

MIONTUAIRISÍ AR CHRUINNIÚ SPEISIALTA DE CHUID
CHOMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL CHAINNIGH TIONÓLTA AR AN
AOINE, 29 MEÁN FÓMHAIR 2023 AG 4.00 I.N. I SEOMRA NA
COMHAIRLE, HALLA AN CHONTAE & VIA FOIRNE MS



MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL
HELD ON FRIDAY, 29TH SEPTEMBER, 2023 AT 4.00 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL & VIA MS TEAMS

Chair: Cllr. Michael Doyle.

Elected Members: *Council Chamber*

Cllrs. John Brennan, Martin Brett, Tomás Breathnach, Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Peter Cleere, Deirdre Cullen, John Coonan, Maria Dollard, Matt Doran, Michael Delaney, Pat Dunphy, Pat Fitzpatrick, Denis Hynes, Michael McCarthy, Joe Malone, Andrew McGuinness & Eugene McGuinness.

MS Teams

Cllrs. Fidelis Doherty, Ger Frisby, Joe Lyons, & Patrick O'Neill.

Officials: Lar Power, Sean McKeown, Fiona ~Deegan, Martin Prendiville, Mary Mulholland, Tim Butler & Anne Maria Walsh.

Cathaoirleach Cllr. Michael Doyle thanked the Members for their attendance at this Special Meeting. He stated that this is a major decision for the Members in securing a significant site on the outskirts of the City. It will be used over the next five years to accommodate Ukrainians and International Protection Applicants. The Council will plan for the long term use of this site.

Mr. Sean McKeown advised that the Special Meeting was convened to approve a loan of up to €3.5m to acquire the St. Patrick's Complex. It is a Reserved Function of the Elected Members to approve borrowings. The Council has been working with the various Government Departments in relation to the refurbishment of the residential units on the Complex and use of these for temporary accommodation to accommodate Ukrainians and International Protection Applicants.

Ms. Fiona Deegan gave a PowerPoint Presentation to the meeting. In her Presentation she gave an overview on the following:

Background Humanitarian Response, availability of accommodation, numbers residing in Kilkenny Community Forum.

St. Patrick's Complex 17 acres, 8 residential properties, Sports Hall, Swimming Pool, Training Centre etc.

- Proposal*
- (i) Council to purchase Complex, Borrowing requirement up to €3.5m.
 - (ii) Department of Housing to provide approximately €9.3m to refurbish 8 units and relocate utilities within the site. Phased refurbishment over a 12 month period.
 - (iii) Department of Children will use the temporary accommodation for five years managed by Kilkenny County Council.
 - (iv) Kilkenny County Council to prepare Masterplan for this site.

Transport Use Local Link, Community Car, Bus Eireann for school transport. Council will seek Active Travel funds for the Ring Road.

<i>Challenges</i>	Ukrainians living in properties with no cooking facilities, use of tourism accommodation not long term sustainable, value for money for Exchequer funds.
<i>Vision</i>	Council to prepare proposals for the long-term future use of site – Masterplan to be progressed over the five years.
<i>Request</i>	Members approval to borrow up to €3.5m to be repaid over 5 years. Council will have ownership of a significant strategic site. Kilkenny’s contribution to the humanitarian crisis.

Cllr. Michael Doyle thanked Ms. Fiona Deegan for the detailed presentation to the Members. He referred to the Workshops given to the Members prior to the meeting to provide all information on this important decision. He thanked all the Executive for the work put into the acquisition of the site and for the immediate use of the site.

Contributions were received from Cllrs. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Peter Cleere, Andrew McGuinness, Joe Malone, Martin Brett, Denis Hynes, Eugene McGuinness, Deirdre Cullen, Tomás Breathnach, Patrick O’Neill, Maria Dollard, John Coonan, John Brennan, Fidelis Doherty, Pat Fitzpatrick and Pat Dunphy. Number of Members spoke in favour of the proposal and a number expressed concerns on the proposal.

The main issues raised by Members are as follows:

- Obligation to house Ukrainians and International Protection Applicants. Moral Responsibility to help.
- Proposed site will accommodate 257 Ukrainians.
- Financial structure will ensure full ownership of site after five years.
- Masterplan for site to be in place at the end of five years, why not Masterplan first?
- Future uses of site.
- Kilkenny has responded to the crisis – how many more refugees do we have to take?
- No guarantees for temporary use after 5 years, will the accommodation be still required by the Department of Children after five years.
- No consultation with the immediate community.
- Traffic and safety concerns, crossing the Ring Road.
- Bus service needs to be expanded within the City urgently.
- Lack of information to Elected Members on accommodation for International Protection Applicants.
- Department of Children not engaging with local representatives.
- Details of accommodation leased from commercial entities.
- Rumours circulating that other properties are being considered by the Department of Children.
- Use of this complex by Homeless Service Providers.
- Current emergency accommodation providers moving onto this site.
- Use of this complex for additional emergency accommodation by Kilkenny County Council.
- Not providing enough accommodation for approved Social Housing applicants.
- Perceived affect on the adjoining area/properties and people.
- Why not consider a lease only of the site for 5 years by the Department.
- Is there commercial interest in this site?
- All funding is being fast tracked. Why not fast track funding for our own Housing Programme.
- Funding being directed to Humanitarian crisis not enough funding for Housing for All.
- County not stress tested to establish how many refugees we can accommodate.
- Favour proper integration into Kilkenny.
- Planning requirements for temporary accommodation.
- Reduce pressure on seeking temporary accommodation.
- Opportunity for Council to acquire a major strategic site for many uses – amenity, sports, etc. – substantial land bank in the City environs.

- Need to provide accommodation to facilitate basic needs of family units such as cooking.
- Implementing Government Policy.
- Management of accommodation by Council staff is working very well in existing accommodation.
- Private Providers accommodation may not have all facilities for families.
- Loss of accommodation in St. John of God Convent.

Members thanked all the Management for all the information provided over the last few weeks, for their availability to answer any questions and for the Workshops to facilitate discussion on the acquisition of the Complex.

Sean McKeown, Tim Butler, Mary Mulholland and Fiona Deegan responded to the queries and concerns raised by the Members. It was re-iterated that the country is responding to a humanitarian crisis but this is a significant opportunity for the Council to acquire a strategic site for future use in Kilkenny City.

Mr. Sean McKeown stated that the Executive have brought forward a proposal to enable the provision of suitable accommodation for Ukrainians and International Protection Applicants on a temporary basis which is 100% funded by the Government. The Council at the end of 5 years will have a significant asset which will be fully paid from the terms of the agreement with the Department of Children. There is a commitment to prepare a Masterplan for this site and wider area to incorporate all types of uses and this process will facilitate public consultation. The availability of St. John of God facility will cease in June 2024.

Ms. Fiona Deegan advised that initial consultation has taken place already with St. Patrick's and SOS who will remain in their buildings adjacent to the site being purchased, and the proposed use of the Complex will not impact on their operations. She committed to making herself available to provide information and answer queries that the local community might have, if the purchase of the complex proceeds. She advised that the agreement with the Department is only for 5 years.

Mr. Tim Butler updated the meeting on the safety concerns raised by the Members on the Ring Road. Meeting will be held shortly with TII to consider improvements to the Ring Road and Active Travel measures. Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning is also underway and this will have proposals on Active Travel measures and expansion of the City Bus Service.

Ms. Mary Mulholland outlined all the Housing Delivery Plans for the current approved housing applicants. She refuted any allegations that the Council are not delivering on the housing delivery targets. Securing a land bank in Kilkenny City and Environs is critical. Emergency accommodation for families is also urgently required. There is a chronic shortage of accommodation for this acute service.

Planning of this site for the future for housing is critical. Housing does have many challenges and the staff are dealing on a daily basis with these challenges. The demand for social housing has decreased and Housing are meeting the needs which is evident from the reduced housing list. In the long term it would be hoped that emergency accommodation can be provided on this site.

Mr. Sean McKeown reiterated that the Council is committed to the long term planning for this strategic site. The Council will engage with the local community if the site is purchased.

Mr. Sean McKeown advised that the Executive are recommending to the Elected Members the purchase of St. Patrick's Complex and approval for borrowing of up to €3.5m is required.

Cllr. Michael Doyle stated that the Members have had the opportunity to air their views and concerns. The Executive have facilitated a number of Workshops with the Elected Members and have been available to answer all queries by the Members.

It was proposed by Cllr. Peter Cleere, seconded by Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh that:

"That subject to the sanction of the Minister for Housing, Planning & Local Government, Kilkenny County Council hereby approves the raising of a term loan of up to €3,500,000 to purchase St. Patrick's Centre, Kells Road, Kilkenny."

Cathaoirleach advised that in accordance with Standing Orders a roll call will be taken on the proposed resolution as Members were present in the Council Chamber and on MS Teams.

Votes For: [16] Cllrs. John Brennan, Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Pat Fitzpatrick, Denis Hynes, Michael McCarthy, Peter Cleere, Deirdre Cullen, Michael Doyle, Joe Lyons, Patrick O'Neill, John Coonan, Maria Dollard, Tomás Breathnach, Fidelis Doherty, Pat Dunphy and Ger Frisby.

Votes Against: [6] Cllrs. Michael Delaney, Matt Doran, Martin Brett, Joe Malone, Andrew McGuinness & Eugene McGuinness

The proposal to borrow up to €3.5m was carried by 16 votes to 6 votes.

Cllr Michael Doyle thanked all for their active engagement and all views are respected. He thanked the Executive for their engagement with Members.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

CATHAOIRLEACH

DATE