

McSWEENEY HOUSE, BERKELEY STREET – OCCUPATION BY REFUGEES AND ASYLUM APPLICANTS. (Update 27th May 2023)

McSweeney House on Berkeley Street, Phibsborough, was broken into on Friday the 12th May, and is currently being occupied by persons unknown, believed to be refugees and asylum seekers.

Planning permission had been granted in July 2019 for the demolition of the existing premises and the construction of a new 35-Unit complex. The original Tenants were re-housed in other Cabhrú properties over a number of years, in preparation for the redevelopment of the site, and the premises has been completely vacant since April 2021.

When all the apartments had been vacated the property was made secure: the water and gas supply was disconnected; the electricity was also disconnected with power only connected to the alarm system; an intruder alarm was fitted; the ground floor windows were boarded-up; and a security company was engaged to call to the premises three times each week.

It is recognised that there is a critical need at this time for suitable accommodation to be provided for refugees and asylum seekers. However, there is concern for the safety, health and welfare of these individuals currently in the premises because all services to the building had been disconnected and there is concern that unauthorised interference with the utility supplies may cause a safety risk.

A High Court Order, with a 7-day stay of execution, was granted on Thursday 18th May, requiring that all persons vacate the property, and the matter was adjourned pending a further hearing on the 25th May. On the 25th May the Judge ruled that the stay on the Order would end and the Order would become operative on Friday 26th May.

Cabhrú is liaising with the Jesuit Refugee Services and with Streetlink Homeless Services to find a solution whereby all migrants in the premises since the 18th May are relocated into alternative accommodation being provided by the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS). The court was advised on the 25th May that, at the height of the occupation, there were 50 migrants in the premises, of whom 40 had engaged with IPAS and 26 offers of accommodation had been made. Cabhrú is given to understand that significant progress is being made in reducing the number of homeless migrants and is optimistic that a resolution to the problem is in sight, provided all offers of accommodation by IPAS are taken-up.

In recognition of the wider housing crisis, in particular the need for accommodation for older people, Cabhrú is keen to ensure that the planned development works and the provision of 35 new apartments is not delayed or hindered in any way. It had been intended to issue a tender for the demolition of the building on the 24th May. Given the circumstances, the tender was not issued and the matter is being kept under review.

The High Court went into recess on the 25th May and will resume again on the 7th June. Cabhrú does not have authority to enforce the Order at this time however, if the premises has not been vacated by the 7th June, Cabhrú will have no option but to return to court and seek an Attachment and Committal Order, to enforce the original Order.

Cabhrú is the business name of Cabhrú Housing Association, a Charitable company limited by guarantee and exempt from displaying the word "limited" or "CLG" in its name. Registered in Dublin Ireland.

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