

LIMAVADY BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE BHUIRG LÉIM AN MHADAIDH

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

20 JUNE 2005

Minutes of special meeting held in the Council Offices, 7 Connell Street, Limavady at 7.30 pm on the above date.

PRESENT:

Alderman G Mullan (in the chair), J Rankin and G Robinson. Councillors A Brolly, P Butcher, B Chivers, L Cubitt, B Douglas, C Ó hOisín, J McElhinney and A Robinson.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Personal Assistant and the Town Clerk. Mr S Mackie, Mr B Adams and Mrs H Faithful, Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

APOLOGIES:

Councillors M Carten, M Coyle, M Donaghy, E Stevenson and the Committee Clerk.

DISTRICT HOUSING PLAN 2005-2006

The Chair welcomed representatives from the Northern Ireland Housing executive to the meeting. Mr Mackie, the Housing Executive's Area Manager highlighted the main aspects of the 2005 District Housing plan and welcomed members' comments thereon.

He highlighted that the private sector housing market was continuing to grow in Limavady Borough Council area, with a further 315 new build starts in 2004, an increase of 35 on the 2003 figure. Members noted that the average house price in the Borough was £93,426, an increase of 42.1% since 2001 compared to the Northern Ireland average price of £113,235. Mr Mackie added that the Housing Executive's House Sales Policy had enabled 56 tenants to purchase their homes at an average discounted sale price of £22,470 compared with the average market value of £44,919.

Members noted that the private rented sector played a significant role in the housing market, representing a 5.5% of the total housing stock within the Borough in 2001. It was also noted that there had been an upward trend in the number claiming Private Sector Housing Benefit, which now represented 32.7% of all housing benefit cases.

With regard to public sector activity, Mr Mackie stated that as at March 2005 the Housing Executive had 1569 homes and Housing Associations had 321 units in the Borough. Mr Mackie advised that as at December 2004 there were 132 relets and that, given that allocations were equal to the number of housing stress applicants (114 as at December 2004 (39% of the total waiting list of 370), housing need was being met by the number of dwellings available for allocation. In addition, as at 31 March 2005, two schemes were on site which included 21 units of supported accommodation at Ballyclose Street and 1 unit of general needs in Ballykelly, with a further four schemes providing an additional 28 units programmed to start over the next five years.

Mr Mackie spoke about the Housing Executive's extensive work with the voluntary and community sectors and other agencies in the Borough on initiatives to promote community safety, community relations, neighbourhood renewal and Housing and Health agendas for the benefit of local communities. He also emphasised the Housing Executive's commitment to tackling homelessness and confirmed that there had been an increase in the number of households presenting as homeless in the Borough, as well as the number of households awarded Full Duty Status, which had increased from 92 as at March 2004 to 122 as at March 2005.

As regards rural issues Mr Mackie explained that the Housing Executive was actively involved in a number of areas such as its partnership with the Rural Estates Programme and other partnerships such as the Limavady Area Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership.

Mr Mackie reported that the Housing Executive's commitment to improving housing conditions for the people of Limavady was demonstrated by the fact that 120 Housing Executive homes had oil heating installed and external cyclical maintenance started in 198 homes in Roemill Gardens, Drumachose Park, installation of oil heating started in 66 homes in Cooleesan Walk and multi element improvements started in 63 homes in Glengiven Avenue. In addition, a total of 203 adaptations for persons with disabilities were carried out at a cost of £551,600 and it was also hoped that kitchen replacement to 102 homes in Woodland Walk/Cooleesan Walk; oil heating installation in 66 homes Caman, Bonnanboigh and Rannyglas would commence in 2005.

Members noted that the Grant aid scheme continued to be a key tool in tackling unfitness in the private sector and also an important strand in the Housing Executive's rural policy, with grants to the value of £637,437 being approved in the Borough for extensive works such as renovations, replacement, disabled facilities and minor works.

In conclusion, Sean Mackie paid tribute to the work of the District's elected representatives on housing issues and thanked members for their continued support and interest. He also thanked Councillor Michael Carten, who represented Council on the Northern Ireland Housing Council.

Alderman Robinson referred to negotiations between the Housing Executive and Roads Service regarding the provision of street lighting in the vicinity of Drumachose Park/Anderson Park which had come to a standstill at the end of phase 1 and requested that the Town Clerk write to representatives in both the Housing Executive and Roads Service in an attempt restart these discussions for the benefit of the residents of the area.

Mr Mackie a number of other questions put to him by members after which the Chair thanked the representatives of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for meeting with Council and for addressing members' queries.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS

(The meeting ended at 8.30 pm)