

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE**  
**Minutes of Housing SPC Meeting held on Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2022 in the Council Chamber, Galway County Council at 10 a.m.**

**I Láthair:-**

**Baill:** Cllr. Joe Byrne, Chairperson  
Cllr. James Charity  
Cllr. Jimmy McClearn  
Cllr. Eileen Mannion  
Cllr. Seamus Walsh  
Cllr. Thomas Welby  
Ms. Nora Corcoran (Social Inclusion)  
Ms. Tara Flynn (Construction)  
Mr. Enda McGuane (Business)

**Oifigigh:** Mr. Liam Hanrahan, Director of Services, Housing  
Mr. Gerard Scully, Senior Executive Officer, Housing - Remote  
Ms. Nuala Heffernan, A/Senior Executive Officer, Housing  
Ms. Angela Spelman, Administrative Officer, Housing  
Ms. Rachel Lowe, Senior Engineer, Housing  
Mr. Kevin Murphy, Senior Executive Engineer  
Mr. Kieran Keon, Senior Social Worker - Remote  
Ms. Genevieve Byrne, Assistant Staff Officer, Housing

Cllr Joe Byrne, Chairperson, began the meeting by extending condolences on behalf of the Housing SPC to the family of former TD, Noel Treacy, RIP

**1. Minutes of SPC meeting held 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 were adopted on the proposal of Cllr. Jimmy McClearn and seconded by Cllr. Eileen Mannion

## **2. Social Work and Housing – presentation by Kieran Keon, Senior Social Worker**

Kieran Keon made a presentation remotely via MS Teams in the Chamber regarding the structure of the Social Work team in the Housing Department and gave an outline of the procedures included his role as the Child Protection Officer. The Social Work Procedure Document (Version 1) was circulated by email prior to the meeting.

### Discussion:

- Cllr Joe Byrne thanked Kieran for the presentation on another aspect of the Housing Department which has an important role
- Cllr Tom Welby mentioned his involvement with the National Traveller Accommodation Committee in conjunction with the Minister for Housing, and that the Minister will be signing off on the review and tenders have been processed
- Cllr Eileen Mannion welcomed the information and mentioned that there was not a lot of awareness regarding the social work piece – this expertise is required across the County
- Cllr Joe Byrne queried if a procedure for social work existed before and if the Housing Liaison Officers were also providing support. Cllr Byrne asked if the Housing Liaison Officers had to deal with these sensitive issues. Cllr Byrne also welcomed the process in relation to the Child Safety portion of the area and queried if anyone could make a referral to the Social Work unit
- Liam Hanrahan clarified that the social work procedures have been updated in relation to the increased involvement of CORU which is the body that regulates social work professionals in that they have to be registered and can be audited. Any member of staff in the organisation can report something to the Child Protection Officer – this includes the Councillors and staff in other sections. In the majority of cases, it would be the Housing Liaison Officer that would be the first point of contact and they assess if the matter needs to go to the social workers. Issues may come to light via a tenant, a grant applicant etc or other points of contact with the Housing Department
- Cllr Joe Byrne queried if the Social Work Procedure document needs to be approved by the SPC and if it would then go to the Plenary Council. As Liam Hanrahan indicated that this was not required, Cllr Byrne asked that it be circulated to all Council Members for their information.

### **3. Housing Maintenance Update – presentation by Kevin Murphy, Senior Executive Engineer**

Kevin Murphy provided a PowerPoint presentation with a progress update on the Housing Maintenance Department

#### Discussion:

- Liam Hanrahan thanked Kevin for the presentation and indicated that the document would be circulated. Mr. Hanrahan noted that a loan for Planned Maintenance was approved by the Council 2 years ago, but that this process was delayed due to the Covid pandemic. Information is to be gathered on every property in relation to required plumbing and electrical works, and for the retrofit programme which would involve extensive works.
- Cllr Jimmy McClearn mentioned that he had seen a couple of retrofitting examples in his local area and that once it was set up that the tenants did not need to change the settings. Cllr McClearn asked that the Councillors be provided with a contact list showing names, numbers and roles within the section in order that they would know who to contact. Cllr McClearn said that he had also previously raised the issue of tenants not knowing what was expected of them – an example that Cllr McClearn was surprised about was a tenant being told to replace an electric shower.
- Cllr Eileen Mannion agreed with Cllr McClearn's points and thanked the Maintenance Department for the work on the Planned Maintenance.
- Cllr Thomas Welby also agreed with the points made but pointed out that tenants need to realise what they have signed in their tenancy agreement. In relation to Cllr Mannion's example regarding the chimney, Cllr Welby pointed out that the chimney problem would no longer exist if the retrofit programme was carried out on the house. Cllr Welby queried how long the retrofitting has taken for the houses that are complete and what the feedback has been on these units
- Cllr James Charity thanked Kevin Murphy for the informative presentation and queried the capital costs for the works to be carried out. Cllr Charity used the example of the house where the energy saving costs had been made and asked how much funding was required to get to that stage. Cllr Charity pointed out that new properties that are rated A1 or A2 do not have chimneys, and that the older properties are working as they are.
- Cllr Joe Byrne thanked Kevin Murphy for the presentation and stated that a Planned Maintenance programme is required for the next 20 years, including every aspect of the house, so that a life cycle of costing and budgeting can be created.
- Kevin Murphy explained that most calls to Maintenance relate to heating, plumbing, chimneys – mostly in relation to lack of maintenance by the tenant or chimney fires. Mr Murphy indicated that the Planned Maintenance programme includes heat pumps and solar panels that are being tendered for currently. Mr. Murphy confirmed that the

tenant will not have to maintain the heat pumps as this is managed by Housing under the warranty.

- Liam Hanrahan outlined that a deep retrofit costs between €40,000 and €50,000 – 90% of which is funded by the Department of Environment. Mr. Hanrahan stressed that there is a requirement to keep the houses to standard and also to turn them over quickly – the new software programme will improve scheduling and monitoring with the contractors.

#### **4. Capital Schemes Update – presentation by Rachel Lowe, Senior Engineer**

Rachel Lowe presented a PowerPoint document giving the update on Capital projects – Ms. Lowe indicated that the next Task Force meeting is due to take place later this month

##### Discussion:

- Liam Hanrahan confirmed that the Capital programme is very large and that Rachel Lowe and Daithí Flood are endeavouring to keep the developments going with their team. Mr. Hanrahan confirmed that sites will be purchased in the MASP area (Bearna, Oranmore, Briarhill, Garraun & Claregalway) as we have a housing need there in addition to the needs of Galway City Council. Mr. Hanrahan indicated that land across the county and derelict units in town centres are being sought for purchase, and that existing houses for sale on the open market are not being sought. The target nationally to be provided by Approved Housing Bodies is 40%.
- Mr. Enda Guane explained that there is a regulator in place for Approved Housing Bodies to oversee finances and asset management. CALF projects will be examined in relation to P & A funding.
- Cllr James Charity welcomed the Capital update report and the fact that 13 additional staff are to be recruited. Cllr Charity suggested that the Capital targets over 5 years may be unachievable given the figures up to the end of next year. Cllr Charity indicated that there should be more negotiations with developers and landowners to discuss potential projects once the County Development Plan is finalised – Parkmore would be an area to look at in the short term.
- Cllr Jimmy McClearn pointed out that even if the 5-year target is met with regard to Capital projects that there will still be a lot of people on the housing waiting list – Cllr McClearn queried if the targets are created by Galway County Council or the Department of Environment
- Cllr Joe Byrne expressed that there is no difference in direct build by the Local Authority and acquisition of units from a developer as the same people are building the houses. Cllr Byrne confirmed that the market will determine the price. Cllr Byrne also noted that the financial model for the Approved Housing Bodies is not working given that tenders are 20-25% greater than 18 months ago. Cllr Byrne pointed out that Brexit and Covid have caused problems for the 2022 programme. Cllr Byrne welcomed the addition of an architect position to the Capital team.

## **5. Any Other Business**

- Cllr Joe Byrne thanked the Council staff for the excellent presentations – Cllr Byrne pointed out that the other Councillors would be interested in viewing the presentations shown at the Housing SPC prior to the minutes being approved at the plenary Council meeting.
- Cllr Byrne reiterated the request for a contact list for Housing staff with the work area listed
- Cllr Joe Byrne queried the schedule of meetings for the year
- Cllr Joe Byrne mentioned that the topic of Control of Horses on the Headford Road should be listed for a future meeting – this matter will be looked at in conjunction with Derek Pender in the Roads Department

**The next Housing SPC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2022 at 10am in the Council Chamber**