

**Minutes of the Housing Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) Meeting
on 9th February 2017**

In Attendance:

- Cllr. Declan McDonnell, Chairperson, Housing SPC
- Cllr. Niall McNellis, Galway City Council
- Cllr. Mike Cubbard, Galway City Council
- Cllr. Ollie Crowe, Galway City Council
- Cllr. Mark Lohan, Galway City Council
- Mr. Diarmuid O'Sullivan, Threshold
- Mr. Paul Hargaden, Voluntary Sector
- Mr. Paul Carey, Construction Sector
- Mr. Alan Daly, Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Officials:

- Ms. Patricia Philbin, A/Director of Services, Housing Department
- Mr. Dermot Mahon, Senior Executive Officer, Housing Department
- Mr. Joe Tansey, Senior Engineer, Housing & Environment Department
- Ms. Siobhan Donoghue, A/Senior Social Worker, Housing Department
- Ms Anne Brett, Administrative Officer, Housing Department
- Mr. Conor Kelly, Administrative Officer, Housing Department
- Mr. Joseph Nyirenda, A/Traveller Accommodation Programme Manager
- Ms. Sharon Lawless, A/Administrative Officer, Housing Department
- Ms. Ailish Coppinger, A/Assistant Staff Officer, Housing Department

Apologies:

- Cllr. John Walsh, Galway City Council
- Cllr. Michael Crowe, Galway City Council,
- Cllr. Mairead Farrell, Galway City Council

Cllr. D. McDonnell welcomed Cllr. M. Lohan, Mr. A. Daly, Irish Congress of Trade Unions Representative, Ms. P. Philbin, A/Director of Services, Housing Department and Mr. D. Mahon, Senior Executive Officer, Housing Department to the Strategic Policy Committee.

(1) Minutes of the previous Meeting 6th October 2016

The adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting of the 6th October, 2016 were proposed by Mr. D. O'Sullivan and seconded by Cllr. M. Cubbard and agreed.

(2) Matters Arising

Cllr. M. Cubbard requested an update on the 2016 Rent Review and highlighted that some tenants are not receiving notification on their rent increase within an appropriate timeframe. It was agreed to forward an update to the Members and to consider appropriate measures to address the issue raised.

(3) Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 – 2018 Midterm Review

Mr. J. Nyirenda Traveller Accommodation Programme Manager delivered a brief presentation to the Members. Mr. D. Mahon Senior Executive Officer advised that the Midterm Review is a statutory requirement and a report must be forwarded to the Department with any amendments, subject to adoption by Council. A discussion took place on the Review and the following points were raised and noted:

- Members queried the specific timeframe on 'temporary' and the maximum capacity in halting sites.
- Current overcrowding crisis in Cul Tra is extremely alarming and needs to be addressed urgently. There are 12 additional families in Cul Tra.
- There is a need to get a breakdown of the exact number of persons including children residing in Cul Tra along with consideration of appropriate management systems at the halting sites.
- Members queried how extensions are prioritised and whether a preferred site for the CENA project was identified.

It was agreed that consultation and cooperation with the LTACC and the traveller families is key in order to advance the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

The Members were advised that temporary in planning terms may vary from 3 to 5 years. An extension of planning permission was granted for the Carrowbrowne site but currently the site is unauthorised as an additional extension of permission was refused by An Bord Pleanála. The 12 additional families in Cul Tra are new family formations and it is their right to choose halting sites if they so wish. The construction of extensions are based on a number of factors e.g. disability grounds and overcrowding. No specific site has been chosen as of yet for the CENA project. The location will be on the east of the city for the Carrowbrowne families and there is pressure for a suitable site to be identified for the project.

The Mid Term Review was proposed by Cllr. M. Lohan, seconded by Mr. P. Hargaden and agreed by the SPC Members. It was agreed to recommend adoption of the Review to full Council at the Special Meeting scheduled for 20th February 2017.

(4) Tenant Incremental Purchase Scheme 2016

Ms. S Lawless A / Administrative Officer provided an update to the Members on the 2016 Tenant Incremental Purchase Scheme. Ms. Lawless noted that the following types of properties are not included as per legislation:

- apartments, flats, maisonettes and duplexes;
- houses specially designed for older people;
- houses provided for people with disabilities to help them leave institutional care and live in the community;
- houses that are part of a group housing scheme for Travellers;
- caravans, mobile homes or other homes that can be moved;
- houses in a private development transferred to the local authority by the developer;
- houses reserved by the local authority for particular reasons.

It was noted that Galway City Council also initially excluded the following additional properties from the Scheme:

- Claddagh, Shantalla, Clareview Park, Coogan Park, Corrib Park, Coole Park, St. Anthony's Terrace & St. Finbarr's Terrace etc
- Townhouses
- 1,2 & 5 Bed properties
- Specially adapted properties

It was proposed by Cllr. D. McDonnell, seconded by Cllr. M. Cubbard and agreed to extend the Scheme to all properties owned by Galway City Council with the exception of houses specified in the Housing (Sale of Local Authority Houses) Regulations 2015 Section 4 Classes of Houses excluded from sale.

The following queries were raised by the Members on the Scheme;

- What enforcement is in place if the property is vacated and rented in the private market. The funding from the sale of the property – where does this money go.
- The voluntary sector would not agree with this Scheme and there is a need for caution around same.
- Is the Local Authority in a position to offer loans to applicants.

Mr. Mahon Senior Executive Officer stated that any proceeds received will be retained in the housing internal capital reserves fund. A property cannot be sold without consent from the local authority. Galway City Council is not in a position to offer loans.

(5) Draft Strategic Plan for Housing Persons with Disabilities

Mr. M. Kenny Social Inclusion Officer gave an outline to the Members on the draft Strategic Plan. The Members were given the opportunity to submit comments on the document to the Social Inclusion Officer by Thursday 23rd February 2017. The Plan will then go before the Housing & Disability Steering Group for approval.

(6) Draft Anti Social Behaviour Strategy

Mr. D. Mahon Senior Executive Officer informed the Members that the Draft Anti Social Behaviour Strategy document will reissue to them in the coming days. Any comments on the document can be forwarded to the Housing Department and the Strategy will go before full Council for noting.

(7) Galway City Community Network Presentation on Homelessness

A detailed presentation on homelessness was delivered by Mr. D. O'Sullivan, Threshold, Ms. E. Dolan, Galway Simon and Mr. M. O'Connor, Cope Galway. Cllr. D. McDonnell thanked the agencies for the presentation and noted that a copy of same will be forwarded to each SPC Member.

A discussion took place on the information given in the presentation referring the HAP Scheme. Ms. A. Brett Administrative Officer noted that some of the details noted were inaccurate and the presentation should be amended accordingly. It was agreed that a meeting to discuss the changes would take place outside of the SPC forum.

Cllr. N. McNelis stated that it was an excellent presentation and proposed to hold a Special Meeting to discuss the document and wider homelessness issues, This was seconded by Cllr. M. Cubbard and agreed.

Mr. A. Daly presented a submission from Galway Housing Action Group urging a campaign for a national housing emergency to be declared to the Housing SPC. This also included a petition on homelessness and housing with 345 signatures. It was agreed to accept the petition and acknowledge same to the Group.

(8) Any Other Business

Cllr. N. McNelis raised the issue of a number of CCTV cameras which were installed in the Leas na Mara estate overnight. Ms. P. Philbin A/Director of Services advised that Galway City Council were not consulted and the issue will be discussed with An Tuath representatives on Friday next.

Cllr. M. Lohan stated that it may be an option to explore the solution similar to the Dublin Lands Initiative. The A/Director of Services advised that the Chief Executive is meeting with Minister Simon Coveney and the state owned lands in the city will be discussed.

Mr. A. Daly queried the number of long term voids in the city and was advised that there are less than 10 voids requiring major refurbishment and approximately 40 short term voids.

This concluded the business of the meeting.