

# Minutes of the Housing Strategic Policy Committee Meeting

## Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2022

**In Attendance:** Cllr. D. Lyons, Galway City Council (Chair)  
Cllr. M. O'Connor, Galway City Council  
Cllr. D. McDonnell, Galway City Council  
Cllr. E. Hoare, Galway City Council  
Cllr. A. Cheevers, Galway City Council  
Cllr I. Byrne, Galway City Council  
Mr. M. Lohan, ICTU Representative  
Ms. K. Golden, GCCN Representative  
Ms. A. McGee, GCCN Representative

**Officials:** Ms P. Philbin, Director of Services, Housing Department  
Mr Brian Barrett, A/Director of Services, Housing Department  
Mr. D. Mahon, Senior Executive Officer, Housing Department  
Ms. H. Martyn, Administrative Officer, Housing Department  
Ms. M. Fallon Ward, Administrative Officer, Housing Department  
Ms Martha Gibsey, Administrative Officer, Housing Department  
Ms Anne Brett, Administrative Officer, Housing Department  
Ms Elizabeth Fanning, Senior Engineer, Housing Department  
Ms Catherine Fahy, A/Senior Social Worker, Housing Department

**Apologies:** Cllr. T. O'Flaherty, Galway City Council  
Cllr. M. Cubbard, Galway City Council

**Present** Ms. S. Bowman, Assistant Staff Officer, Housing Department

### 1. Minutes of Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2022

The Minutes of the Meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> May 2022 were proposed by Cllr. D. McDonnell and seconded by Cllr. I. Byrne and agreed by all.

### 2. Matters Arising

Matters arising raised by members and addressed by Mr B. Barrett & Mr D. Mahon included:

- Update requested on the current status of Ukrainian refugees in Galway – approx. 1,000 refugees in the city in emergency accommodation in state provided accommodation (numbers were higher during summer in student accommodation, when available) and over 1,200 in the county. National benchmark is 75% of refugees coming to Ireland need accommodation and 25% have secured own accommodation when arriving in Ireland.
- Update on Kiltullagh property – still with An Bord Pleanala following 3<sup>rd</sup> party appeal, no notice of decision received to date.
- Amendment requested from previous minutes in regard to reference to 'short term lets and low availability in city' – there is low availability of rental properties rather than short term lets
- Enforcement and Staffing - not a Housing Department issue, more for the Planning Department but we will get an update, Housing Department not involved in enforcement of this area
- Cllr. E Hoare – counted twice in error on Minutes of previous meeting, to be corrected.

### 3. Homeless Report & Update / Housing First / Regional Homeless Action Plan 2019-2022-update

Acknowledgements offered to Housing Department and the Homeless team on all the hard work being done and the comprehensive report received. Ms. H. Martyn provided an update on the Homeless report issued, including the updated August homeless numbers, and responded to queries raised by members as follows:

- Are there any families in homeless services with no accommodation being made available to them? – no availability currently in the city and GCC currently have a waiting list for families who are waiting to access homeless accommodation. Trying to use prevention where possible and promote mediation if coming from family home. Currently no private emergency accommodation available for either homeless or Ukrainian refugees.
- HAP tenant where Landlords are ceasing tenancies. Can we keep family in the property, does GCC have any influence to help keep family in the property? - Homeless HAP Place-finder and Tenancy Sustainment Officer both work intensively with Landlords to try and avoid families coming into services. Landlords are selling properties as they are trying to get out of the market. RAS tenants are automatic transfer applicants and we are obligated to help house these tenants. New Vacant Homes Officer in place to help acquire more homes.
- HAP discretion levels update? – Ms. A. Brett advised that applied to approx. 150 tenants to date. Each case is being looked at individually using up to date information, approx. 80 other applications received. GCC are targeting couples and singles first, as singles can now qualify for the couple rate and get a 35% uplift. It will take time to process all, as it has to be done on an individual case by case basis.
- Housing First, how many people are being left behind or how many can be helped if funding or 1-beds available to them? –GCC are depending on own build schemes presently with very few coming on the market. Council can only house c.20% of Housing first in any scheme. CBL was changed to include 1 or 2 beds and encourage applicants to bid on CBL. AHB schemes are also helping to provide additional 1-beds.
- Is there an age cut off for services? – No cut off point, age is 18 years, and all have to be assessed.
- Tenancy sustainment service it commendable but are those on HWL for years getting over-looked due to others getting housed as a result of NTQ's? – Families are not getting prioritised, medical needs have to be considered also. Not just time based, it is also needs based and people on NTQ's often have nowhere to go.
- Ms. K. Golden advised of the deep concern expressed by GCCN Linkage Group about the increase in homeless going into the winter months in regard to number of NTQ's which is up considerably, increase in number of Landlords leaving the market. It is becoming more difficult for anyone linking in with homeless services to find accommodation. Convey the fear among the GCCN members of what we are facing into this winter. Recruitment and retention crisis in homeless services and they are losing expertise, experience, commitment and compassion in staffing of local service providers. Increase in level of demand for services. Fundraising is under pressure due to other ongoing issues around the world. Homeless Services review in Dublin should include homeless services outside of Dublin also – Ms Martyn acknowledged the concerns raised and noted that GCC are working with the Department in the background and confirmed that they are working with Department in regard to Section 39 & Section 10 currently. If supplementary expenditure required GCC can put a case to the Department.
- Is there a Government policy that we have to give 30% of local authority houses to homeless etc. and what effect that has on our housing waiting list? – not in the legislation and not aware of a Directive in regard to 30%
- What control has GCC over the houses we have given to COPE/SIMON if any tenancy breaches etc? – GCC work intensively with COPE & Simon and it will be brought to attention of Estate Management Team if GCC intervention is required. GCC have had very few issues to date and are not currently dealing with any cases.

- What is biggest constraint to getting homeless accommodation and can the budget be increased if it's a price issue? – We can claim back 90% of cost, but main issue is availability and if hotel owners want to accept clients which can be a challenge. Availability has been the main issue due to city being so busy with tourists. (Hotels have said it's the busiest year since pre-covid and they expect it to continue until end of year, so availability may be limited for remainder of year – as per feedback received from Hotels note by Mr B Barrett)

#### **4. Traveller Accommodation Programme Mid-Term Review**

Mr. D. Mahon provided an update on the Traveller Accommodation Programme Mid-Term Review 2019-2024, and responded to queries raised by members as follows:

- Has purchasing of properties resumed – Staffing issues earlier in the year, but now resolved.
- Drop in RAS properties, currently none available in city.
- Culturally Specific Traveller Accommodation confirmation that the 25 will be delivered as per the table – none completed to date, 4 at planning stage at present.
- What percentage of Traveller Accommodation allocations are in each area of the city E/W/C? – Once Garda check completed as done on all allocations and any Estate Management issues are considered. There are more allocations on East of city as this is their area of preference as per their application.
- Cllr A. Cheevers would like noted his concerns over what happened over last few months with house fires and that it may escalate further and result in a fatality.
- What costs are involved in the refurbishments works as a result of the arson attacks and are they insured (request up to date costings) – Number of properties are being refurbished and all are insured. The costs involved are approx. €300,000, which is recoupable against insurance.
- Are there any measures in place to secure the properties to ensure this doesn't happen again? – Properties are normally boarded up to protect the property, and occasionally CCTV is installed in the property, which can be considered for future.
- Keeraun/Circular Road areas can we try to enhance the area and improve the safety of the roads when completing these projects - Keeraun to Maolchnoic currently have no footpaths or bus services in the area and there is a need for both on this road – we will speak to Roads Department in regard to these issues

Following discussion on the issued raise it was agreed on the proposal of Cllr. D. Lyons and seconded by Cllr. M. O'Connor to note the Mid-Term Review and it was also noted that the LTACC would consider the Review in full at their meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

#### **5. Capital Programme Update**

Ms E. Fanning provided an update to the Capital Programme and responded to queries raised by members as follows:

- Approx. 5 years ago GCC were given an investment of €5m for developing Ballybane site for Affordable Housing and no works done to date, why – GCC are working with Department on progressing project.
- Bothar na Choiste, are they on our lands or private lands - CPO how long will it take and how long until work commences – They are our own lands, working on infrastructure to open lands
- Are we still waiting on suitable model to deliver Affordable Housing from Department? – It is agreed on how to deliver affordable housing. Allocation unsure to date.
- Eligibility of families that have moved out of city, will they be able to bid on Affordable Housing
- Ms K Golden wished to re-iterate that the Day Centre at SQR does not return to dormitory style accommodation (prevent infection prevention control, dignity etc.)
- CWR is for temporary accommodation to keep people out of elements not a route out of homeless services – GCC acknowledge it is only a stepping stone out of homeless.
- How many units do we expect to be delivered by end of year – 174 units

- Going to take 4 years for 58 houses to be delivered in Ballybane - What are the costings of overall project and security costs – GCC unable to comment on costs to date.
- Merlin lands, we will need access to site with new houses being built and co-ordination with transport department is needed – We are working with architects & engineers in both Housing & Transport on the plans to ensure connectivity & permeability
- Number of applications received for Architect position – 3 or 4 applications received, it is a new position to GCC, still working on filling position.
- Clybaun Rd / Oldfield site, has number of affordable houses changed and is there any plans of site – 28 social & 37 affordable houses planned
- Keeraun site with 71 units need to look at road widening and by-pass – GCC will work with Roads Department on these issues
- 101 units at Ballybane More – 50 due for delivery early next year & remainder later in year

## **6. Housing Needs Assessment 2022 - update**

Ms H. Martyn provided an update on the ongoing Housing Needs Assessment and noted that those on HAP, LTL, RAS & Transfer applicants were excluded from HNA. Members were advised that 933 HNA forms were issued and at 28/09/2022, 677 has been returned. C.300 reminder phone-calls are to be made to applicants with a staff member assigned for same over the coming weeks. It was noted that if completed forms are not returned applicants will be removed from the HWL.

## **7. Any Other Business**

The following issues were raised under AOB:

Ms K. Golden requested an update at the next meeting on the Cold Weather Response.

Mr D. Mahon advised that Affordable Housing eligibility, income means test and allocations can be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

**Next Meeting scheduled for Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at 9.30 am.**