

Minutes of the Housing Strategic Policy Committee Meeting

Friday 25th November, 2022

In Attendance: Cllr. D. Lyons, Galway City Council (Chair)
Cllr. T. O' Flaherty, Galway City Council
Cllr. D. McDonnell, Galway City Council
Cllr. E. Hoare, Galway City Council
Cllr. A. Cheevers, Galway City Council
Cllr. M. Cubbard, Galway City Council
Mr. M. Lohan, ICTU Representative
Ms. M. O'Connor, GCCN Representative (substitute for K. Golden for Item 3 only)
Ms. A. McGee, GCCN Representative

Officials: 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. Gibsey, Administrative Officer, Housing Department
Ms. E. Fanning, Senior Engineer, Housing Department
Ms. C. Fahy, A/Senior Social Worker, Housing Department
Mr. E. Humphreys, Senior Executive Architect, Housing Department
Ms. C. Ni Fhlaithearta, Senior Staff Officer, Housing Department

Apologies: Ms. K. Golden, GCCN Representative
Cllr. I Byrne, Galway City Council

Present Ms. B O'Connor, Staff Officer, Housing Department

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 30h September 2022

The Minutes of the Meeting of 30th September, 2022 were proposed by Cllr. E. Hoare and seconded by Cllr. D. Lyons and agreed by all.

2. Matters Arising

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

- Update on Affordable Housing Scheme – deferred until the next meeting in February to allow for a more indebt presentation.
- An overview of all Affordable Housing schemes proposed across the City to be formalised for February meeting.
- Update on Cold Weather Response – included in Homeless Report.

3. Homeless Report & Update / Housing First / Cold Weather Report

Mr. E Humphreys shared and provided an update on a Report which had been issued to Cllrs in advance of the meeting in relation to the development proposal at Seamus Quirke Road. Mr. M. O Connor provided an update and comment and while it was a massive and very welcome addition there were some reservations in relation to dormitory style accommodation as part of the overall plan. Acknowledgements were offered to Mr. Humphreys on the report and presentation and the idea and concept was well received. Queries were responded to by Members present as follows:

- How will this be financed/staffed? – Funding and strong support from the Department has been received.
- Initial Planning stages have been completed and it is envisaged to lodge the Part 8 before Christmas, once this is completed it is envisaged to take a period 6 months to engage consultants, tender process etc. it is intended to bring before Council in Quarter one with construction in later in the year.
- Waterside House is being examined as an alternative day centre while works at Westside are ongoing.
- There service in SQ Road is at capacity. The intention is to create more space (including accommodation) and maximise the potential for this site. Services will be vastly improved – the 8 units proposed are not meant to be permanent accommodation, they are meant to be a stepping stone to more permanent accommodation solutions.
- Mr. M O'Connor provided clarity on a query of how the centre operates at the moment – Functions as a day centre at the moment which caters for 30-40 per day. The Centre does not provide accommodation at the moment the intention that new building will.

Ms. H. Martyn provided an update on the Homeless report issued and on the Cold Weather Response, including the updated homeless numbers, and responded to queries raised by members as follows:

- Traveller families are becoming homeless in larger numbers due to a number of reasons, family breakdown, larger families receiving NTQ, the reality is the landlords are not there at the moment.
- What system is in place re: inspection of properties – Staffing and resourcing issues at the moment, funding received in the Budget for additional Staff and would hope to rectify those issues as soon as possible.
- In response to a query on how many inspections are taking place and if a breakdown could be presented to Cllrs it was stated that due to the staffing constraints not as many inspections have been possible to meet the needs – hope to rectify once Staffing issue addressed.
- Challenge to meet demands as space is very difficult to find – are there Ukrainian's presenting as homeless also? – Homeless accommodation is not currently been offered to Ukrainians. There are currently 1,300 Ukrainians in the City and they are being centrally managed in Hostels, Hotels etc..
- In relation to the Cold Weather Response, if its gone over capacity are we always able to meet demands? – Demand is unprecedented and there is real concern and recognition of level of need. Galway City Council are working with COPE Galway and other Agencies on how to address and it is kept under review.

Mr. O'Connor departed the meeting at this point.

4. Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant

Mr. D. Mahon provided an update on the Vacant Home Refurbishment Grant outlining the scheme as follows:

- This grant scheme was announced last week, was available in towns and rural areas since July and has now been extended to the City.
- A grant of up to a maximum of €30,000 is available for the refurbishment of vacant properties for occupation as a principal private residence, including the conversion of a property which has not been used as residential heretofore, subject to appropriate planning permission being in place. Where the refurbishment costs are expected to exceed the standard grant of up to €30,000, a maximum top-up grant amount of up to €20,000 is available where the property is confirmed by the applicant to be derelict (i.e. structurally unsound and dangerous) or if the property is on the Derelict Sites Register, bringing the total grant available for a derelict property up to a maximum of €50,000.
- Press Release and Social Media will issue next week. It is based on an approval in principle process in which works are funded on completion. Ms. Claire Ni Fhlaithearta is the Vacant Homes Officer and will be processing applications as they come in.
- In relation to a query on whether a property in the City but in the rural part of the City is included – Ms C. Ni Fhlaithearta responded that once the property is within the City boundary it is eligible,

however the application will be assessed against the criteria and the property would have to be principle residence of the person applying for the Grant.

5. 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, 811 have been assessed. The deadline for return to the Dept is 29th November. 180 applicants have not responded, and every effort has been made to contact these applicants. There is an appeals process available if someone is removed from the list. A further update will be given at the February when the assessment is published in the New Year. Quarter 4 report 2022 will contain further details.

6. SPC Work Programme 2023/Meeting Dates

Mr. D. Mahon referred to the draft Work SPC Work Programme issued in advance of the Meeting and It was agreed that as well as the proposed items listed for 2023 to include a discussion on the Planned Maintenance Programme.

The SPC Work Programme and proposed dates of the Meetings for 2023 was proposed by Cllr. D Lyons and seconded by Cllr. D McDonnell. The dates for the 2023 Meetings are as follows:

- 24th February, 2023
- 26th May, 2023
- 29th September, 2023
- 24th November, 2023

7. Any Other Business

The following issues were raised under AOB:

All members present wished Ms. H Martyn and Mr. D Mahon well in their new roles and thanked them for their support and work to date.

Next Meeting scheduled for Friday 24th February, at 9.30 am.