

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE
Minutes of Housing SPC Meeting held on Wednesday, 1st February 2023 in the Council Chamber, Galway County Council at 10 a.m.

I Láthair:-

Baill: Cllr. Joe Byrne, Chairperson

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn

Cllr. Thomas Welby

Cllr. Eileen Mannion

Cllr. Seamus Walsh

Mr. Mark Coffey

Oifigh: Mr. Liam Hanrahan, Director of Services, Housing

Ms. Carmel Kilcoyne, Senior Executive Officer, Housing

Ms. Angela Spelman, Administrative Officer, Housing

Mr. Kieran Keon, Senior Social Worker, Housing

Mr. Damien Mitchell, Senior Engineer, Housing

Mr. Eoin Hardiman, Assistant Staff Officer, Housing

Apologies: Mr. Enda McGuane, Ms. Aimee McGee, Ms. Nora Corcoran

- Cllr. Joe Byrne welcomed Mark Coffey to the Housing SPC.
- Cllr. Byrne informed the members of the apologies of Ms. Aimee McGee and Ms. Nora Corcoran.
- Cllr. Byrne informed the members of the withdrawal of Mr. Enda McGuane from the Housing SPC and that there will be a follow up by Mr. Liam Hanrahan for the new member.
- Cllr. Byrne thanked Ms. Carmel Kilcoyne for her work on the working agenda for the year ahead. A copy will be issued to all members.

1. Minutes of the meeting of the 16th November 2022

- The minutes of the meeting on the 16th of November 2022 were proposed by Cllr. Seamus Walsh and seconded by Cllr. Thomas Welby.
- Cllr. Byrne opened the floor to matters arising from the minutes.

- Cllr. Byrne queried the status of the Tubber Road judicial review and the status of the Social Housing Assessment.
- Mr. Damien Mitchell confirmed the Tubber Road case was before the Commercial Court recently with the aim of setting a date for the hearing.
- Mr. Hanrahan confirmed that the Social Housing Assessment has been completed.

2. Housing Delivery Action Plan Update

- Mr. Mitchell began by informing the members of the additional resources provided to the Capital Team in the Housing section.
- Mr. Mitchell provided an update with regards to the on-going projects and targets.
- Mr. Mitchell informed the members that currently Galway County Council can account for 291 of the 351 projects for 2023 Housing Delivery.
- Mr. Mitchell informed the members that the positive numbers in terms of targets are a direct result of the expansion of the Capital team.
- Cllr. Eileen Mannion thanked Mr. Mitchell for his update and queried if there were any upcoming projects for the Connemara region.
- Mr. Mitchell explained that in Carna and Rosmuc there are reviews to be carried on here on existing lands and Waste-Water Treatment plants to identify potential areas for construction.
- Mr. Mitchell informed Cllr. Mannion that Galway County Council are examining the same for Spiddal.
- Cllr. Welby queried if there is any update on any proposed projects in the Moycullen-Oughterard area.
- Mr. Mitchell informed Cllr. Welby that in relation to Council lands on the Mountain Road in Moycullen, which is an LA build project, that it is on hold pending an outcome to the Surface Water Design project for this area which is being conducted by the Roads Section.
- In relation to Nan Burkes Field in Oughterard, Mr. Mitchell informed Cllr. Welby that we have offered the project to an AHB but the feasibility of same is dependent on the CALF review which has not been finalised yet. If the AHB does not proceed with the project, Galway County Council will develop these lands as an LA Build project.
- Cllr. Jimmy McClearn thanked Mr. Mitchell for his update and agreed that the additional staff is a positive.
- Cllr. McClearn queried if there will be a revision of Galway County Council's housing delivery targets?
- Mr. Mitchell informed Cllr. McClearn that the availability of lands and infrastructure is a major issue, but there are on-going discussions on this.
- Cllr. McClearn queried if a partnership approach is possible due to the on-going issue of finance.
- Mr. Mitchell explained the market is currently an issue but there are various approaches and discussions on partnerships at the moment.
- Mr. Hanrahan informed Cllr. McClearn the programme is well advanced and that assistance from the Department can assist developers in terms of finance.
- Mr. Hanrahan informed the members that Home Build Finance Ireland are interested in the possibility of financing the private sector.

- Mr. Hanrahan believes without the private sector that it is difficult for social housing to meet targets.
- Cllr. Byrne queried if an increased supply can be sought from turnkey developments. Cllr. Byrne believes the LA build process is too time consuming.
- Mr. Mitchell explained that the LA Build programme is a four-stage process with the Department and the department have been very helpful to Galway County Council.
- Mr. Mitchell explained that Galway County Council have not control of timeframes for turnkeys.
- Mr. Hanrahan explained that turnkeys are part of the solution, but LA build is the best approach.
- Cllr. McClearn queried how the council approach the availability of zoned residential lands?
- Mr. Hanrahan informed Cllr. McClearn Galway County Council have offers of several sites and other sites to AHB's.

3. Affordable Homes Scheme - Presentation

- Mr. Hanrahan informed the members of the need for affordable homes and that there are targets to be met. Mr. Hanrahan explained there have been changes to the scheme with the new regulations.
- Ms. Kilcoyne delivered the presentation.
- Cllr. Welby sought clarity on the 70%/30% allocation.
- Mr. Hanrahan explained that 70% of the properties must be sold based on two criteria 1) the appropriate house size and then 2) by date and time of receipt of application. This is in accordance with the legislation. 30% can be allocated by the council's scheme of priorities criteria.
- Mr. Hanrahan informed the Councillors that under the 30% the elected members will be deciding on the scheme's priorities such as distance from the property etc.
- Ms. Kilcoyne expressed the need for clear record keeping on when an application is received, as this will be a deciding factor for allocation.
- Cllr. Mannion queried if a young couple without children applied now could they receive a property larger than their need.
- Ms. Kilcoyne confirmed that the allocations are to be made on the current need. This was further confirmed by Mr. Hanrahan.
- Cllr. Byrne informed the members that for the upcoming SPC meeting a draft of the scheme should be discussed by the members with the aim for passing at the April Plenary meeting.
- Ms. Kilcoyne confirmed she will draft and circulate this to the councillors for consideration.

4. Ukrainian Crisis.

- Ms. Angela Spellman informed the members that currently there are 90,000 Ukrainian refugees in Ireland.
- Ms. Spellman explained that under the Offer a Home scheme this the appropriate way to deal with the increased numbers.

- Ms. Spellman explained in greater detail that under the scheme the property needs to be unoccupied and of a liveable standard. Furthermore, in Galway County Council there has been 39 properties inspected with 3 on the stream now.
- Ms. Spellman informed the members that shared accommodation is dealt with through the Red Cross and Commercial Properties are through the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.
- Ms. Spellman explained that currently there are licence agreements in place for landlords providing accommodation and that the current price is €800 a month.
- Mr. Hanrahan informed the members that currently in Galway City and County there are 4,300 Ukrainian refugees, and the majority are in hotel and hostel settings.
- Mr. Hanrahan explained further that many of these are 3–6-month contracts as many of the hotel and hostels aim to go back to normal trading during the summer months.
- Mr. Hanrahan informed the members that the Department are looking at potential sites for modular housing
- Mr. Hanrahan also informed the members that large scale buildings are being considered and that Galway County Council are providing technical support to the private sector with regards to this.
- Cllr. Byrne queried if Galway County Council’s support is for Offer Home and sites? And if these sites are council sites?
- Mr. Hanrahan confirmed they are both state owned and private.
- Cllr. Mannion queried if councillors will be notified of any incoming refugees to their areas?
- Cllr. Byrne informed Cllr. Mannion that only remit of the SPC is for the Offer a Home scheme.
- Cllr. McClearn queried where would a habitable property be available for €800 a month?
- Mr. Hanrahan again referred to the figured of 39 expressions of interest and that all landlords had clear information on the amount and scheme.
- Cllr. McClearn queried if the option of acquiring parochial houses could be an option and acknowledged that rural settings and transport are challenges, but the local link is in operation across various areas and of great assistance.

5. Any Other Business

- Cllr. Byrne queried is the Social Housing Application process could be looked at as it is an executive function.
- Cllr. Byrne informed the members there are various queries from T.D.s about the delay in assessing applications.
- Mr. Hanrahan explained that the increase in the threshold amount has led to an increase in the amount of applications
- Mr. Hanrahan informed the members that incomplete applications are a major issue and timing consuming.
- Mr. Hanrahan clarified that there several applications on hand but that resources are low at the moment.

- Mr. Hanrahan briefed the members on the move to online applications for social housing and that it will not allow uploaded applications that are incomplete.
- Cllr. Byrne acknowledged that engagement from representative beforehand might reduce the level of incomplete applications.
- Cllr. Byrne concluded the meeting.