

# Minutes of the Housing & Social Inclusion Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) Meeting 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2021 (via Zoom)

**In Attendance:** Cllr. D. Lyons, Chairperson, Galway City Council  
Cllr. D. McDonnell, Galway City Council  
Cllr. T. O'Flaherty, Galway City Council  
Cllr. M. O' Connor, Galway City Council  
Cllr. E. Hoare, Galway City Council  
Cllr A. Cheevers, Galway City Council  
Cllr. M. Cubbard, Galway City Council  
Cllr. I. Byrne, Galway City Council  
Ms. K. Golden, GCCN Representative  
Ms. M. Conneely, GCCN Representative  
Mr. M. Lohan, Irish Congress of Trade Unions

**Officials:** Mr. D. Mahon, A/Director of Services, Housing Department  
Ms. H. Martyn, A/Senior Executive Officer, Housing Department  
Mr. T. Prendergast, A/Senior Engineer, Housing Department  
Ms. A. Brett, Administrative Officer, Housing Department  
Ms. M. Fallon-Ward, Administrative Officer, Housing Department  
Ms. A. Lyons, Administrative Officer, Housing Department  
Ms. L. Sharkey, A/Administrative Officer, Housing Department  
Ms. S. Donoghue, Senior Social Worker, Housing Department

**Present** Ms. K. Lohan, A/Staff Officer, Housing Department

**Absent:** Mr. W. King, Construction Sector

Cllr. D. Lyons welcomed new members Cllr. E. Hoare and Ms. M. Conneely to the Housing and Social inclusion SPC and thanked all present for attending the meeting.

## **1. Minutes of Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2021**

The Minutes of the Meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2021 were proposed by Cllr. I. Byrne and seconded by Mr. M. Lohan.

## **2. Matters Arising**

Ms. H. Martyn confirmed that the majority of families in emergency accommodation are from the Traveller Community in reply to a query from Ms. Golden.

Mr. T. Prendergast advised the meeting that window and door replacement is internally funded by Galway City Council, there is a database in place for a multi-year plan, the project for 2021 is for 30 units which is expected to start in August and end in October and the project will broaden year on year. Retrofitting is funding dependent, the cost on average is €10,500 per unit and surveys are currently being completed. It is tied into the Planned Maintenance Programme, however the short notice of funding calls and availability of labour can be challenging.

Mr. D. Mahon confirmed that the Housing Department is looking to move to a planned maintenance approach and is working with the LGMA to develop a system to assist with this. Mr. Mahon also confirmed that funding is available for voids and DPG works on City Council owned properties. Regarding DPGs on private properties

he advised that the Housing Department are working through the applications received, however internal inspections are somewhat curtailed by current Covid-19 restrictions but in some cases external inspections can take place. He advised that an update on this item would be provided in the Chief Executive report which would be presented to Council in June.

### **3. Draft Control of Horse Bye-Laws 2021**

Mr. D. Mahon provided a summary to the meeting of the Draft Bye-Laws and cover letter circulated to members on the 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2021. He advised that 8 submissions were received. The draft Bye-Laws are going through the statutory requirements and submissions will be assessed and presented to the full Council. A copy of the licence form will be ready and circulated to SPC members prior to the Bye-Laws coming into effect.

Members raised the following queries regarding the draft Bye-Laws:

- Can a booklet issue to all tenants regarding the Bye-Laws
- What constitutes an 'authorised person', what staffing provisions are in place to enforce the Bye-Laws
- Do the Bye-Laws apply to all residential areas in the city area
- Can a time delay be put in place as 5 days is a short period
- Can emphasis be placed on rehoming and returning animals rather than destroying

Mr. D. Mahon responded to the queries raised as follows:

- An easy to read version of the Bye-Laws booklet can be prepared and will be included in revised versions of the Galway City Council Tenants handbook
- An authorised person includes members of An Garda Siochana and delegated staff members of Galway City Council
- Wording will be amended to 5 'working' days, as per summary report issued
- The 5 days included is minimum period, time will be allowed for the owner to present, it is a national requirement that horses have passports and are micro-chipped
- The commencement period can be increased from one month to three months to allow for a grace or settling in period
- The wording does include sale, rehoming or destruction, Galway City Council will always endeavour to ensure other options than destroy are explored, destroy would be the final option considered

It was proposed by Cllr. E. Hoare, seconded by Cllr. M. Cubbard and agreed to note the Draft Control of Horses Bye-Laws 2021, submissions received and to proceed to list the Draft Bye-Laws and amendments proposed at the next suitable Council Meeting.

### **4. Homeless Report and Update/Housing First**

Ms. H. Martyn provided a summary of the Homeless Report circulated to SPC members on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021 and highlighted the following items:

- Monthly surveys are completed and submitted to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage which includes how long people are availing of emergency accommodation services
- Funding available to the west region for 2021
- Low availability of units available for rental accommodation
- Number of people who have exited services in the western region which includes Galway City
- Cold Weather Response and the plan going forward until April 2022
- Covid-19 response, vacation programme roll out and isolation service available
- Update on Hub in Westside.
- Number of households on Notice of Terminations

- Update on Housing First

In response to Ms. Martyn's report, members raised the following additional points:

- How does reporting occur for the Hub in Westside, what is the hub classified as, and how are any issues addressed.
- Compliment interagency response and co-ordination during the Covid-19 pandemic and low number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in homeless community
- Time-line of vaccination roll-out

Ms. Martyn responded to the queries raised, she confirmed that the vaccination roll-out will commence in early June with the G.P. linked in with homeless services. The Hub is classified as an emergency accommodation service. Aware that a one-off issue arose in the Hub over the weekend and working with Peter McVerry Trust to address any matters of concern. The PMVT Hub has been put forward for an award with ICSH and it is currently the first one of its kind operational in the country.

## **5. Capital Programme/Traveller Accommodation Programme update**

Mr. T. Prendergast provided an update to the meeting on the housing capital programme in place and the current status of Galway City Council, Approved Housing Bodies and Private Public Partnerships projects underway and planned up to 2024. Overall it is projected over 1,000 units will be provided. He gave detailed updates on projects Ballybane, Roscam, Headford Road, Merchants Road, Circular Road and Doughiska. He also advised of possible mixed Social and Affordable Housing area earmarked for Headford Road, Merlin and Castlegar.

In response to queries raised by members, Mr. Mahon and Mr. Prendergast responded as follows:

- Covid-19 has caused a delay and disruption with some projects
- There is evidence that costs are increasing due to Covid-19 and Brexit which could impact future contracts particularly over the next 12-24 months
- Aware of illegal dumping in Doughiska, security is stepped up and a Japanese Knotweed treatment is planned
- Issues regarding access to site in Merlin Park is being addressed
- Areas of mixed developments where possible
- Part of land in Knocknacarra site proposed to be disposed to GRETB will be at market value for school services and will be viewed under the requirement to provide community gain
- Site at Keeruan Part 10 of Planning and Development Act 2000 is obliged to be carried out, development will increase by 3 units
- Carrowbrowne – replacement of heating and water system works are currently underway
- Are in regular contact and engagement with Department regarding targets and developments
- Staffing levels to complete all projects is a concern

## **6. Update on Choice Based Letting (CBL)**

Ms. A. Lyons provided the meeting an update on the progress of the Choice Based Letting project including:

The system went live on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 2021; 60% of eligible applicants have registered to date; 61 properties have been advertised to date, 6 offers have being made and 54 are in progress, 16 additional properties are scheduled to be advertised in June 2021 Both the traditional allocation process and Choice Based Letting are in operation. In response to Ms. Lyons's report, members raised the following additional points:

- Will four bed accommodation be included on CBL
- Assistance for people without smartphones/internet access

- Concern over 40% figure of people not registered, can another advertising campaign take place

Ms. H. Martyn and Ms. A. Lyons responded to the queries raised as follows:

- Four bed accommodation will be advertised when units are available
- Applicants without internet access can contact staff in the Housing Department who can assist them, libraries are also used to provide facilities and promote service
- 60% of applicants registered is a high figure for this stage of the project, Galway City Council is open to conducting additional advertising campaigns. The system is based on areas of choices so some people may also be waiting to register until they see something advertised they may be interested in
- Elderly and disabled applicants are kept under review and units assigned to these categories will not be advertised on the CBL system

## **7. Any Other Business**

Ms. Maria Fallon Ward, Administrative Officer was welcomed to the SPC.

Cllr. Lyons thanked all members and officials for their attendance and the meeting then concluded.

The next meeting of the SPC is scheduled for 24<sup>th</sup> September 2021.