

Minutes of the Housing & Social Inclusion Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) Meeting 27th November 2020 (via Zoom)

In Attendance:	Cllr. D. Lyons, Chairperson, Galway City Council Cllr. D. McDonnell, Galway City Council Cllr. T. O'Flaherty, Galway City Council Cllr. M. O' Connor, Galway City Council Cllr. F. Fahy, Galway City Council Cllr A. Cheevers, Galway City Council Cllr. M. Cubbard, Galway City Council Cllr. I. Byrne, Galway City Council Ms. K. Golden, GCCN Representative Mr. M. Lohan, Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Officials:	Ms. H. Martyn, A/Senior Executive Officer, Housing Department Mr. T. Prendergast, A/Senior Engineer, Housing Department Ms. A. Brett, Administrative Officer, Housing Department Ms. S. Carroll, Administrative Officer, Housing Department Ms. A. Lyons, Administrative Officer, Housing Department Ms. L. Sharkey, A/Administrative Officer, Housing Department Ms. S. Donoghue, Senior Social Worker, Housing Department
Present	Ms. M. Kilgariff, A/Assistant Staff Officer, Housing Department
Apologies:	Mr. W. King, Construction Sector Ms. B. Kelly, GCCN Representative Mr. D. Mahon, A/Director of Services, Housing Department

Cllr. D. Lyons welcomed all present and thanked them for attending. Apologies were recorded for Ms. B. Kelly and Mr. D. Mahon.

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 25th September 2020

The Minutes of the Meeting of 25th September 2020 were proposed by Cllr. T. O' Flaherty and seconded by Cllr. M. Cubbard. Cllr. I. Byrne asked that the Minutes be updated to reflect her attendance at the meeting.

2. Matters Arising

Ms. H. Martyn advised that Choice Based Letting (CBL) is projected to be introduced in Q1 2021. An introductory letter will issue to applicants in December 2020 with a follow up letter issuing in January outlining passwords and login details. An information session will be arranged with the full Council.

The Housing Needs Assessment is progressing with the deadline of 7th December. 1,262 letters were issued with 329 not yet responded and these applications will be closed. If applicants make contact with the Housing Department after the deadline, consideration will be given to re-opening their applications.

Ms. Martyn advised that any representations made to the Housing Department by Elected Members will be responded to. Ms. Martyn confirmed that the cost of the Glen Oaks for homeless accommodation is €35 per night, €375,000 in total, with additional operational costs.

Mr. T. Prendergast advised that a contractor has been appointed for the upgrading of windows and doors and details of the exact locations where the scheme will be rolled out can be provided.

The investigation into the fire at the property in Carnmore is ongoing. Engagement with residents in Sliabh Bán has taken place and will continue. Contractor to be appointed early 2021 with first moves taking place in May/June. Handbook for residents has been drafted and is to be issued in early 2021.

Plans are in place to look for expressions of interest in the Affordable Housing Scheme to establish if there is interest in the type and location of the properties with a view to a contractor commencing end 2021/early 2022 and the projected delivery of the units in 2023. No further clarity in relation to the scheme has been received from the Department.

3. Homeless Report and Update/Housing First

Ms. H. Martyn referred to the report issued and noted that Housing First is on target to achieve 30 allocations by year end 2021 and may be in the position to do more, if suitable units can be identified. Housing First is not funded by the Department. Ms. S. Donoghue advised that another tenancy has been added since the update issued, bringing the total to 12 with a further 4 awaiting properties. It is hoped that 3 more may be allocated before Christmas and another 2 in January 2021.

Ms. H. Martyn advised that a small number of units have proven challenging to let. She emphasised that this is not a huge issue at the moment but there is pressure to let these units as quickly as possible and it is hoped that Choice Based Letting may assist. Mr. T. Prendergast stated that the void rate is relatively low (between 1-1.5%) with 53 properties currently void. Mr. Prendergast advised that the average length of time occupants spend in the homeless hub is 6 months. The supplier has performed remedial works on the modular units and a small number of works are to be rectified as soon as possible.

There has been no increase in notices to quit with the number remaining at 60. Ms. S. Donoghue confirmed that time on the Housing Waiting List is separate from Homeless Services.

4. Traveller Accommodation Programme Update

Ms. S. Donoghue provided an update on the Traveller Accommodation Programme 1 year progress report which was circulated prior to the meeting. She noted that the reconfiguration of the LTACC with an independent chair had been a success. COVID-19 has presented a challenge. She advised that the LTACC has formed an Operational sub-committee and an Estate Management sub-committee. 14 of the 20 targeted HAP allocations have taken place. No new delivery of Culturally Specific Accommodation has taken place in 2020.

Ms. Donoghue advised that Galway City Council plan on adding an ethnic identifier to the homeless assessment form. It is hoped that a review of the national housing application form will take place in 2021. The annual count of Traveller families will take place on December 4th. Ms. Donoghue voiced concern over the large number of young Traveller families entering homeless services.

Mr. T. Prendergast provided an update on capital projects as outlined in the report. He advised that he expected the Keeraun development to be ready for part 8 publication in Q1 2021 rather than Q2 as was detailed in the report. Mr. Prendergast confirmed that a new design will be considered for Fana Glas. There will be an element of Traveller Specific Accommodation but a change of zoning will be required.

5. Draft Control of Horses Bye Laws 2021

Ms. S. Carroll referred to the Draft Control of Horses Bye Laws circulated for information. The Bye Laws are based on the Control of Horses Act, 1996 and the aim is to strengthen and clarify Galway City Council's powers in relation to control of horses in the city. A copy of the Bye Laws is with solicitors for legal proofing and the Housing Department will be working with the Department of Agriculture, Galway County Council, Galway Traveller Movement and the Gardaí. It is proposed that Galway City and Galway County Councils develop joint Bye-Laws. Ms. Carroll responded to queries in detail and advised that she could meet members separately to discuss. She advised that a Memorandum of Understanding with the Gardaí will be proposed in relation to

horse complaints outside of business hours. 19 horses have been seized by the Local Authority in 2020 and none have been returned so far. 2 horses are currently in the pound. A portion of the cost of seizure and impounding is recouped from the Department of Agriculture. Ms Carroll agreed that an education programme would be helpful and that this could potentially be developed through the LTACC.

6. Housing Loans/Tenant Purchase Scheme Update

An update on the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan and the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme 2016 was circulated. The Incremental charge on properties sold through Tenant Purchase ranks second to any charge from a bank.

7. Update on House Building Programme

Mr. T. Prendergast provided an overview of the Rebuilding Ireland house building programme. The target build from 2018-2021 was 730. 200 new builds were brought on stream in 2020 with a target of 320 in 2021. It is projected that Galway City Council will come in just below target overall.

8. SPC Work Programme 2021

Traveller Accommodation is to be added as a standing item on the 2021 work programme. It was agreed to add the City Development Plan and a review of the Rebuilding Ireland programme to the agenda also.

Cllr. D. Lyons advised that any other suggestions should be brought directly to Ms. H. Martyn.

The next meeting of the Housing SPC is due to take place on Friday, 26th February 2021 at 9.30am.

9. AOB

Cllr. Lyons thanked all members and officials for their attendance and contributions throughout the year.

The meeting then concluded.