

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Minutes of Housing, Culture and Recreation SPC Meeting held in the Room G01 on 16th September, 2015 at 11.00a.m.

I Láthair :-

Baill: Cllr. T. McHugh, Chairperson
Cllr. M. Noone
Cllr. M. Fahy
Cllr. P. Hynes
Ms. Helena McElmeel
Mr. Declan McKeon

Oifigigh: Mr. P. Gavican, D.O.S.
Mr. Michael Owens, S.E.O. Corporate Services
Mr. M. O'Donnell, A.O. Housing
Ms. M. Jordan, A.O. Housing
Mr. M. Sheil, S.E.E. Housing
Mr. T. Doherty, E.E., Housing
Ms. S. Slattery, A.S.O.

Apologies were received from Jean Brann, S.E.O. Housing and Cllrs. Eileen Mannion and Donagh Killilea

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 3rd June, 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd June, 2015 were adopted on the proposal of Cllr. Fahy, seconded by Cllr. Hynes.

Matters Arising

Mr. Gavican requested that the minutes be amended at Item No. 2 Capital Funding Programme as follows: "Funding has also been allocated for the construction of 6 single rural houses, 10 houses at Gort Mhaoilir, Athenry, 10 at Garbally Drive, Ballinasloe, 3 at Esker Fields, Ballinasloe **and 25 at Weir Road, Tuam.**"

Cllr. Hynes noted that under Item No. 2 there were no proposals for Gort or Loughrea. Mr. Gavican stated that the Council had submitted a Programme of works to the Department, and the Department had selected the works which would receive funding.

Cllr. Fahy raised a matter in relation to Item No. 5 Draft 1916/2016 Centenary Programme – update. He stated that there will be two events taking place in Ardrahan to commemorate the Centenary, i.e. a Mass on St. Patrick's Day in St. Teresa's Church, Labane and also an event at Limepark on Easter Monday. He requested that the Defence Forces be asked to attend these events.

Cllr. Hynes informed the meeting that the publication by Sean O'Mahony entitled "Frongoch: University of Revolution", could be of great assistance in compiling the Register of Relatives of Participants in the 1916 Rising, as it contained all the names of the 326 people who were arrested.

2. Update on Social Housing Strategy

It was agreed that this matter had been dealt with under Matters Arising.

3. Voids Update

Mr. Sheil circulated a report outlining the current position in relation to voids in Galway County Council. The total number of void properties stands at 86, with Department funding approved for 25 units. An Architect will be appointed shortly to examine options for dealing with the vacant properties on Gilmartin Road, Tuam. This process will involve a full and detailed public consultation, and also assessment of the costs for the various options to ensure value for money.

Cllr. Fahy stated that there were a number of dwellings vacant in Crowe Street, Gort.

Ms. Jordan informed the meeting that it was difficult to let these properties at present. It is hoped to have CCTV cameras installed at this estate by October, and Estate Management processes will also be put in place to enhance the Estate. Ms. Jordan stated that a specific unit has been established to deal with anti-social behaviour. An Anti-Social Behaviour Officer has been appointed. This Unit can respond to complaints immediately, and liaise with the Gardai where necessary.

Mr. Gavican stated that fundamental issues have to be addressed in both Gilmartin Road and Crowe Street before works can progress, and that good Estate Management is critical.

4. Update on Current Expenditure

Mr. O'Donnell stated that 54 units have been approved under the Construction Programme. Approval has been received for 41 units under the Capital Acquisitions Scheme, together with 30 units which were previously approved, giving a total of 71 units. A number of acquisitions are being progressed also. There has been a shift of emphasis from Capital to Current expenditure, e.g. RAS and Leasing. Approved Housing Bodies will receive funding to lease, purchase or construct housing units. Galway County Council has held discussions with the Approved Housing Bodies and has informed them of the preferred locations for these units. The prospective tenants will be taken from the social housing list. Some units will be delivered over the coming months, while others are still under discussion.

It was noted that while ambitious targets have been set under the Rental Accommodation Scheme, it is very difficult to get Landlords to participate in the scheme. All towns within commuting distance of Galway City are under pressure for supply, with exceptionally high rents. Galway County Council conducted a major advertising campaign, on radio and in local newspapers. It involved considerable investment, but has generated very few new landlords. Cllr. Burke queried if there were any incentives for the private Landlord to go on the Rental Accommodation Scheme. Mr. O'Donnell replied that it is the prerogative of the Landlord who they rent the property to, and there is a lot of competition from demand in the private sector.

Cllr. Fahy queried what the position would be if Galway County Council were asked by the State to take in refugees from Syria. Mr. Gavican replied that it was a topical subject, but no direction has been received to date. The Social Housing Strategy contains a Resettlement Scheme to cater for such situations, although the current crisis might not

have been envisaged. Galway County Council will have to accommodate whatever number of refugees are referred to them if that transpires.

5. 1916/2016 Centenary Programme for the County of Galway

Mr. Owens informed the meeting that the Draft Programme was adopted at the July meeting of the Council. The Grant Scheme had also been approved at that meeting. Fifty grant applications had been received, twenty eight of which had received approval. Galway County Council will be launching a series of initiatives focused on the Centenary, e.g. the launching of two Irish Language Scholarship Schemes. Mr. Owens stated that Athenry had been chosen as a location to host an event on Easter Monday 2016, which will involve the synchronised wreath laying in a number of locations around Ireland, and will be broadcast live on RTE. Mr. Owens informed Cllr. Fahy that as a result the Army may not be available to facilitate the event in Limepark on Easter Monday. RTE are also producing a documentary which will include a one minute slot on each County. Galway has been successful in being selected for a half hour broadcast also. The format will be based on a well know personality visiting the County, and meeting with relatives recalling their connection to the Rising.

The National launch of the Centenary Programme will take place on 8th October, 2015, after which each County will have an individual launch between October/November. Copies of the Programme will be made available after this launch.

Cllr. Hynes thanked Mr. Owens and his staff for the extensive research which had gone into the preparation of the Programme. Cllr. Fahy agreed with Cllr. Hynes, and said that it would be a fitting tribute to the Volunteers of 1916. Mr. Owens thanked them for their comments, and stated that the Programme was a collective effort which had been delivered by the Steering Group.

6. Any Other Business

Cllr. McHugh queried if the Department envisaged re-introducing a Tenant Purchase Scheme. He stated that it had been a very successful scheme in the past giving tenants the mechanism to purchase their houses. Mr. Gavican stated that the Department intend to release a scheme later in the year, however the Council will have to be mindful of stock levels when operating any new scheme.

Mr. McKeown asked if the Council had a policy with regard to the provision of community facilities. He said that community facilities should be located in order to provide benefit to the maximum number of people. Cllr. McHugh advised Mr. McKeown to put this item on the Agenda for the next meeting, so that the matter could be discussed.

Ms. McElmeel queried if the Council had an Assets Register of such facilities in the County. Mr. Owens replied that he would be able to provide one at the next meeting.

This concluded the business of the meeting.