

# Minutes of the Housing & Social Inclusion Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2019

**In Attendance:** Cllr. D. Lyons, Chairperson, Galway City Council, Cllr. D. McDonnell, Cllr. T. O’Flaherty, Cllr. M. Cubbard, Cllr. O. Crowe, Cllr. F. Fahy, Cllr A. Cheevers, Mr. Mark Lohan, Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Ms. B. Kelly, GCCN Representative, Ms. K. Golden, GCCN Representative, Mr. W. King, Construction Sector

**Officials:** Mr. D. Mahon, A/Director of Services, Housing Department, Ms. H. Martyn, A/Senior Executive Officer, Mr. T. Prendergast, A/Senior Engineer, Ms. S. Donoghue, Senior Social Worker, Ms. A. Brett, Administrative Officer, Ms. S. Carroll, Administrative Officer, Ms. A. Lyons, Administrative Officer, Ms. K. Lohan, Assistant Staff Officer,

**Apologies:** Cllr. M. O’Connor, Galway City Council

The SPC Chair Cllr. D. Lyons welcomed members to the first meeting of the Housing SPC for the term of Council 2019 - 2024. Introductions of members and Housing Department staff present at the Meeting followed.

## **1. Minutes of Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2019**

The Minutes of the Meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019 were proposed by Cllr. D. Lyons, seconded by Cllr. T. O’Flaherty and noted.

### **Matters Arising**

None.

## **2. Draft Corporate Plan 2019-2024**

Ms. E. Murphy, A/Senior Executive Officer, Human Resources delivered a presentation to the Meeting on the Draft Corporate Plan 2019-2024. Ms. Murphy provided an overview of the Plan including its objectives, contents, the overall objectives for Housing and the timelines for the plan which will be presented to the December Ordinary Meeting of Council for adoption by Council.

## **3. Homeless Report and update**

It was agreed to take items 3 and 4 together – Homeless Report and update and Draft West Regional Homeless Action Plan 2020-2022.

## **4. Draft West Regional Homeless Action Plan 2020-2022**

Ms. A. Lyons, Administrative Officer delivered a presentation of the contents of the Draft West Regional Homeless Action Plan 2020-2022. Following Ms. Lyon’s presentation queries raised by members were responded to by Mr. D. Mahon, Ms. S. Donoghue, Ms. A. Lyons and Ms. A. Brett including;

A significant number of households enter homeless services following receipt of a valid Notice to Quit from their Landlord. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government is carrying out research into the reasons given for Notice to Quits. The Residential Tenancy Board (RTB) can investigate if the reason for the Notice to Quit, for e.g. if a landlord is selling a property, in this scenario landlords now have to advise the RTB

if the property is sold and if not, tenants have first refusal to re-let the property.

The Cold Weather Response facility is currently in place and will be operational until the end of April 2020, Galway City Council is working with service providers and weekly meetings are held between Galway City Council, COPE Galway and Galway Simon Community.

The number of void Galway City Council units is in the region of 70, the Council is working towards a turnaround target of 10 weeks however in some cases a significant amount of works is required. The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 was adopted by the Council in July 2019, the targets and scheme will be outlined to the next meeting of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) and they will then be presented to the Housing SPC.

HAP Placefinder services are operating in Galway City Council and Galway County Council. Mayo County Council are putting plans in place for the introduction of a HAP Placefinder and Roscommon County Council continue to offer the service to those who require it. The Homeless Budget has been increased to €10.5 million in 2020 for the region. A family hub facility is available in Galway City and a Modular housing scheme comprising 15 units will be available for families from January 2020. The Peter McVerry Trust will manage the Modular scheme on behalf of the City Council.

An increase in 1 to 2 bed units of accommodation are required in the city, 40% of applicants on the housing list are single person households. 174 housing units were delivered in Galway City in 2019.

In section 4.4 of the Plan the wording should be amended to read “applicable”.

Rough Sleeping continues to be an issue in the city. Consideration of additional hostel accommodation is required. There is a number of non-national rough sleepers who do not qualify for housing supports, work is ongoing with repatriation agency Barka, Dublin to resolve some of the issues.

Members were requested to submit any amendments to the Homeless Action Plan to the plan to Ms. Lyons as soon as possible. The Plan will be considered for adoption by Council at its December Meeting. The local authorities in the West Region are required to adopt the Plan also. Ms. A. Lyons gave members an update on the current situation on homelessness in the city.

During the course of the debate the following proposal was tabled by Cllr. Cubbard and seconded by Mr. M. Lohan; “I propose that this SPC invite Minister Eoghan Murphy to the next meeting of this Committee”. This was agreed.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Draft West Regional Homeless Action Plan 2020-2022 be forwarded to Council for adoption.**

## **5. Housing Capital Programme update**

Mr. T. Prendergast, Senior Engineer provided a presentation on the Housing Capital Delivery Programme 2019-2021. He highlighted delivery to date 2016-2019 and the planned delivery targets for 2020-2021. He outlined projects underway and planned projects of Galway City Council and Approved Housing Bodies. Following the presentation Mr. D. Mahon and Mr. T. Prendergast replied to queries raised by members including;

Methodology for the delivery of a mixed tenure scheme on the remaining Ballyburke lands is being considered. Possible approaches include a development licence model. The infrastructure upgrade works required to facilitate development of the Bothar an Choiste site will be funded internally. Applications for LIHAF and SSF funding in respect of these work were not successful. A Part VIII will come before Council for consideration in 2020 for the Monivea Road site. The development in Newcastle will consist of 83 units and

Respond Housing Association are in discussions with the Developer. CENA is bringing forward proposals for the Circular Road and an application for CAS funding was lodged with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. SHIP funding is 100% for Social Housing units. Potential AHB turnkey developments in Roscam and Doughiska are currently going through the Planning process. Galway City Council will be purchasing significantly less properties on the open market in 2020.

## **6. Housing Grants**

Ms. H. Martyn, A/Senior Executive Officer gave an update on this item to the Meeting and advised that Ms. L. Sharkey, A/Administrative Officer would notify members of changes to Housing Grants schemes.

## **7. Housing Rent Review 2019**

Ms. S. Carroll, Administrative Officer gave members an update on the progress of the Rent Review 2019. She advised as follows: The Differential Rent Scheme 2019 is effective for all new tenancies from 1<sup>st</sup> July; The rent is assessed as 17% of the households income; number of households assessed and the number of households where information is outstanding or no reply was received from the tenant; The average rent and deductions applied for pensioners and disabled tenants; No backdating will apply to this housing rent assessment and the implications for tenants for non-reply to requests for information.

## **8. SPC Work Programme 2020 and Schedule of Meetings**

Mr. D. Mahon, A/Director of Services referred to the draft SPC work programme for 2020 issued and advised that if members wished to include an item on the 2020 programme to contact him at their earliest convenience. It was agreed that the next meeting of the SPC be scheduled for Friday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at 9.30am and the dates and times of future meetings will be agreed at that meeting.

## **9. Any Other Business**

None.