

# Minutes of the Housing Strategic Policy Committee Meeting

## Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2023

<b>In Attendance:</b>	Cllr. D. Lyons, Galway City Council (Chair) Cllr. T. O' Flaherty, Galway City Council Cllr. E. Hoare, Galway City Council Cllr. A. Cheevers, Galway City Council Cllr. M. Cubbard, Galway City Council Mr. M. Lohan, ICTU Representative Ms. M. Conneely, GCCN Representative Ms. K. Golden, GCCN Representative
<b>Officials:</b>	Ms. E Fanning, A/Director of Services, Housing Department Ms. M. Gibsey, Administrative Officer, Housing Department Ms. M. Fallon Ward, Administrative Officer, Housing Department Ms. Cliona Clancy, Senior Staff Officer, Housing Department Mr. D. Healy, A/Administrative Officer, Housing Department Mr. M Cormican, Senior Engineer, Housing Department
<b>Apologies:</b>	Cllr. D. McDonnell, Galway City Council Cllr. I. Byrne, Galway City Council
<b>Present</b>	Ms. F. Griffin, Assistant Staff Officer, Housing Department

### 1. Healthy Age Friendly Programme

Ms. Marie Nolan gave a presentation on the Healthy Age Friendly Programme.

The members expressed their thanks for the presentation and asked if it could be circulated to members following the meeting.

### 2. Minutes of Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2023

The Minutes of the Meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2023 were proposed by Cllr. E. Hoare and seconded by Cllr. T. O'Flaherty and agreed by all.

### 3. Matters Arising

- Clarification was sought in relation to the retrofitting of properties, a programme of works was requested outlining where we are with the works and what is projected – a programme of works is not currently available but it will be looked at and made available if possible. Galway City Council are spending the budget for the retrofitting and are getting to houses, there is very limited resources at the moment.
- A query was raised in relation CBL and the properties that are not advertised on same. A list of properties that are held back and not advertised on CBL was requested.
- Queries were raised in relation to evicting people from social houses due to succession of tenancy issues who subsequently end up in homeless services, information was requested on how much it is

costing to facilitate a person in homeless services – succession will only be granted to tenants who have been living in the house and paying rent for 2 years or more in line with our Scheme of Letting Priorities. When people do not meet this criteria the occupant is asked to leave. The cost of homeless services per person was not readily available, it was advised this information would be sought.

- An update was sought in relation to the Ballyburke site. It was originally planned to have a mix of social and affordable units, why now is there a change for social units only – it is confirmed the site will now consist of 84 social units, this is due to the debt outstanding on the land.
- A list of current vacant properties was requested – it was advised there are currently 81 voids. 24 of them are long term voids. The average turn around time for units when you take away the long term voids is around 37 weeks which is just over the National average of 35 weeks. There is lots of work happening at the moment to try and bring that turnaround down as much as possible.

#### **4. Housing Capital & Affordable Housing Update**

An update was circulated to members in advance of the meeting. Queries raised by the members were responded to as follows:

- A query was raised in relation to the land at Brothers of Chairty referenced in the report – A report was completed by the LDA looking at all lands that could be possible for social housing. These consideration of lands will change over time.
- In relation to the Capital project ongoing in Ballybane, some of the houses built by the previous contractor have been knocked, what is the reason for this? What was the cost for the last contractor to leave the site and what is it costing for the new contractor to finish the job. A full financial report needs to be provided for all public representatives – It is envisioned that these houses will be delivered by the end of next year. The previous contract is still under litigation so we are unable to comment on this any further at the moment. If the cost of the new contractor can be released Galway City Council will supply this. In relation to the houses being knocked, confirmation will be sought on this from the contractor.
- Do the LDA have conversations with the Local Authority in relation to the issues around infrastructure with some of our plans having been rejected by An Bord Pleanála before because of this issue – Sites are being screened a lot better than before. The Local Authority do meet with the LDA in relation to Infrastructure issues.
- Where are we at in terms of our target for delivery of houses and what is the current number of people on the Housing Waiting List – 181 is the target the Department has set for the year, this doesn't include the acquisitions with a target of 50, we are confident in meeting the acquisition target and possibly exceed it which could bring the figures up to 231 for the year. There are currently approx. 4,600 people on the Housing Waiting List.
- Queries were raised in relation to the background checks carried out when allocating houses to people on the housing waiting list – Garda checks are carried out on every applicant before an allocation is made. The social work team also work closely with the AHBs in relation to this and a risk management plan is carried out. In relation to specific cases, these can be discussed offline if needed.
- Have the houses in An Cliathan been allocated – No the allocations for this development have not been decided on to date.

- Tenants have been allocated units for Phase 1 of Barr an Uisce some time ago but are yet to receive a move in date, what is the update on this – There was a delay in the delivery of these units due to some building control issues, these have now been resolved and it is envisioned key handover of these units should happen in the coming weeks.

## 5. Strategic Plan for People with a Disability – Q2 2023 update

An update was circulated to members in advance of the meeting. Queries raised by the members were responded to as follows:

- A query was raised in relation to the 100 SHIP units proposed for Castlegar/Tuam Road, will these all be social housing or a mix of social and affordable – Each potential site will be considered for the mix that is appropriate. The units mentioned is a proposal and will come before the Council should it go ahead.
- Planning is approved for 101 units on the Old Monivea Road, where exactly is that and will it be all social units – The site is beside the Mosque. These are CALF units managed by Tuath, it was proposed to be a mix of cost rental units and social units, however Tuath are having difficulty getting the cost rental to work.
- In relation to the Ballyburke site the report states 27 of the 84 units will be social UD+ what does this mean – Universal Design which means they are wheelchair accessible or else they have been designed so that they can be adapted if needs be.

## 6. Homeless Update

Mr. D Healy provided an update in relation to Homelessness, the update included the following points:

- 218 adults accessing Homeless Services currently in the City, this includes 76 families
- Securing additional accommodation at the moment is very difficult, Private Emergency Accommodation is running at capacity
- 34 people are currently benefiting from the Housing First Scheme
- There has been increase in presentations in recent weeks, Galway City Council are working closely with COPE Galway on these
- 39 allocations have been made year to date to people with a Homeless basis of need
- There is currently 23 Traveller families in Private Emergency Accommodation
- 51 tenancies have been secure under the Homeless HAP Placefinder Scheme in 2023 to date
- The Cold Weather Response will commence in November, a review took place at the end of last years service which identified the need for a stand alone building. We are currently working on securing a lease on a property on the Dublin Road which will provide 18 beds for the Winter months.

Queries raised by the members were responded to as follows:

- In relation to the Peter McVerry hub in Westside, are there any operational issues there – No, Galway City Council met recently with them and there is no major issues to report.
- Concerns were raised at the amount of vacant properties when there is 76 families in Homeless Services, the turnaround time on these properties needs to be quicker.
- Are we confident that we have the right amount facilities available for the Cold Weather Response in terms of the amount we are expecting this year – There is a confidence that the measures outlined in the report will be sufficient.

- It was advised by Ms. Golden that there is a significant risk that strike action will be called for COPE Galway and Galway Simon, there is concerns for safety of the employees and clients, this is something Galway City Council need to be prepared for. Due to pay cuts and other factors it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and retain staff. A continuity plan is needed in the event of strike action.
- Members expressed their thanks to the work being done under Homeless Services to all involved.

## **7. AOB**

No other business.

**Next Meeting scheduled for 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2023 at 9.30 am.**