

**Housing Strategic Policy Committee Meeting Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020**  
**COVID-19 Response Update**

<b>COVID Response</b>	<p>A significant number of necessary and appropriate measures have been put in place since 12<sup>th</sup> March as part of the Housing Department's response to Covid-19. Response measures have been put in place for the most critical areas identified by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government by all local authorities. In addition, the list of essential services is kept under review by the Department on an ongoing basis. To assist and advise on housing matters during Covid-19 teleconference calls are held with the Department and the Housing Agency on a weekly basis.</p>
<b>Traveller Response</b>	<p>Galway City Council has been working closely with the HSE (Traveller Health Unit), Consultant in Public Health and Galway Traveller Movement to identify and implement specific and appropriate measures that may be required to protect Traveller Households living in Traveller specific accommodation.</p> <p>An audit of all Traveller households was carried out to assist in identifying older and more medically vulnerable people. Contact was made with this group and support continues to be provided where required. The audit included current living arrangements with a number of measures implemented to enable social distancing and self-isolation where required. These measures include decanting families to alternative accommodation for the duration of Covid 19 and the provision of portaloos and replacement mobiles in limited circumstances. Other measures include information distributed to families on sites, provision of extra toilets in Cul Tra and Carrowbrowne Temporary site, provision of additional space for self-isolation, relocation of families where prompt and practical solutions could not be found on site, offers of alternative temporary accommodation to all families on Cul Tra site living without facilities, allowing them to relocate for the duration of Covid-19 and various other measures including monitoring of sites and triaging of maintenance requests. The measures in place are reviewed regularly as situations evolves.</p>
<b>Homeless Response</b>	<p>Galway City Council working closely with the HSE and service providers has made provision in the event that there is a requirement for homeless clients to self-isolate. Teleconference meetings are held with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Housing Agency and Lead Local Authorities to update and discuss matters that require clarification on a weekly basis.</p> <p>In March, the Corrib Haven Family Hub was decanted of the families who were subsequently placed in private emergency accommodation. The Hub is currently in use as a self-isolation facility for single people. In addition, clients availing of the Cold Weather Response at Seamus Quirke Road were relocated to Bunk Hostel, which has been leased by the City Council for approximately 3 months. Bunk Hostel provides 32 en-suite rooms and can also be used in the event of suspected or confirmed cases. In addition, transitional units were made available for the duration of Covid-19 to cater for those who are medically vulnerable and must cocoon/self-isolate. An audit of services was carried out by the service providers and measures have been put in place to respond to situations as they arise. A number of families in Private Emergency Accommodation are being moved to own-door self-catering accommodation and operating procedures are in place by the service providers in</p>

	<p>the event of a suspected/confirmed case. 22 homeless HAP tenancies were set up since Covid-19 commenced. 7 of these tenancies were families moving directly from PEA. The remainder were preventions from entering services and exits from Direct Provision.</p>
<p><b>Housing Maintenance</b></p>	<p>As part of the ongoing effort to restrict the transmission of the COVID19 virus Housing Maintenance activity has been restricted. As and from Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March all Response Maintenance requests are being screened. Requests deemed critical following assessment will be addressed immediately. Non-essential maintenance requests will be logged and will be dealt with at a later stage when the situation changes and current restrictions are lifted. Tenants who raise a maintenance request will receive a call to facilitate such an assessment, they will be advised at that point with regard to the categorization of the issue and the level of response. Critical items include –Electrical faults / Plumbing issues / Heating systems faults / significant building fabric or structural issues.</p> <p>Items which will be categorized as non-critical include (non exhaustive list): Boiler/stove replacements / Draught complaints / Internal repairs – tiles/flooring, window sills, timberwork etc. / Sanitary ware / Dampness/condensation / Wall cracks/decoration / Glass replacement / Boarding up windows and doors / Leaking gutters &amp; downpipes / Fascia and soffit repair / Outhouses &amp; sheds / External walls, gates &amp; fences.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to elderly and/or vulnerable tenants when response assessment is being carried out. This measure is being put in place to protect the health of tenants’ our own and contract staff and the wider community.</p> <p>From 18 May Phase 1 inspections of vacant properties and construction sites recommenced.</p>
<p><b>Administrative Response</b></p>	<p>Administrative services continued in the back ground though a number of responses have been curtailed since the outbreak in March. The HAP/RAS/LTL teams are very active in setting up new tenancies and recalculating rents as required. The Housing assessment team continue to process housing applications and a process is being devised on how to allocate units in a safe manner. As Housing Construction resumed from 18th May, work in the Capital unit will be ramped up as a result, clarification is still awaited on the resumption of work on mobility grants, HDG, etc. Telephones, emails and postal services are put in place to respond to queries and process applications. There has not been a significant impact on rents generally and a decision was made not to review rents upwards with the impact of the Covid payment to those who found themselves temporarily out of work. There are a number of areas that the Housing Unit are liaising with the Dept. and the Housing Agency in getting these services operational in a safe manner again and this will be rolled out during the various phases of the roadmap.</p>