

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE**  
**Minutes of Housing SPC Meeting held on Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022 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. James Charity

Cllr. Eileen Mannion

Cllr. Seamus Walsh

Ms. Aimee McGee (Clúid)

Ms. Nora Corcoran (Social Inclusion)

**Oifigh:**

Mr. Liam Hanrahan, Director of Services, Housing

Ms. Carmel Kilcoyne, Senior Executive Officer, Housing

Ms. Nuala Heffernan, Administrative Officer, Housing

Ms. Angela Spelman, Administrative Officer, Housing

Mr. Damien Mitchell, Senior Engineer, Housing

Ms. Patricia Morley, Senior Staff Officer, Housing

Mr. Eoin Hardiman, Assistant Staff Officer, Housing

**Apologies:**

Mr. Kieran Keon, Mr. Enda McGuane

- Cllr Joe Byrne began the meeting by informing the committee of the apologies received from Mr. Enda McGuane and Mr. Kieran Keon.
- Cllr Byrne took the opportunity to explain that this meeting will be a chance to begin to look at the important issues for housing for the upcoming year.

## **1. Minutes of the meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2022**

- The minutes of the meeting held on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2022 were adopted on the proposal of Cllr. Thomas Welby and seconded by Cllr. James Charity.
- Ms. Aimee McGee requested clarity on housing for those with disabilities as there was a variety of areas and needs for those with a disability and these are not clear in the Housing Delivery Action Plan.
- Cllr. Byrne informed Ms. McGee that Mr. Damien Mitchell will address this in his update.

## **2. Housing Delivery Action Plan Update**

Mr. Mitchell updated the group as follows:

- That Galway County Council is poised to meet their housing targets for 2022.
- about the various challenges faced by Galway County Council this year which included inflation, costs of materials, costs associated per unit, shortage of construction worker and difficulty in recruiting council staff.
- that Galway County Council have a housing disability subgroup that meets on a regular basis to ensure they meet the various disability requirements and demands. These demands and requirements have been met. Disability sector and HSE are part of subgroup. (Ms McGee's query)
- about the impact of delays with An Bord Pleanala decisions and that all developments in the pipeline are required to go to ABP and therefore will be delayed.
- About the issue of infrastructural deficits and how this is the biggest issue in terms of effecting delivery.
- That there are wastewater facilities at present in many areas where there is no demand and that this leads to a constant push back to the larger towns in the county for development. This issue has been brought to the department for discussion and further guidance.
- With regards to the housing targets for 2023, the outlook was positive for meeting these targets.
- that the numbers of houses in terms of delivery have jumped significantly and that there are various units under discussion currently. These include turnkeys, CAS, AHB, Part 5 and LA build projects. There will be a further expression of interest on turnkey projects next March.
- that the on-going designs for LA build projects in various locations across the county.

Cllr. Byrne and Mr. Liam Hanrahan thanked Mr. Mitchell and his team for all their hard work.

- Mr. Hanrahan informed the members that the department are impressed with Galway County Council's work to ensure the targets are met. He outlined the large level of work undertaken to meet these targets. He supported Mr. Mitchell's claims that the

targets for 2023 will be met but that the challenges faced this year and next year will be significant.

- Cllr. Eileen Mannion thanked Mr. Mitchell and his team for their update. Cllr. Mannion queried when the development in Clifden will be completed.
- Cllr. James Charity thanked Mr. Mitchell and his team for their update. Cllr. Charity queried whether there will be a revision on the 60% LA/40% AHB ratio if the targets are not met.
- Ms. McGee wished to flag the properties in Carna and that the lack of infrastructure is leading to a drop in school numbers. Ms. McGee wished to make the committee aware of this. Ms. McGee requested an update on the status of the Claregalway development and if there were any issues?
- Mr. Hanrahan outlined that the target per year after 2023 for housing will be 350 houses. Mr. Hanrahan informed Cllr. Charity that if the 60/40 ratio is not met, the overall target will still have to be met. He expressed the need for more delivery from the AHB's and acknowledged that the review on the CALF structures should allow more for more delivery on AHB units.
- Mr. Mitchell informed Cllr. Mannion that the Clifden properties should be snagged over the coming weeks and that all units will be delivered by the end of December. He informed Ms. McGee that there has been an investigation done on Carna where the council have lands and schemes. Galway County Council are still awaiting this report. Regarding Claregalway, he outlined that the design phase is nearly completed and the submission to An Bord Pleanála is imminent.
- Cllr. Byrne queried if there were any reports available on the value for money for LA build and turnkey developments and why Galway County Council are paying a premium price on these. Cllr. Byrne also queried the status of the Tubber Road, Gort.
- Mr. Mitchell outlined the process to Cllr. Byrne and informed him that the department have a system in place concerning the value for money on developments. He advised that the Tubber Road case has been transferred to the Commercial Court and is due in November. Mr. Mitchell anticipates a quick decision.
- Cllr. Charity further queried the 60/40 split target for next year and whether the 40% will be met for AHB next year.
- Mr. Hanrahan outlined that if the 60/40 split cannot be met that Galway County Council will have to meet the deficit. He expressed his positivity that a substantial number of units are in the pipeline and will be delivered. He also explained that there is 250-300 units with planning permission and developers.
- Mr. Hanrahan informed the members that the Department and Minister are aware of the need for assistance from developers with regards to delivery.
- Ms. McGee informed the members that Cluid Housing have 52 properties in the pipeline.
- Cllr. Charity queried the figured from other AHB's.
- Mr. Mitchell was unable to provide the exact figures, but that there are various projects from other AHB's. Mr. Mitchell also expressed the need to change the CALF model to so that is cost effective for AHB's to undertake developments.

### **3. Croi Conaithe**

- Ms. Patricia Morley delivered the presentation.
- Cllr. Byrne and Mr. Liam Hanrahan thanked Ms. Morley for a very informative presentation.
- Mr. Hanrahan welcomed the scheme expansion to include rural areas, as Galway County Council have received numerous applications and queries for these areas. He informed the members that the relevant information will be circulated in due course. He advised that previous works undertaken before grant approval will not be eligible for the grant and that works are itemised on the forms.
- Cllr. Jimmy McClearn expressed his view that the scheme is quite limited. Cllr. McClearn believes there is not a great need for the grant and that owners of various properties have no incentive to apply for the grant. He believes there is already a challenge to meet housing targets and that the scheme is a lot of work for little reward.
- Cllr. Mannion thank Ms. Morley for her presentation. Cllr Mannion believes many homes in the Connemara area would be holiday homes and therefore not applicable. She queried if an Individual can apply if works have already started.
- Mr. Hanrahan confirmed they can, but only works carried out after the grant approval will be covered.
- Cllr. Mannion queried the need for planning permission.
- Ms. Morley clarified it would be needed for larger extensions or services on a property.
- Cllr. Charity thanked Ms. Morley for her presentation. He echoed Cllr. McClearn's views that the scheme is limited. Cllr. Charity expressed concern over the number of refusals in terms of applications. He believes a re-think needs to be done on the scheme and particularly with regards to properties owned by developers that are not eligible under scheme.
- Cllr. Byrne agreed both Cllr. McClearn and Cllr. Charity made good points but that there is a high number of people who will be eligible for the grant.
- Ms. McGee believes it is a small drop in the ocean overall, but it is positive to see potential for derelict properties to be brought back. She queried if anything is coming down the line for commercial properties?
- Ms. Morley confirmed that an applicant can apply with commercial property, once it will be converted fully for residential properties.
- Ms. Morley also informed the members that the 8 current viable applications are all based in town or village centres.
- Mr. Hanrahan further outlined that applicants can use commercial properties if brought back to residential use, or above commercial unit is used. Mr. Hanrahan believes an approach like this might tackle vacancy levels in various towns in the county.

### **4. Local Authority Home Loan Scheme**

- Ms. Carmel Kilcoyne delivered the presentation.

- Cllr. Byrne thanked Ms. Kilcoyne for a very informative presentation.
- Cllr. Thomas Welby thank Ms. Kilcoyne. Cllr. Welby queried why the success rates on appeals was 50%+.
- Mr. Hanrahan confirmed that at appeal stage, the applicants submit further and more detailed financial documentation which allowed the decision to be reversed.
- Cllr. Byrne queried the number of working applications not adjudicated on at the moment.
- Ms. Kilcoyne also provided clarity on the point of refusals as the Applicants have already been refused by two Financial institutions, they may demonstrate the ability to repay the loan.
- Cllr. Welby queried is interest rates are subject to change.
- Mr. Hanrahan confirmed interest rates are subject to change.
- Cllr. Charity queried how self-build applications are treated? Does the site need to be in the applicant's name? And even if it is family lands? Also, if a deposit is required.
- Ms. Kilcoyne confirmed that the guidelines on self-builds are clear; the site is to be transferred to the applicant's name and a deposit is required also.
- Cllr. Welby raised the question if direct labour is allowed.
- Mr. Hanrahan confirmed it is.
- Cllr .Charity queried if planning permission must be in place and that was confirmed as a requirement by Mr. Hanrahan.
- Cllr. Byrne was intrigued by the site's issues raised and has asked for further clarity on this. This will be provided by Ms. Kilcoyne.
- Cllr. Byrne expressed his hope that all on-going schemes, when coupled together will help families and create a bigger and more positive picture for housing.

#### **5. Any Other Business (A.O.B)**

- Cllr. Byrne asked Mr. Hanrahan to address Ms. Corcoran's query on the Social Housing Assessment.
- Mr. Hanrahan confirmed that Social Housing Assessments are undertaken every year and this year there was 1200 approx. chosen for Galway County Councils assessment. Mr. Hanrahan explained that Galway County Council are required to reach out to all chosen applicants and request they submit updated documentation. Mr. Hanrahan explained that there have been various attempts made across various platforms to contact applicants who have not responded thus far. He confirmed currently there are 234 who have not returned further information requests. Mr. Hanrahan acknowledged the hard work by the housing staff to reach these people, but it is the responsibility of the applicant to submit the requested documents. Mr. Hanrahan explained that those with disability requirements or children on the application have not been closed yet and will be a reviewed. He advised that there is constant engagement with Housing Liaison

Officers and various other groups to identify certain applicants who may have difficulty with the process.

- Cllr. Byrne queried why an individual would not be assessed.
- Mr. Hanrahan informed Cllr. Byrne that an applicant not assessed this year may have been assessed last year or updated their details previously.
- Cllr. Byrne questioned if current social housing tenants were part of the assessment.
- Mr. Hanrahan confirmed current social housing tenants are not assessed.
- Cllr. Byrne acknowledged the hard work of the social housing staff here.
- Cllr. McClearn echoed Mr. Hanrahan's point that it is the responsibility of applicants to respond to the assessment if they wish to stay as an applicant.
- Cllr. Byrne raised the question of whether the areas of choice and the areas covered by each Housing Liaison officer should match the Municipal District areas.
- Mr. Hanrahan confirmed that there are 4 Housing Liaison Officers but 5 Municipal Districts. Furthermore, that the areas of choice do not align with the Municipal Districts and there it can be a large workload for certain Officers. Mr. Hanrahan believes an updating of the areas of choice to align with the Municipal Districts should be added to the SPC work plan.
- Cllr. Byrne sought an update on the Control of Horses legislation.
- Mr. Hanrahan informed the members there was a recent Parliamentary Question before the Dail and that the Minister for Agriculture addressed the need to simplify the legislation and confirmed a review is underway.
- Cllr. McClearn addressed the issue of the housing grants process. He acknowledged the hard work of the grants team and highlighted that it is a large workload.
- Cllr. Byrne asked how applications are being prioritised?
- Mr. Hanrahan confirmed all applications are being examined at the same time.
- Ms. McGee informed the members the issue was addressed at the PPN linkage group, and it was put forward that the funding was not enough and by the time applications are looked at, the works quotes are out of date.
- Cllr. Byrne acknowledged the difficulties here but confirmed the funding amounts are tied to national allocations.
- Cllr. Byrne confirmed dates for Meetings in 2023 will be looked at in the coming days and concluded the meeting.