism or the operation of utilities or there is an imminent risk of such damage, and it is not practical to wait to apply for a warrant, **the chief executive of the local authority may authorise an employee of the authority in writing** to enter the dwelling and take such measures as are considered appropriate in the circumstances.

**Section 15:** provides that where a housing authority intends to repossess a dwelling **abandoned by the tenant's household**, the authority must serve a notice on the tenant requiring him or her to confirm within 4 weeks if the household intends to occupy the dwelling as its normal place of residence. Where, at the end of the 4-week period, the housing authority is satisfied that the household does not intend to occupy the dwelling as its normal place of residence, the authority will serve a further notice on the tenant bringing the tenancy agreement to an end with immediate effect. Provision is made for the return to the tenant, at his or her expense, of property found in the dwelling that does not belong to the housing authority and for the disposal of such property if the tenant does not arrange for its return. Where property is found in the dwelling that belongs to a person other than the former tenant, the housing authority shall take all reasonable steps to identify the owner and return the property to him or her, at the owner's expense.

**Section 16:** provides that a person who was the tenant of a dwelling before the tenancy in that dwelling was terminated under Section 15, may, if aggrieved by the termination, apply to the District Court **within 6 months of the termination**. If the District Court decides that the housing authority did not comply with the notice requirements of Section 15 or did not have reasonable grounds for finding that the dwelling was abandoned, or that the former tenant had reasonable cause, by reason of illness or otherwise, for failing to notify the authority of his or her household's intention to reside in the dwelling, the Court shall, if the dwelling has not been let to a new tenant, declare the notice under Section 15(2) terminating the tenancy to be of no effect, or direct the housing authority to allocate to the former tenant another suitable dwelling in the same locality as the dwelling in which the tenancy was terminated under Section 15.

**Section 17:** applies to a dwelling where there **is no tenancy due to the death of a tenant and which is occupied by a member of the deceased tenant's household who is not entitled to succeed to the tenancy**. A housing authority is empowered in such a case to apply to the District Court for an order for possession of the dwelling, stating the grounds on which the application is being made, including the basis on which the housing authority refused any application by the occupier to succeed to the tenancy, and, at the authority's discretion, information on oath by an official of the authority. The housing authority must give the occupier at least 10 working days' notice of the Court hearing of the possession application. Where the occupier does not, without due cause, appear at the hearing of the possession application, the District Court may grant the order where there is a prima facie case for doing so. The Court is empowered to adjourn the hearing as it sees fit, with or without conditions.

- **SubSection (7)** provides that the Court shall make the possession order if it is satisfied that the housing authority has grounds for the recovery of possession and that an order is a proportionate response to the person's occupation of the dwelling and the Court considers it reasonable, in all the circumstances, to make the order.
- Under **SubSection (8)**, a housing authority will have the right to repossess the dwelling from a date specified in the court order, which date shall not be more than 6 months after the date the order is made. Section 18 repeals Section 62 of the Housing Act 1966. The Section also amends Section 3 of the 1966 Act relating to service of notices to apply its provisions to Tenancy Warnings under this Part.

**Section 18(1)(a)** provides for **publication in at least one newspaper circulating locally** of Section 15 notices to the tenant of an abandoned dwelling and SubSection (1)(b) provides for an offence of removing, damaging or defacing a Tenancy Warning affixed on or near the dwelling concerned in a manner prescribed under Sections 7, 8 or 9.

**Section 19:** provides for a number of amendments to the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997, which established the right of a tenant, tenant purchaser, housing authority or approved housing body to apply to the District Court for an order excluding a person believed to be engaged in anti-social behaviour from a dwelling used for social housing purposes or purchased from a housing authority and, where appropriate, from its locality. “

#### **4(c) Tenant Purchase Scheme 2016**

Ms. K. Curtin briefed the meeting on this report which was circulated as follows:

##### **“Tenant Purchase Scheme -Summary/Explanatory Notes**

##### **The scheme will operate under Part 3 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014**

##### **Tenants eligible to purchase**

- A house may be sold only to its tenant (including joint tenants).
- The tenant (or one of the joint tenants) must have been in receipt of social housing support for a minimum prescribed period, (including RAS, HAP and approved body housing) but shall not in any case be less than 1 year: which will apply to all forms of social housing support or combinations of such support.
- The house occupied by the tenant must be available for sale under the scheme.
- The tenant must have minimum reckonable income of at least €15,000 per annum.
- All classes of tenants that fulfil the conditions set out above may purchase under the scheme, except where they are disqualified from purchasing in any of the following circumstances.
  - In the preceding 3 years, the tenant or a household member was in arrears of rent, rent contributions, charges, fees or any other monies owed to a housing authority or approved housing body for an accumulated period of more than 12 weeks in respect of a dwelling or site provided as social housing support.

This ineligibility will not apply where the tenant or household member concerned enters into rescheduling arrangements with the authority or body for paying off these debts and either substantially complies with the terms of those arrangements or the authority or body concerned is satisfied that failure to substantially comply with the rescheduling

arrangements was due to circumstances outside the control of the tenant or household member.

- The tenant previously purchased a dwelling under this or a previous tenant purchase scheme.
- The tenant has failed to pay all outstanding water charges due and owing in respect of water services provided to the property
- A housing authority may refuse to sell a house to a tenant under the scheme where the authority considers that the tenant or any household member is or has been engaged in anti-social behaviour or that a sale to that tenant would not be in the interest of good estate management.
- Tenants are also required to indicate the intended source of funding to pay the discounted purchase price of the house.

### **Houses that may be sold**

All local authority houses - **other than** affordable housing, new houses designated for sale under the 2010 incremental purchase scheme and classes of dwellings excluded from sale by regulations - may be sold to tenants. Local authority apartments and other dwellings (including maisonettes) that require regular upkeep and management of common areas, etc., in conjunction with other dwellings or properties may not be sold.

### **The Regulations exclude the following classes of houses from sale**

- Houses designed for occupation by elderly persons.
- Houses provided for persons with disabilities.
- Group traveller housing.
- Part V dwellings provided in private estates.
- Caravans, mobile homes, etc.
- Houses that a housing authority decides not to sell for reasons of proper management of its stock of housing accommodation or on account of their structural condition.
- Houses that an authority decides not to sell for the time being on account of proposals the council has to carry out remedial works in the estate concerned or to regenerate the area in which the house is located.

### **Houses are sold in their existing state of repair and condition with an express exclusion of:**

- Any warranty as to the state of repair or habitability of the house.

### **Calculation of reckonable tenant income**

Housing authorities will include the reckonable income of all joint tenants and any tenant's spouse, civil partner or cohabitant who is resident in the house when calculating reckonable tenant income for the purposes of the minimum income requirement and the level of discount to be applied. Reckonable income will be calculated as gross income, i.e. before deduction of income tax, Universal Social Charge, pension contributions, pension-related reductions and PRSI, etc.

### **The following sources and classes of income will be included for reckonable income:**

Income from employment, including self-employment, overtime payments, bonuses and commission, as follows:

- Overtime – restricted to a maximum of 10% of basic income, except where there is a regular overtime pattern.
- Bonuses – restricted to a maximum of 10% of basic income.
- Commission – restricted to a maximum of 30% of basic income.
- Maintenance payments received.
- Income from rental properties, dividends, capital investments and other similar sources of income.
- Subject to the income disregards listed below, income from social welfare payments (including pensions) by the Department of Social Protection, **but only where these payments constitute a secondary source** of income, i.e. a social welfare payment to a tenant in receipt of income from employment is reckonable income, as is a social welfare payment to the spouse, civil partner or cohabitant of a tenant in employment, whether or not that payment is in addition to employment income of that spouse, civil partner or cohabitant; pensions other than social welfare pensions, from whatever source, including from abroad.

### **Income from the following sources will be disregarded for the purposes of calculating reckonable income:**

- Child Benefit.
- Carer's Allowance
- Carer's Benefit and Half-Rate Carer's Benefit.
- Family Income Supplement
- Guardian's Payment
- Exceptional needs payments
- Diet Supplement
- Rent and Mortgage Interest Supplements
- National Fuel Scheme
- Respite Care Grant
- Prescribed Relative Allowance
- Living Alone (Pension) Allowance

- Age 80 (Pension) Allowance
- JobBridge-National Internship Scheme
- Domiciliary Care Allowance
- Tús (Community Work Placement Initiative)
- Back to Education Allowance
- Gateway (Local Authority Activation Scheme)
- Rural Social Scheme
- Community Employment Programme
- Fostering Allowance
- Blind Welfare Allowance
- Back to Work Family Dividend
- Boarding-Out Payments-Student grants and scholarship schemes
- Home Tuition Scheme
- Youthreach training allowance
- Payments by charitable organisations-one of the functions of which is to assist persons in need by making grants of money to them
- Payments made by another EU Member State that correspond to Child Benefit
- Rehabilitation training allowances
- Income earned by children.

In determining reckonable income, a housing authority will disregard income that is once-off, temporary or short-term in nature and that is outside the regular pattern of a person's annual income. Otherwise, where income fluctuates from week to week, reckonable income will be determined on the basis of a person's average earnings over a typical work period.

**A housing authority will require a tenant to provide documentary evidence to verify different types of reckonable income, as follows:**

- Employee income - one or both of Form P60 and payslips for each employment and, where necessary, a signed and stamped employer's salary certificate, stating employment terms, basic salary, overtime, commission, bonuses and any other payments
- Income from self-employment - a copy of the income and expenditure accounts for each business or such documentation that satisfies the authority as to the nature and amount of income involved
- Payments made by the Department of Social Protection
- Rental income from land or property - a copy of accounts or a statement of rental income
- Interest on savings, investments or dividends - a statement from the financial institution or other provider, detailing the amount paid
- A pension other than a pension paid by the Department of Social Protection – a document issued by the body involved, detailing the payments made.

- Maintenance payments received - the Court Order, formal or informal maintenance arrangement or agreement, or solicitor's statement, detailing the amount and frequency and end-date of payments, and documentary evidence that the required payments are being made in accordance with the order, arrangement, agreement or statement concerned
- Income from any other source - documentary evidence from the appropriate person or body involved, detailing the source and nature of the income and the amount paid.

### **Purchase price of house**

The purchase price of a house is the value of the house for the purposes of calculating the applicable discount and will be calculated as the greater of the market value of the house (which reflects its prevailing state of repair and condition), or (b) half the estimated cost to the council of providing a replacement house to modern standards in its housing stock to accommodate a household in the same class as that for which the house was designed.

### **Calculation of tenant purchase discount**

The discount given to a tenant purchaser depends on reckonable tenant income.

The housing authority will give the tenant a discount of 60%, 50% or 40% off the purchase price of the house, depending on reckonable tenant income.

- A discount of 60% off the purchase price applies where reckonable tenant income is between €15,000 and €20,000.
- A discount of 50% off the purchase price applies where reckonable tenant income is between €20,001 and €29,999.
- A discount of 40% off the purchase price applies where reckonable income is equal to or greater than €30,000.

### **Tenant purchase of house and sale conditions :**

On receipt of the discounted purchase price from the tenant, the housing authority will transfer the fee simple in the house to the tenant by means of a prescribed transfer order. The transfer of ownership is subject to the terms of the housing authority's incremental purchase and the following conditions:

- The house shall, unless the housing authority gives its prior written consent, be occupied as the normal place of residence of the purchaser or a household member.



- The house or any part of it shall not, without the prior written consent of the housing authority be sold, assigned, let or sublet or otherwise disposed of or mortgaged, charged or alienated, otherwise than by devise or operation of law.
- Be subject to the Terms and conditions relating to the resale of the house.
- The purchaser shall not cause any nuisance or allow any person residing in the house to cause any nuisance or be guilty of, or permit, any conduct likely to cause annoyance or disturbance to his or her neighbours and shall not engage in, or allow any person residing in the house to engage in, anti-social behaviour.
- The purchaser shall not knowingly permit a person, against whom an excluding order or an interim excluding order is in force in respect of the house on account of anti-social behaviour, to enter the house in breach of the order.
- The purchaser shall keep the house and all parts of it and all fixtures and fittings in it, and all additions to it and the gardens, driveways and pathways (if any) in good order, repair and condition and maintain and uphold and, whenever necessary or for whatever reason, reconstruct and replace the same and keep the house and all parts thereof in first class decorative condition at all times.
- The purchaser shall insure and keep insured the house against loss or damage to its full reinstatement value and pay all premiums and sums necessary for that purpose and, on demand, produce to the housing authority as the authority shall direct the policy or policies of such insurance and the receipt for each such payment.
- The transfer order expressly excludes any warranty as to the state of repair or habitability of the house.

### **Payment of discounted purchase price**

The tenant is not required to pay a deposit to the housing authority as part of the tenant purchase process. The tenant must pay the discounted purchase price of the house to the housing authority before the transfer order is made.

### **The discounted purchase price may be paid by one, or a combination, of the following:**

- The own resources of the tenant and his or her spouse, civil partner or cohabitant, which may include funds provided by family members, etc.

- A local authority house purchase loan, if approved under the authority's credit policy. The examination of a loan application will involve a separate assessment of tenant income by the housing authority.
- Payment of the loan amount to the authority is deemed to be made on completion by the tenant purchaser of the mortgage contract. The possibility of private financial institutions providing loan finance to tenant purchasers under the new scheme is currently being examined.

### **Incremental purchase charge**

On sale of a house under the scheme, the council will place an incremental purchase charge on the house equivalent to the discount granted to the tenant off the purchase price.

If the council gives a 50% discount to the purchaser, the incremental purchase charge will be 50% of the value of the house. The period for which the charge applies to the house (i.e. the charged period) depends on the level of the charge.

If the charge is 60% of the value of the house, the charged period is 30 years.

If the charge is 50% of the value of the house, the charged period is 25 years.

If the charge is 40% of the value of the house, the charged period is 20 years.

The incremental purchase charge will wither away to nothing over the charged period in annual incremental releases of **2% of the value of the house**, provided that the purchaser complies with the terms and conditions of the transfer order.

The incremental releases for the first **5 years of occupancy** will not be applied until that period **has expired**. If a housing authority suspends an incremental release during the charged period for failure to comply with a sale condition, the tenant purchaser must, within 2 month of expiry of the charged period, pay to the authority the amount of the outstanding incremental purchase charge, based on the current market valuation of the house. Where part only of the outstanding charged share is paid to the housing authority, the charged period will be reduced by the number of years equating to the number of incremental releases represented by the payment.

### **Resale of tenant purchased house during the charged period**

Housing authority will have first refusal on buy-back of tenant purchased houses resold during the charging period, in which case the resale price is the current market value of the house less the value of the outstanding charge on the property.

If the tenant purchaser resells the house in the market **within 5 years** of purchase, he or she must pay the current value of the total charge back to the council. If he or she sells the house later in the charged period, he or she must pay to the council the current value of the outstanding charge. The charge only applies where the tenant purchaser makes a profit on resale of the house (net of selling expenses) and the amount of the outstanding charge payable by the tenant purchaser may be reduced to avoid, as far as possible, the tenant incurring a net loss on the resale.

**A housing authority may refuse to consent to resale of a tenant purchased house in the market during the charged period where**

- The proposed sale price is less than the market value.
- The new purchaser is or was engaged in anti-social behaviour or the sale is not in the interest of good estate management
- The sale would leave the vendor or a household member without adequate housing.

**Appendix : Update from Housing Agency , 14<sup>th</sup> January 2016.**

**Spoke with Jim Baneham, Housing Agency who is dealing with this Tenant Purchase Scheme who advised the following:**

- **Leaflet is currently being finalised and is 99% ready to go – this leaflet will be circulated to each Local Authority for printing by ourselves and distributed to our Tenants.**
- **Leaflet was also sent to the Adult Literacy Organisation by the Housing Agency and minor amendments had to be made prior to it being finalised.**
- **Leaflet has also been sent to an Irish translation service.**
- **Leaflet is expected to be finalised later this week or early next week and all Housing Director of Services will be notified of same.**
- **A Template Application Form has also been produced by Housing Agency for the Scheme – template only – addition, if required can be included, if necessary.**
- **Template letter for Tenants has also been produced by Housing Agency and will also be circulated to DOS in the coming days.”**

Ms. Curtin stated that 80% of tenants will not qualify for the Scheme. It is important to manage expectations and to ensure tenants have a good understanding of the Scheme.

Mr. J. Breen stated he hoped all tenants would receive details of the Scheme in the first or second week in February. However he stressed that in excess of 80% of Council tenants in Kerry are on social welfare payments.

All members thanked the Housing Staff for the comprehensive reports.

Cllr. D. Grady stated there is a crisis in Killarney with the number of housing applicants and this is the case all over the county. While applicants are presently housed under the RAS and Leasing Schemes the landlords can demand their houses back at any time. Cllr. Grady called for the recommencement of the building programme. He acknowledged the number of houses allocated in 2015 but asked how many new applications were received in 2015. He welcomed the proposal to construct 20 houses in Killarney and added that it was taking a long time to commence construction. The turn around time for vacant houses is slow and he asked if this is as a result of a shortage of funding. While Cllr. Grady welcomed refugees to Kerry he stated local housing applicants must come first.

Cllr. J. Brassil welcomed the holding of the Special Meeting as it highlights the scale of the task ahead. Housing is the single biggest issue at present and the figures presented in the reports are startling. He expressed concern that the housing waiting list will get longer and said this is not a reflection on the officials in the Housing Department who do excellent work. There are 5,073 qualified applicants on the housing list and in 2015, a total of 688 new housing applications were received. Cllr. Brassil then referred to the report on Item 3(a) which outlined that 426 housing units were constructed or acquired in 2015. This will increase to 446 in 2016 with a further 370 units being provided in 2017. He accepted the Housing Assistance Payment will also come on stream during this period. Based on these figures the housing list will increase year on year. The Minister stated all those on the housing list would be housed by 2020 but at the present rate of progress the housing list in Kerry will reach 6,500 by then. Staff work very hard to achieve the targets set down by the Department and he believed adequate resources are not being made available. At present it appears to be an unsolvable crisis and this is a reflection of the funding allocated and the solutions on offer.

Cllr. Brassil asked if NAMA contacted the Council in relation to the vacant properties in their possession. In Dingle the previous week a house owned by NAMA was sold to a venture fund and the couple that were renting it must vacate the house by the end of the month. The sale price of that house was very low. He referred to the Tenant Purchase Scheme and the fact that 80% of tenants in Kerry will not qualify to purchase their homes and he asked how the Department sanctioned such a scheme. He requested that a letter would issue to the

Department outlining members concern at the terms of the Tenant Purchase Scheme.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae thanked the Housing staff for their excellent work and in particular those working in the Grants Section. These grants allow elderly people to have comfort in their home. A major issue is the shortage of houses in the Killarney area but in particular in the town. In some instances landlords have indicated to young couples that they want to sell their property and it would not suit them to move out of town as they only have part time work. One such couple cannot get a house they can afford in Killarney town. When a lease with Kerry County Council is mentioned the landlord is not interested. The stipulation that a lease must be for a minimum of 5 years is deterring landlords from letting houses to the Council. Cllr. Healy-Rae added that there are numerous vacant houses in the county and he asked how can landlords be encouraged to let their houses. It is also possible that they cannot afford to do up or complete the house. He asked if an incentive scheme could be introduced whereby the Council would fund the repair/completion of the house and the cost would be deducted from the rent. Alternatively the Government could introduce a Grant Scheme for the repair or completion of these houses. Funding of €200,000 is provided in 2016 for planned maintenance and this is just €50 per house. He asked how much was provided for this work in 2015.

Cllr. Healy-Rae called on the Government to provide adequate funding for the repair of vacant houses. There is no homeless facility in Killarney and he asked that this would be addressed. Single applicants are on the housing list for years with one lady on the list for 16 years. There are no 4 or 5 bed houses available to accommodate larger families and he asked what plans are in place to address this. Cllr. Healy-Rae welcomed plans to facilitate returning emigrants in Castleisland. He asked if additional staff were sanctioned by the Department to deal with refugees. In conclusion Cllr. Healy-Rae referred to the Housing Assessment which will be carried out in 2016 and he asked that people would not be removed from the list as they may have moved to a different address recently.

Cllr. M. Gleeson congratulated officials on the excellent progress made in 2015 in difficult circumstances. It does not make sense that a Government Department would introduce a Tenant Purchase Scheme that excludes 80% of tenants. He submitted a Notice of Motion for the February Meeting regarding the number of people on the housing waiting list and it is evident from the reports circulated that this list is enormous. Until such time as a housing construction programme commences there will be no progress. In the past estates were constructed, especially in cities, without adequate infrastructure but thankfully that no longer happens. Cllr. Gleeson complimented the Council on their efforts to address anti-social behaviour and he asked that housing estates would be kept free of litter. He also asked that vacant houses would be repaired and reallocated as soon as possible as there can be a problem with anti-social behaviour with vacant houses.

Cllr. Gleeson complimented the Housing Grants Section on the administration of the Grant Schemes and he added that these grants transform lives. He referred to Armagh House which is still boarded up and is an eye sore and he asked that it would be made available for use as soon as possible. Cllr. Gleeson invited other towns to play their part in facilitating traveller families. The new Tenant Purchase Scheme is extremely disappointing and he asked that there would be an emphasis on the construction of social housing into the future.

Cllr. J.J.Culloty concurred with the views expressed by Cllr. Gleeson in relation to Armagh House. He pointed out that the figure of 80% of tenants that would not be eligible to purchase their homes could in fact be higher as other circumstances could mitigate against tenants. Cllr. Culloty acknowledged the enormous amount of work done by the Housing Department in the past 12 months. He did not believe the current stock of vacant houses in the county would make any inroads into the current waiting list. He welcomed the 20 houses to be constructed in Killarney and he asked when they will be completed. Cllr. Culloty expressed surprise that 50% of housing applicants require a 1B house and he asked if there is any solution to this problem. In relation to funding there does not appear to be an allocation for the repair of voids in 2016 and he understood this allocation would normally be made in January. It is difficult to plan when details of the allocation have not been received and he asked when it is envisaged notification of this allocation will be received.

Cllr. M. O'Shea commended the Chief Executive, the Director of Housing and all staff on the excellent reports presented. He asked if it was possible to break down the housing list to identify those who genuinely want housing. 74% of applicants are on Rent Supplement and most of them are suitably housed. He asked how many applicants refused social housing in the past 12 months. Houses are being purchased by the Council in estates and he asked that only tenants of an impeccable standard would be housed there. It is now very difficult to get a house in the Milltown/Killorglin for the RAS/Leasing Programme.

Cllr. O'Shea asked why members are not circulated with the list of housing applicants for their area. He asked how many tenants breached their Tenancy Agreements in 2015 and were issued with Warning letters. In conclusion Cllr. O'Shea asked if the Council pays utility bills for refugees.

Cllr. J. Finucane welcomed the detailed reports circulated to members. He recognised fully that commercial Banks are not lending and added that what is required is an arrangement with Credit Unions. In the past the Council sold subsidised sites and he asked that this would be considered again. 72% of housing applicants are seeking 1 or 2 bed accommodation and there is a need for a public private partnership to build 1 and 2 bed apartments. At present no houses are being built in Tralee and this will create a problem for the future. Cllr. Finucane asked that consideration would be given to encourage applicants to

move to rural villages as this would help to rejuvenate these areas. In conclusion Cllr. Finucane stated there is an urgent need for a more speedy response to the present housing crisis.

Cllr. S. Fitzgerald commended the Housing Department on their excellent work. Rents in the private sector have now exceeded what the Council pays through the RAS Scheme and as a result it is very difficult to acquire properties to rent. This is a major problem and some tenants in private accommodation have received Notices to Quit and they cannot acquire alternative accommodation. The housing construction programme should be recommenced and it would take 3 to 4 years for it to have an impact on the waiting list. Cllr. Fitzgerald suggested that contact would be made with voluntary housing associations to establish if they have a role to play in this area. In conclusion Cllr. Fitzgerald stated the number of houses available for Long Term Letting or the RAS Scheme has reduced drastically.

Cllr. T. Ferris stated of the few functions left to local authorities housing is the most important. The concerns expressed by members must be articulated to the Department. While 72% of qualified applicants want 1 or 2B accommodation there is a huge shortage of this type of accommodation. She referred to Housing Grants and the 90% approval rate and asked if Category 2 applicants are included in that figure. Cllr. Ferris expressed disappointment at the General Maintenance Budget of €200,000 and she asked if this includes the replacement of windows and doors. She asked if language classes and counselling services will be provided for refugee families.

Cllr. Ferris stated her biggest concern relates to the new Tenant Purchase Scheme because those who need it are excluded from purchasing their homes. She PROPOSED that the Scheme should be amended to include a requirement that those purchasing their home must have lived there for 7 – 8 years. The only option for housing applicants is either the RAS Scheme or the Long Term Leasing Scheme and that is not enough. She expressed concern in relation to Long Term Leases that in 5 years time landlords will want their properties back and this will result in a huge number of people in need of housing. Cllr. Ferris stated she emailed a list of queries on behalf of the Sinn Féin members to Mr. Breen and she was awaiting a reply. She acknowledged the incredible work being done by the Housing Department and in particular the Investigating Officers who show great compassion to applicants.

Cllr. J.F. Flynn stated grant applicants who want to replace windows and doors are not being given Priority 1 status. It is very important for older people to get on the priority list. The repair and reallocation of houses should not be delayed when a staff member is off work. The construction of houses at Ardmoniel was due to commence in September and the criteria changed to include more houses. Yet it is now proposed to build the same number of houses. Cllr. Flynn asked that notification of houses allocated would issue to councillors by email.

Cllr. N. Foley stated she wanted to be associated with the words of commendation to the staff of the Housing Department. She noted it was intended to purchase 40 houses in 2016 and she asked is that area specific given the breakdown of applications by area. She asked if the maintenance programme relates only to the replacement of ranges, repair of chimneys etc. Cllr. Foley referred to the 10% refusal rate and said there is great credit due to staff for the work they do in trying to accommodate applicants. Cllr. Foley asked when the details of the Energy Efficiency Programme for 2016 would be available. The present arrangement for the allocation of funding for Housing Grants by the Department is not satisfactory as additional allocations can be received late in the year. 50% of housing applicants require 1B accommodation and she asked how much of the Council's housing stock is 1B. The new Tenant Purchase Scheme is unacceptable. Many people in need of housing held out for a Council house so that they could purchase it but they have been disenfranchised by the new Scheme.

Cllr. M. Cahill complimented Mr. Breen and his staff on their work. He added that there is a housing crisis in the county with in excess of 5,000 qualified applicants on the housing list. 688 applications were received in 2015 and 651 of these were approved. On the other hand just 400 properties were allocated that year. Cllr. Cahill asked if any of the houses purchased last year were in Killorglin or Glenbeigh. A lot of villages are derelict and there are houses for sale and he suggested that the Council could purchase some of these houses and have small commercial units on the ground floor with accommodation overhead. Cllr. Cahill welcomed the proposal to construct 2B houses at Ardmoniel as 72% of housing applicants are single and many of them have children. He called for the construction of more single rural dwellings and for a better and more efficient Transfers Policy. It is rumoured that some of the refugees to arrive in the county in April will be housed in Killorglin and there is a lot of anger over this as some applicants are on the list for 10 years and have not been housed. The new Tenant Purchase Scheme is flawed as the majority of tenants are automatically excluded from it as they are in private housing. He supported Cllr. Flynn's request that members be informed of houses being allocated via email.

Cllr. M. Kennelly complimented the staff of the Housing Department who do a great job in difficult circumstances. The refusal rate for housing is a cause for concern and the turn around time for vacant houses is too long. In Listowel recently a 3B house in a housing estate sold for €69,000 and this is a lot cheaper than the €160,000 limit imposed by the Department. Houses are boarded up in towns and villages and the Housing Department should consider purchasing these. Cllr. Kennelly welcomed the Energy Efficiency Programme and grants allocated under the Housing Grant Schemes.



Cllr. S. Locke stated the Tenant Purchase Scheme will not be a success and it should be referred to the Minister for review and amendment. Many single applicants are on the housing list for over 10 years. Cllr. Locke asked when permission is granted for a housing development could the Council insist that they include 1 or 2B units to facilitate single people. He asked how many houses in the Tralee MD are on the list for the Energy Efficiency Programme. Funding must be secured to repair vacant houses and he asked that a letter would issue to the Department calling for the allocation of funding for this purpose immediately.

Cllr. J. Healy-Rae stated it is very difficult to source properties for RAS or the Long Term Leasing Scheme. He requested that an advertisement would be placed in the local papers seeking properties for these Schemes. The new Tenant Purchase Scheme is not acceptable with in excess of 80% of tenants who will not qualify for the Scheme. A tenant must be 3 years without arrears to qualify also. Most tenants would like to purchase their home. Two single rural dwellings will commence in 2016 and that is not adequate. Cllr. Healy-Rae asked that 2B houses would be the smallest housing unit constructed as many single male applicants have a son or a daughter who come to stay with them at weekends. He was glad the Council still has 14 acres in Kenmare as it will be badly need for the construction of social housing. 74% of housing applicants are on Rent Allowance and he asked if they are all seeking social housing. Many of them are not on Rent Allowance by choice and they would prefer to be in a Council house but they have no choice. Cllr. Healy-Rae stated he understood the Council owns 6 houses in Valentia View and if that is the case he asked that they would be allocated immediately.

Cllr. J. Moloney stated it is very frustrating for those on the housing list to see vacant Council houses especially when it will cost a lot to repair them and approval is not forthcoming. A letter should issue to the Department pointing out that it is better value to repair vacant houses rather than purchasing new houses. A Council house was badly damaged in Moyvane and he asked if there is any programme of inspection of Council houses to ensure they are being properly maintained. In 2015 members were informed that 16 houses would be constructed in Listowel but he understood this was reduced to 10 and he requested an explanation for this reduction. Cllr. Moloney referred to house repairs and asked when a repair crew go to a house to carry out a specific repair but other repairs are also required that all the repairs would be carried out at the one time rather than having to return later. He requested that the voluntary housing bodies would be brought on board with a view to assisting in the housing of those on the housing list.

Cllr. P. Connor-Scarteen thanked all Council staff who managed a lot of changes last year to ensure members got timely responses to their queries. He asked that other Departments would follow their example. The Housing Department excelled at meeting and exceeding targets set for 2015. He welcomed the proposal to construct 20 houses in Kenmare in 2016. He requested that pipes would be laid at an adequate depth to ensure they will not freeze. Provision should also be made to provide footpaths connecting to the existing footpath from the new development. Cllr. Connor-Scarteen requested that additional single rural dwellings would be constructed as three is not adequate. He also called for the repair of all vacant houses and stated additional staff maybe required with such a large waiting list. Cllr. Connor-Scarteen welcomed the 90% approval rate for housing grants and concurred with Cllr. Flynn in asking that members be notified of housing allocations via email.

Cllr. J. Healy-Rae stated as he had bad internet coverage it would not be acceptable to him to receive notification of housing allocations via email.

Mr. J. Breen thanked the members for their compliments to staff, the recognition of their work and the market in which they operate. While in excess of 70% of qualified housing applicants are on rent allowance they are suitably housed. If the construction of 20 houses in Killarney goes to tender in Q2 of 2016 they should be completed by Q1 of 2017. Mr. Breen undertook to convey the views of members on the Tenant Purchase Scheme to Department officials at a meeting with them the following Thursday. Every effort is being made to speed up the repair of vacant houses but they must work within the Budget. In relation to the houses to be constructed in Listowel Mr. Breen stated following a detailed assessment of the site it was decided that the site could only accommodate 10 houses. He agreed with members that a minimum of 2B houses should be constructed. He undertook to consider advertising for suitable properties under the RAS and Long Term Leasing Scheme. Mr. Breen accepted the Council must construct houses for single applicants and to purchase housing for them where necessary. He undertook to consider members request that houses would be purchased in towns and villages. In 2015 NAMA offered Kerry County Council 20 houses but one was purchased.

Mr. Breen stated the Investigating Officers pride themselves in knowing the housing applicants and they try to ensure the refusal rate is as low as possible. Two houses were purchased in Killorglin town in 2015. Single rural dwellings awaiting refurbishment will be reviewed in 2016. A Transfers Policy will be brought to the SPC for consideration. Members can be notified by email of housing allocations in future.

Mr. T. Sheehy stated the design approval is now one stage for housing developments costing under €2m. The Ardmoniel Scheme is a 12 house scheme and a more detailed design is being prepared and he hoped to get approval to proceed to tender. The design will be forwarded to the Department by the end of February, he hoped to be in a position to go to tender by June and that construction would commence in 2016.

The Chief Executive pointed out the difficulty with the new approval procedure is if the development exceeds the budget the excess will not be refunded by the Department.

Mr. Breen informed members that a conditional survey of all Council houses is being undertaken and this will inform the planned maintenance programme. The 10% refusal rate in Kerry is achieved through extensive consultation by staff with housing applicants. This rate relates to those who refuse an offer of housing in writing.

Cllr. M. O'Shea stated he heard the refusal rate is 30%.

Mr. Breen stated applicants are offered housing in their area of choice. Prior to offering an applicant a house they are Garda vetted and the Council is the only landlord who does this. He confirmed that the Council does not pay rent or utility bills for refugees. The Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2014 sets out an extended process to be undertaken prior to taking a tenant to Court but this adds an element of certainty to the process. Mr. Breen undertook to meet with the members for the Listowel MD to discuss the site layout etc for the houses to be constructed in Listowel. The Inter Agency Group are considering locations for the next group of refugees and the location will be dependant on the services available.

Cllr. D. Grady stated it is a waste to build 1B houses as single people may need a family member to stay with them.

Mr. Breen undertook to consider this suggestion. He thanked the Housing staff for their work over the past year and for presenting detailed report.

The meeting concluded at 4.45pm.

**Gerard O'Brien**  
**Meetings Administrator**

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**Cathaoirleach of Kerry County Council**