

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Minutes of Housing SPC Meeting held on Wednesday, 5th April 2023 in the Council Chamber, Galway County Council at 10.00 a.m.

I Láthair:-

Baill: Cllr. Joe Byrne, Chairperson
Cllr. Jimmy McClearn
Cllr. James Charity
Cllr. Thomas Welby
Cllr. Eileen Mannion
Cllr. Seamus Walsh
Mr. Mark Coffey

Oifigigh: Mr. Liam Hanrahan, Director of Services, Housing
Mr. Gerard Scully, Senior Executive Officer, Housing (Remote)
Mr. Kieran Keon, Senior Social Worker, Housing (Remote)
Mr. Damien Mitchell, Senior Engineer, Housing
Ms. Kathleen Lohan, Staff Officer, Housing
Mr. Eoin Hardiman, Assistant Staff Officer, Housing

Leithscéal Ms. Marcella Conneely,
Ms. Carmel Kilcoyne

- Mr. Hanrahan confirmed that PPN and Galway Chamber have been contacted regarding the filling of vacancies on the SPC.

1. Minutes of the meeting of 1st February 2023

- The minutes of the SPC meeting held on 1st February, 2023 were proposed by Cllr Welby, seconded by Cllr. Charity and agreed.
- **Matters of Accuracy** – None

2. Housing Delivery Action Plan Update

Mr. Mitchell provided a detailed summary to members of the various projects and targets under Housing for All for 2023 and confirmed that work was continuing to ensure delivery of housing units and to increase Galway County Council's landbank for housing purposes.

In response to queries raised by members Mr. Mitchell advised as follows:

- Galway County Council are pursuing and investigating purchase of sites at various locations across the County.
- Galway County Council are in discussions with an AHB regarding Oughterard housing development. If the site is to be developed by an AHB a Section 183 would be required to dispose of the site to the AHB appointed to undertake the project. This would allow the AHB to submit a Planning Permission and remove the requirement for Galway County Council to submit a Section 10 planning application to An Bord Pleanala. It is a faster process. He confirmed that the site in question is Residential zoned land.
- Housing for All Social Housing delivery targets for 2023 is 351, a number of turnkey developments are under negotiation but will not be included in the 2023 targets.
- **Housing in Carna** - Galway County Council are awaiting reports for the existing Housing sites in Carna, but they have gone to independent consultants to determine the spare capacity of the WWTPs on these sites.
- **Oranmore** - A compulsory purchase order process has commenced for the Community facilities lands in Oranmore that are currently in testate. It is an agreed process. A second CPO process will take place later for residential zoned lands in Oranmore close to these Community facilities zoned lands.
- The new planning exemption process can be availed of by the Council. Mr. Hanrahan further advised that the Part 8 process would also continue to be used where we have started this process.

In response to queries raised by members Mr. Hanrahan advised as follows:

- There is a difference between modular housing and fast-tracked housing. Furthermore, these would not be acceptable for social housing but might be able to be delivered for the Ukrainian response through the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the O.P.W.
- He additionally advised members that there are issues surrounding the longevity of modular and fast-tracked units.

3. Draft Scheme of Priority for Affordable Dwelling Purchase Arrangements

Mr. Hanrahan provided a detailed summary to members of the Draft Scheme of Priorities for Affordable Dwelling Purchase arrangements and highlighted the following:

- That there is a need to update the previous scheme of priority due to the legislation updates and the scheme is required to be adopted by the full Council. It is intended to present the scheme at the April meeting of Council and it will be submitted to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

- There is a need to meet the scheme national requirements and then the council's own scheme of priorities.
- Under the scheme of priorities he explained there will be a deadline for the acceptance of submission of applications, 30% of the applicants will need to have lived in Galway for 2 years or have an outstanding connection with the area, they must live in the Municipal District of the scheme or 10km from the scheme and that a lottery system will be used if there are more applications than available properties.

In response to queries raised by members Mr. Hanrahan advised as follows:

- He confirmed applicants for the affordable housing schemes do not need to have applied for social housing supports.
- He explained that 70% of the houses will be open and that 30% will be for people with a local connection. If there is not enough successful candidates from the 30%, it goes back to all applicants and a lottery system is used. He explained that this will not disadvantage applicants and that it will be favourable to local applicants.
- Housing developments will contain various numbers of housing units.
- He advised that properties would be allocated in accordance with the scheme of priorities and the size of the property the applicant expressed an interest in purchasing.
- He advised that the drop-out rate of applicants could be quite high due to various factors and this was experienced by other Local Authorities who have started the process.
- He confirmed that person(s) from one side of a Municipal district can apply for a housing scheme on the other side of the Municipal district and he further explained that this should not be confused with planning requirements at the full Council meeting.
- He advised that the Local Authority Equity stake would be in place and linked to the length of the mortgage.
- He clarified the reason for the insertion of the 10km limit in the draft scheme and how this condition would work in practice when applications are assessed.
- He advised that projects are dependent on various factors and the market.

In response to queries raised by members Mr. Mitchell advised as follows:

- He acknowledged concerns raised regarding affordable and social mixed tenure estates.
- He advised that Part V units are being delivered, but the number of units delivered is dependent on the delivery of private housing estates.
- He advised members that the target of 223 affordable units to be delivered up to 2026. However, there are issues with the market with regards to construction and there are limits on the cost of schemes, and this will lead to schemes not being viable in certain areas.

- He advised that there is a fallback for unsold affordable units to be reassigned into social housing stock.
- He explained that the scheme is designed to ensure that there will be enough applicants for the schemes.
- It was proposed by Cllr. Charity, seconded by Cllr. Mannion that the Draft Scheme of Priorities for Affordable Dwelling Purchase arrangements be recommended to the full Council as presented. This was agreed.

4. Tenant in Situ Scheme

Mr. Hanrahan provided a detailed presentation to member of the Tenant in Situ Scheme and highlighted the following:

- The eviction ban was lifted on the 31st March 2023 and this scheme order Housing Authorities to assist applicants where they were served a valid Notice of Termination/Notice to Quit.
- That under the scheme Galway County Council are allowed to possibly purchase a property with HAP/Social Housing Supports approved tenants.
- Galway County Council will adapt their approach to house purchase in line with the national guidelines and he informed the members of this approach which will be followed.
- He advised members that many social housing applicants who have been served a valid Notice to Quit have been allocated social housing unit or secured alternative accommodation.
- He further advised that there are certain standards that proposed properties must meet and if these are not met, Galway County Council will not pursue purchase of a property.
- He advised that Galway County Council's target for acquisitions is 25 units in 2023.

In response to queries raised by members Mr. Hanrahan advised as follows:

- Rent Pressure Zones designation rests with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- He advised that each tenant that submits a validated Notice to Quit to the council is contacted regarding the scheme and information is provided to tenants and property owners about the scheme.
- He advised that there is provision in the scheme for tenants who are not eligible for social housing supports, via AHBs/Cost Rental and the Housing Agency.
- He advised that COPE manages Homeless accommodation services on behalf of the Council, currently very little emergency accommodation is available. He further advised members that homelessness is still high priority.
- He advised that no further staff have been assigned for implementation of the Tenant in Situ scheme.

- He advised that Galway County Council are expecting to reach its target and that a number of purchases are in the pipeline.

5. Any Other Business

- Mr. Hanrahan informed the members that at the next SPC meeting, Mr. Ger Scully will have an amendment to the scheme of letting priorities concerning the family size and bedroom amounts for approval.
- In response to a query raised regarding the Croi Conaithe scheme, Mr. Hanrahan advised that the proposed updates will not come into effect until May.
- The Chair Cllr Byrne advised members that facilities were now available to allow members to attend the SPC meeting remotely.
- Cllr. Byrne concluded the meeting.