

Minutes of the Housing & Social Inclusion Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) Meeting 27th May, 2022

In Attendance: Cllr. D. Lyons, Galway City Council (Chair)
Cllr. M. O'Connor, Galway City Council
Cllr. D. Mc Donnell, Galway City Council
Cllr. T. O'Flaherty, Galway City Council
Cllr. E. Hoare, Galway City Council
Cllr. M. Cubbard, Galway City Council
Cllr. A. Cheevers, Galway City Council
Cllr. E. Hoare, Galway City Council
Mr. M. Lohan, Trade Union Representative
Ms. K. Golden, GCCN Representative
Ms. A. McGee, GCCN Representative
Apologies: Cllr. I. Byrne, Galway City Council

Officials: Ms P. Philbin, Director of Services, Housing Department
Mr. D. Mahon, Senior Executive Officer, Housing Department
Ms. H. Martyn, Administrative Officer, Housing Department
Ms. M. Fallon Ward, Administrative Officer, Housing Department

Present Ms. S. Bowman, Assistant Staff Officer, Housing Department
Ms K. Feeney, Galway Simon

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 11th March 2022

The Minutes of the Meeting of 11th March 2022 were proposed by Cllr. D. Mc Donnell and seconded by Cllr. E Hoare.

2. Matters Arising

No matters arising

3. Homeless Report & Update / Housing First

Ms. H. Martyn provided an update on the Homeless report issued with the meeting Agenda. Ms. Martyn responded to queries raised by members as follows:

- Minimum Standards Inspections on PEA – not currently in GCC remit to complete inspections. Any accommodation concerns can be emailed the Housing Department if any issues and GCC will revert to COPE for follow up. K. Golden added that there is currently a discussion happening nationally in relation to inclusion of PEA in relevant standards and HIQA may be involved also but it may not be optimum time to bring them in as it may be a disincentive to providers to offer accommodation.
- Alternatives for Glen Oaks – GCC currently advertising and seeking tenders for Cold Weather Response for winter 2022 / 2023.
- Modular Homes accommodation – There is no time limit on services offered, HAP will also be sourced where possible through Homeless HAP Team.
- Landlords not signing up to HAP if they present as Homeless what happens next or are they moved to top of list – HAP will also be sourced where possible through Homeless HAP Team
- Westside Modular & Corrib Haven – confirmed both currently full and at capacity

- Housing First - GCCN welcomed advocacy on behalf of Galway City Council to increase targets. Request for update on 1-bed units from Department – motion has been adopted but no reply from Department to date.
- GCCN would like to advocate that we do not return to dorm style accommodation for CWR due to concerns in regard to infection prevention control, human dignity and trying to move people on from services.

4. Youth Homeless Strategy

Ms K. Feeney (in attendance) Galway Simon, provided an update and overview of the Youth Homeless Strategy report issued with the meeting Agenda. Mr. D. Mahon & Ms. K. Golden GCCN responded to queries raised by members as follows:

- Students' couch-surfing & hidden homeless - students can revert to student welfare system within the college for assistance. Priority is given to people who do not have any access to family support.
- Student Union presence on the committee – membership of SPC is defined by legislation, therefore there is currently no place available for a student representative on the committee

5. Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy – proposed amendments

Mr. D. Mahon provided an update on the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy reports issued previously with meeting the Agenda noting proposed amendments and changes highlighted in red throughout the document. Mr. Mahon responded to queries raised by members as follows:

- Caravans parked in driveways – Tenants are not permitted to allow anyone to remain/live in driveway as it is a breach of tenancy. Process in place to deal with this issue, as warnings have to be issued etc. which may take a considerable amount of time
- GCC Housing Department liaising with Gardaí on regular basis – Contact is often on a daily basis and regular meetings also being held. Court orders now required by GCC before Gardaí will assist GCC in enforcing any powers
- Control of Dogs in estates – tenancy agreement and tenant's handbook list breeds of dogs not permitted and Dog Warden follows up where necessary. If persistent non-compliance then it is a breach of tenancy which will be dealt with through the formal process.
- An Sean Bhaile: hole in the wall issue update - Case currently before the courts and once concluded an update on legal costs will be confirmed
- Barrier in Ballyloughane – Housing Department do not have control over this, the Parks Department currently have the key to the barrier.
- Illegal Occupiers - Breach of tenancy, will be dealt with through the formal process
- GCC & Gardaí re: Domestic Violence – GCC have powers through the “excluding order process” which requires court order.
- Transfers due to ASB – ASB is not grounds for a transfer. Transfer will be considered on advice from Gardaí or if there a threat to life. Often when transferred ASB issues do not follow.
- Senior Housing Estate Liaison Officer – Position being filled internally by an existing HELO.
- CCTV in estates – under current GDPR legislation GCC not permitted to operate CCTV.
- Voids – CCTV is installed in some properties if going to be empty for a period of time
- Control of Dogs – unable to give a time limit and there is nothing written into tenancy agreement about barking dogs after certain times. May require going to court and getting an order in relation to noise disturbance.
- Illegal Dumping – Currently dealt with by Environment Department as it is a breach of the bye-laws. Housing Department will include a section in the Strategy to highlight tenant responsibilities
- Criminal activity at a property – will be dealt with by Gardaí and they will prosecute individuals. GCC will not automatically evict tenant from property due to criminal activity involvement, a process has to be completed to secure succession of property, and may need to go to Court to evict.

The Amendments and Changes proposed within the Draft Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2022 document were proposed by Cllr. D Lyons and seconded by Cllr. M Cubbard. It was agreed by all that the document be listed for consideration by Council as the making of a Strategy is a reserved function.

6. Strategic Plan for People with a Disability – Q1 2022 update

Mr. D. Mahon provided an update on the Strategic Plan for People with a Disability issued previously with meeting Agenda. He advised that the Housing & Disability Steering Group meet on quarterly basis and have also received copy of attached report. It was noted that the Department has also requested that updates are provided at each SPC meeting in relation to progress. Mr. D Mahon and Ms. P. Philbin Director of Services responded to queries raised by members as follows:

- Update on progress of Capital Funding – Instruction received from Department in April 2022 that property acquisitions may re-commence;
- Update on commencement of social and affordable housing (Merlin Lands) works and start date – stage 2 and Part 8 approval received, once relevant procurement documents received from Department this will be going to tender;
- Ballybane scheme – 6 disability units to be provided within the 58 units planned (approx. 10%);
- Department have introduced a mechanism to share the burden of construction costs due to rising inflation. Currently working through schemes with fixed price contracts. Mechanism in place from the Department that they may fund up to 70% of the increase. Other schemes listed are not gone to tender yet and with inflation pressures and higher tenders that may come back, it will then be up to the Department to approve. Noted the increasing difficulty to get contractors to commit to works due to increasing costs for material and labour etc. and Department are fully aware of situation;
- Ballybane site – negotiations still ongoing on this site, work has not stopped but progress is slow;
- Turnkey - GCC received an independent QS to assess the uplift on the costs involved and the recommendation was sent to Department to review. Currently with Department to make decision.

7. Any Other Business

The following issues were raised under AOB:

Ms. P Philbin provided an update on challenges facing Ukrainian Refugees:

- IPAS advise there are currently approx. 150 people in Glenoaks, 120 Corrib Village, 50 in Westwood student accommodation and 18 in a B&B in Salthill, this accommodation was not arranged by GCC.
- Acknowledgement and thanks given to Galway Simon, COPE Galway and volunteer centre for all help in Westside Centre.
- Relocation of refugees once students return - Corrib Village & Westwood IPAS to organise re-location of families.
- Kiltullagh House update on completion date and insurance costs – Planning permission granted and appealed to An Bord Pleanála, awaiting outcome. Insurance claim submitted and re-build costs included in claim.
- Advanced Purchase Scheme – 1 expression of interest received
- Walter Macken Flats Cladding discolouration – Ms. Philbin will email response to this directly
- Short Term Lets – concerns raised on low availability in Galway City, request update on any changes to rules on short term lets, given the current housing crisis situation

Next Meeting scheduled for Friday 30th September at 9.30am