

# Minutes of the Housing Strategic Policy Committee Meeting Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024 via MS Teams & in the Council Chamber

**In Attendance:** Cllr. D. Lyons, Galway City Council (Chair)  
Cllr. E. Hoare, Galway City Council  
Cllr. T. O' Flaherty, Galway City Council  
Cllr. D. McDonnell, Galway City Council  
Cllr. M. Cubbard, Galway City Council  
Cllr. M. O'Connor, Galway City Council  
Cllr. A. Cheevers, Galway City Council  
Mr. M. Lohan, ICTU Representative  
Ms. K. Golden, GSC Representative

**Officials:** Mr. E. Lynch, A/ Director of Services, Planning Management  
Ms. H. Martyn, A/Senior Executive Officer, Housing Department  
Ms. A. Brett, Administrative Officer, Housing Department  
Ms E. Killarney, Traveller Accommodation Officer, Housing Department  
Mr. D. Healy, A/Administrative Officer, Housing Department  
Mr. M Cormican, Senior Engineer, Infrastructure Development  
Mr. A. Falvey, Senior Executive Engineer, Housing Operations  
Ms. L. Esler, Administrative Officer, Infrastructure Development  
Ms. C. Fahy, Senior Social Worker  
Ms. A. McManus, Tenancy Sustainment Officer

**Apologies:** Ms. M. Conneely, GCCN Representative  
Ms. L. Fanning, A/Director or Servies, Housing & Social Inclusion

**Present** Ms. M. Kilgarrieff, Staff Officer, Housing Department

Cllr. D. Lyons opened the meeting and welcomed all. Apologies from Ms. E. Fanning & Ms. M. Conneely

## **1. Minutes of Meeting 23/02/2024 & Minutes of Reconvened Meeting 11/03/2024**

Minutes were proposed by Cllr. T O' Flaherty, seconded by Ms. K. Golden and agreed by all.

## **2. Matters Arising**

A spelling error was noted on page 2 of the minutes of the meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> March. Should read AHB, not ABH. Ms. Golden referred to her statement at the end of the meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> February where she noted the lack of respect shown for the members of the SPC by the people who left the meeting early. She wished to note also the lack of respect this action showed to service users and clients of homeless services as this action meant the homeless update could not be given.

Cllr. T O'Flaherty requested an update in relation to Walter Macken apartments.

## **3. Housing Capital & Affordable Update**

Mr. M. Cormican advised that an update was circulated and took that the members had read same. The only change to the update is that planning has been received from An Bord Pleanála for the Merchants Road development. The next phase can now be commenced. A decision on Ballyburke is due on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May. The order for Clybaun Road has been signed.

Mr. Cormican advised that the pipeline of 145 is unlikely to be exceeded, however, plans are proposed to try to increase the target including expressions of interest in turkey developments, repair and lease programmes, among others.

Mr. Cormican acknowledged the delay in the Merlin Woods scheme. He stated that planning was sought in December 2021, affordable funding was applied for in April 2023 and an expression of interest for developers to complete the scheme has been completed. Mr. Cormican noted that an Affordable Housing Team has now been brought on board to deal with these projects.

A decision has not yet been made on the infill scheme in Ballinfoile. Contact has been made with residents.

The properties in Coill Tire will be for Social Housing tenants.

Following queries in relation to the Tuam Road site Mr. Cormican advised that no comment can be made on private land sales. He advised that land sales are acquired through the Land Acquisition Fund, a changed funding model and that the process has now been refined.

Mr. E. Lynch confirmed that Galway City Council has contacted the homeowner, and the site is receiving attention.

#### **4. HDSG Progress Report**

Ms. H. Martyn confirmed that the report circulated in advance of the meeting is up to date to Q1 2024. She outlined some of the figures detailed in the report. OVER €1 million spent in 2023. Disabled Persons Grant allocation of €587,000 for 2024. A further report will be brought to the next SPC.

Ms. C. Fahy detailed the various housing disability steering sub-groups and advised that they meet every 4-6 weeks.

Ms. Martyn confirmed that strategic plans have also been updated. She noted the challenge of acquiring larger units for families with children that have sensory development issues. A Disability Technical Advisor has now also been put in place. Galway City Council have committed to meeting with the Housing Agency each quarter.

Mr. A. Falvey advised that the Technician has returned to the Housing Grants section on a temporary basis. The post will be backfilled permanently. 2 full time staff are currently in that area.

Ms. Martyn stated that she would follow up with HR in relation to the interviews and revert with more information.

#### **5. Homeless Update**

An update was circulated prior to the meeting. Ms. H. Martyn acknowledged the challenges in this area. Housing senior management met with Minister O'Brien to discuss homelessness, and they will meet with him again in June. The emphasis has been placed on moving families in long term homelessness to longer term accommodation. Questions were answered by Ms. H. Martyn and Mr. M. Cormican.

The Housing section is looking at void properties and is trying to ringfence funding that could be allocated to homeless families and are awaiting confirmation from the Department regarding that funding. In the interim, the focus is on acquisitions, RAS and HAP.

A pilot with wraparound services for families in homeless services has been secured in collaboration with Tusla and the HSE. Galway County Council are also involved with the pilot. This programme will be progressed at the beginning of June.

Numbers of families in homeless services are down slightly. The Housing First tender is due for review in late May.

10 units on Newcastle Road for elderly homeless clients are due to be ready by year end. The increase in the number of older men coming through homeless services was noted. A project offering more help and support to this group may be considered.

Works on the Homeless Day Centre on the Seamus Quirke Road are going to tender, with those works to be finished by Q4 in time for the winter response. The day centre will be closed while the works are ongoing, and clients will be moved to alternative accommodation.

Concerns were raised that those on the housing waiting list for a number of years may be overlooked as pressure is put on the Housing Section to house those with Notices of Termination. Ms. Martyn advised that every attempt is made to achieve a balance when allocating properties, with time on the list being taken into consideration, homelessness is only prioritised in certain circumstances.

A large number of bids have been received on the Choice Based Letting system for the Cnocán Glas development. The Tenant in Situ (TiS) Scheme is allowing the Council to buy properties for tenants whose landlords have issued Notices of Termination (NoT) with the intention to sell the property. The TiS Scheme cannot be applied where the NoT is given for reasons other than the intention to sell.

There are now 5 staff members working in the Tenant in Situ/NoT area full time, and there is collaboration between social inclusion and allocations. A number of schemes have gone through the planning process, approximately 150 units have planning or are about to be approved. Preparation for an EOI on land for social and affordable housing has begun.

Housing staff have been in contact with Cope with a view to using the vacant property at 7 Dublin Road until it is needed again for the Cold Weather Response in November.

The LDA has completed work on state lands, but no list of vacant state-owned buildings has been compiled. If Councillors are aware of specific buildings they would like to draw attention to, they can contact the Housing Department.

Ms. K. Golden noted the increase in homelessness and increased reliance on HAP. HAP rates have not been increased since the discretionary 35% rate was introduced in July 2022. Ms. Golden advised that international protection applicants are being offered camping accommodation on the Limerick/Clare border which may cause issues in relation to centre of interest for applicants.

International protection applicants should contact IPAS directly with queries and that information can be circulated.

HAP tenants are advised to check Notices of Termination with Threshold before submitting them to the Housing Department. The RTB is responsible for investigating accuracy of notices.

Information sessions will be held in relation to specific affordable housing schemes. 4 potential developers have responded to tender for Merlin Woods development with estimated delivery of first phase of Q1 2026.

No directive has come in to zone more land as residential. Council will be ready should that request come through. Will likely be tied into the National Planning Framework.

## **6. Traveller Accommodation Plan Update**

Ms. E. Killarney gave an update on the Traveller Accommodation Plan. The report will be circulated after the meeting. The Draft Plan is expected to be completed by mid-June and notice of publication will be published.

## **7. A.O.B**

Issues in relation to Gleann Bhan and Sliabh Rua were discussed. Members were advised that operational issues should be reported to the Council through relevant departments. An application was made to turn 32 Sliabh Rua into a Community Facility. Funding was rejected but alternative funding options will be explored.

Estate Management will provide an update in relation to license agreements for Cope to run community centres at Suan and Melody's Court.

Ms. H. Martyn requested that Elected Members be patient with regards to representations on behalf of constituents. Housing are working with OpenSky to add the housing waiting list position to the Choice Based Letting system.

Mr. E. Lynch confirmed that the multi modal corridor is with the Transport Directorate. A timeline is imminent. Mr. Lynch advised he would revert to Mayor Hoare with further details.

Cllr. D. Lyons and other Councillors thanked the staff of the Housing Department for their work. The meeting then concluded.