

**Minutes of the Housing Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) Meeting
on 8th February 2016 in the Council Chamber**

In Attendance: Cllr. Declan McDonnell, Chairperson, Housing SPC,
Cllr. John Walsh, Galway City Council,
Cllr. Niall McNelis, Galway City Council,
Cllr. Michael Crowe, Galway City Council,
Cllr. Mairead Farrell, Galway City Council,
Cllr. Mike Cubbard, Galway City Council,
Mr. Diarmuid O'Sullivan, Threshold,
Mr. Paul Hargaden, Voluntary Sector

Officials: Mr. Thomas Connell, Director of Services, Housing Department,
Ms. Laurena Mitchell, A/Director of Services, Housing Department,
Ms. Anne Ruane, Administrative Officer, Housing Department
Ms Helena Martyn, Administrative Officer, Housing Department
Ms. Sharon Lawless, A/Administrative Officer, Housing Department,
Ms Anne Brett, Administrative Officer, Housing Department
Ms. Aisling Whyte, A/Assistant Staff Officer, Housing Department

Apologies: Cllr. Anna Marley, Galway City Council,
Cllr. Ollie Crowe, Galway City Council,
Ms. Helen Cousins, Irish Congress of Trade Unions,
Mr Paul Carey, Construction Sector
Mr. Colm O'Riordain, A/Senior Executive Engineer, Housing Department,
Mr. Joe Tansey, Senior Engineer, Housing & Environment Department,

(1) Minutes of the previous Meeting 20th July 2015

The minutes were proposed by Cllr. Niall McNelis and seconded by Mr Diarmuid O'Sullivan and agreed.

(2) Matters Arising

No matters arising.

(3) Work Programme 2016

Mr Thomas Connell advised members that the work plan which had been circulated could be amended if any members wanted to make changes.

Cllr Declan McDonnell requested three more objectives to be added:

- Homeless Strategy
- Housing Transfer Policy
- Tenant Purchase Scheme

It was agreed that these three items be added to the Work Plan for 2016. The plan is to be re-circulated with the points additional points.

(4) Schedule of Date 2016

Members agreed that the meetings should be held at 9.30am on the scheduled dates.

In relation to the dates, the meeting of the 28th July was brought forward to the 21st July as it collided with Race Week.

(5) Traveller Accommodation Programme

Mr Thomas Connell went through the report on the Traveller Accommodation Programme which had been circulated to members. Mr Thomas Connell advised that due to the appointment of the Traveller Accommodation Officer, Mr Joseph Nyirenda, a focus has been brought to the objectives outlined in the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

Mr Thomas Connell informed members that there is an overwhelming pressure on the City Council due to housing demands in the City at present. Mr Connell advised that there are serious issues with some of the halting sites in the City at the moment, Cul Trá is currently overcrowded, there is unauthorised occupation of a lands in Doughiska and permission for the extension of use in Carrowbrowne Halting Temporary site has been refused. An interdepartmental committee has been set up due to these issues, this committee made up of Roads, Planning and Housing have examined the lands owned by Galway City Council outlining the pockets of lands suitable for development. These lands are outlined in Appendix I and Appendix II (which also outlines the impact of the Outer City Bypass on these lands).

The proposals include development of 6 / 8 bay halting site at Ballybane, development of a traveller specific group housing scheme in Keeraun and a mixture of social, voluntary and traveller specific accommodation in Doughiska lands. Mr Thomas Connell informed members that a consultation with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government on the proposals has taken place.

Ms Laurena Mitchell advised that 55 houses in addition to the 14 in Ballymoneen Road have recently been approved. Ms Mitchell also stated that families parked at Millers Lane have been assessed for Homeless services and this is the only solution at present as fairness and equality have to be shown for families already on waiting lists.

Cllr Niall McNelis expressed his disappointment with the representatives of the Galway Traveller meeting who did not attend the LTACC meeting scheduled earlier today. Cllr McNelis also advised that the public representatives need to consider the language being used on radio in relation to the traveller community as it has not been great the last few weeks.

Cllr Niall McNelis queried if the Site in Keeraun is the same site which the City Council bought for 11million and is now being hugely impacted by the outer city bypass. Cllr McNelis also advised that the last time planning permission was sought for such developments over 4000 objections were received.

Cllr Declan McDonnell informed members that the information in the report was inaccurate as the hard stand in Coilte Mhuirinne did not feature on the report. Cllr McDonnell also advised that 80% of travellers reside in the east side and all the developments mentioned in the report are also in the East Side, the area representatives should have been consulted prior to this report being drawn up as the families in the east side have to be considered.

Mr Thomas Connell informed members that Coilte Mhuirinne is a group housing scheme, he also advised that the proposals set out in the report are those which were adopted by members for the Traveller Accommodation Programme. Mr Thomas Connell stressed the fact that there is unauthorised encampment at Doughiska, Carrowbrowne and overcrowding in Cúl Tra which is why the Traveller Accommodation Programme needs to be implemented to address these issues. In relation to consulting the area representatives, Mr Thomas Connell agreed to meet with all councillors to inform them of progress and will attend public consultations where possible.

The lands at Keeraun in appendix III (2) will still have a site fronting the road which will be available for development. In relation to the time scale for these developments the Part VIII process will begin in May / June 2016. Mr Niall McNelis queried if there were special exemptions for traveller specific sites under Part VIII. Ms Laurena Mitchell advised that this Part VIII is similar to all other Part VIII process, a public consultation will be part of this and members can decide on the application but this decision can be over ruled by the Chief Executive Officer. Cllr Niall McNelis requested that a brief summary on Part VIII be circulated to members also including the details in relation to the powers of the Chief Executive Officer in relation to this.

Ms Laurena Mitchell to circulate the relevant section of Part VIII from the Local Government Act 2001.

In relation to the site at Coilte Mhuirinne Cllr Declan McDonnell queried when it had been last inspected as there are a large number of caravans on site. Mr Thomas Connell to follow up on this.

Mr Thomas Connell advised that the objective of the City is to provide a good mix of different societies across the city. Ms Laurena Mitchell also advised that the City Council have an allocation scheme which they follow and this doesn't allow for allocation of specific groups. Mr Joseph Nyirenda introduced himself as it was his first SPC meeting. He informed members that traveller accommodation in the city is a big problem, we need to work together in moving forward. The tip of the ice berg is Millers Lane, its our responsibility to provide the necessary needs for these families so we should look favourably at the proposals set out, in relation to the land being in the East side there is no land available for the local authority any where else.

A recommendation for members to meet with the Director of Services in relation to proposals set out is to be brought forward to the Council Meeting and a date and time to be agreed for same.

Ms Laurena Mitchell advised that the application to proceed with phase 2 of Ballymoneen Road had been approved and this is for 55 more units to be built.

In relation to CAS Projects Cope have submitted planning for the Domestic Violence Refuge.

Mr Thomas Connell informed members that the site in Ballyburke will be put forward as a PPP which would provide 166 units.

(6) HAP

Ms Laurena Mitchell informed members that HAP had commenced on 1st February 2016, the rent caps of which are the same as those in the County. Ms Mitchell introduced the newly appointed Administrative Officer Ms Anne Brett and welcomed her to the housing department. Ms Anne Brett advised that staff training in relation to HAP had taken place. The DSW will no longer be paying rent supplement, the people in receipt of rent supplement are now to come to Galway City Council to be assessed for HAP. These applicants need to be approved as having a housing need and if they are illegible they move on to the HAP process. Once on the HAP process the HAP Team have a turn around time of 3 – 5 days, the applicant is advised of their responsibility to seek private accommodation and they then come back to meet with a member of the HAP team. The rent calculation is carried out in Galway City Council but the collection of rent and the paying of rent to the land lord is the responsibility of the hub in Limerick. Mr Diarmuid O'Sullivan recommended that a public awareness campaign be put in place to create awareness to landlords. Ms Laurena Mitchell advised that this plan is already in place and it is going to be in conjunction with RAS and Long Term Leasing.

Mr Niall McNelis requested that a workshop in relation to HAP be given to members. Ms Anne Brett advised that a workshop will be organised post election.

(6) Social Inclusion

The draft social inclusion strategy will be brought before the SPC on Thursday 5th May.

(7) AOB

Information on the Tenant Purchase Scheme was circulated to members which sets out the parameters of the scheme.

This concluded the business of the meeting.