

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Minutes of Housing, Culture and Recreation SPC Meeting held on Thursday, 25th October 2018 in Boardroom, Centrepoint, Liosbán at 10.00am

I Láthair:-

Baill: Cllr. S. Walsh, Chairperson
Cllr. D. Killilea McHugh
Cllr. M. Fahy
Cllr. E. Mannion
Cllr. P. Hynes
Ms. H. McElmeel

Oifigigh: Mr. M. Owens, A/ Director of Services, Housing
Ms. Jean Brann, Senior Executive Officer, Housing
Mr K. Finn, Senior Executive Engineer, Housing
Mr E. Mulvey, Tenancy Enforcement Officer, Housing
Ms. E. McKiernan, A/ Assistant Staff Officer, Housing

1. Presentation from Ó' Cualann Cohousing Alliance

Mr John Moore, Head of Operations at Ó' Cualann Cohousing Alliance gave a presentation on their model of developments of fully integrated cooperative homes at affordable prices in sustainable communities (presentation attached)

Cllr. Killilea asked Mr Moore to differentiate between Ó' Cualann Cohousing Alliance and an Approved Housing Body (AHB) such as Tuath or Respond.

Mr Moore responded that other approved housing bodies like Tuath or Respond rent their properties to people with a housing need whereas Ó' Cualann provide affordable homes for purchase to those that can't afford to purchase on the open market.

Cllr Killilea asked about the common charter and how neighbour disputes are handled by Ó' Cualann.

Mr Moore explained that an agreement is reached between Ó' Cualann and the residents with input from a staff member from the Local Community Development section of the Council at the beginning of any development.

Cllr Killilea asked if there was any interest in Galway for such a scheme.

Mr Moore replied that Ó' Cualann have been approached by groups in Galway and that Galway City Council expressed an interest in looking at suitable sites to develop approximately 15 units.

Mr Owens said that Galway County Council had invited Ó' Cualann to make this presentation and if Galway County Council were to engage with Ó' Cualann it would be subject to a Section 183, transfer of Council site which would be subject to members approval.

Cllr Hynes welcomed Mr Moore and added that he would be in favour of opening discussions with Ó' Cualann Cohousing Alliance.

Mr Moore reiterated the mission statement of Ó' Cualann Cohousing Alliance and that there is a need of affordable housing with larger urban models preferable.

Ms McElmeel enquired if there is much demand around the periphery of the City and that it could be an opportunity to obtain potential mixed developments.

Cllr Fahy raised the issue of rough sleepers in Galway county town areas and if there could be accommodation or houses provided to house them in, was there anything that could be done by Ó' Cualann in this area.

Mr Moore spoke about Ó' Cualann's involvement in discussion with Belfast Council regarding accommodation rough sleepers for the winter. Their aim is to provide temporary, secure, centrally located accommodation for rough sleepers in the winter months. Dublin City Council has also been approached in respect of providing a site for modular units (secure, no cooking facilities). Site will also be looked in Limerick soon. One of these modular units would cost approx. €25,000 from Limerick Castle Cabins.

Cllr Mannion told Mr Moore that this was an interesting concept, plans look very good and wished him luck with projects.

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 14th September 2018.

Ms McElmeel requested clarification on item three – discussion in relation to Council owned lands. Will there be a review of the zoning sites on Galway County Council owned land. Is there an opportunity to engage with Planning Section / SPC if our current zoning is holding us back in developing sites.

Cllr Fahy proposed minutes of SPC 22nd March 2018.

Cllr Hynes seconded motion

Cllr Fahy addressed the SPC about a site that is for sale in the Toberoe area of Gort. M. Owens replied that discussions were ongoing.

Cllr Killilea enquired if there had been much interest from potential tenants for the 40 units at Gilmartin Road, Tuam. Mr Owens replied that the allocation process had not commenced. There is a new document to be put forward to the SPC regarding the proposed new tenancy induction programme following on from that there will be the rolling out of a significant number of units by July 2019 in Gilmartin Road.

3. Draft Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy - presentation

Mr Owens circulated the Draft Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy which SPC members are advised to review and revert back to at the next SPC meeting following meeting of the Plenary Council.

Mr Mulvey delivered the draft Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy. The strategy is governed by National Policy. ASB predominantly relates to drug activity and related anti-social behavior associated with that activity (copy attached)

Following questions from Cllr Killilea, Mr Mulvey explained the process surrounding the matrix used by allocations and the process followed by Galway County Council in relation to criminal activity - responsibility of the Gardai to investigate but that the Housing unit would link in with them and share information.

Cllr Killilea discussed an article written in the Tuam Herald where a Council tenant had been convicted of a criminal offence and sent to jail. Cllr Killilea posed the question as to what would now happen to that tenant's house. Mr Mulvey advised that it is at the discretion of each Local Authority what happens to the property. Abandoned houses are dealt with on a case by case basis but there is no prescribed method of dealing with it in legislation.

Cllr Fahy advised that tenants had reported ASB issues to him directly. Mr Mulvey advised the Cllr that those and all ASB complaints need to be reported to the Tenancy and Estate Management office (TEM) and that all reports are handled with discretion and confidentiality. Cllr Killilea enquired whether Galway County Council has evicted any tenant. Mr Mulvey replied that there had been two evictions under Section 12. Cllr Mannion asked if once evicted does Galway County Council need to rehouse the evictee. Mr Mulvey advised that any evicted tenant is suspended from Galway County Council housing list for a period of two years.

Cllr Fahy thanked Mr Mulvey for his contribution at a recent neighbourhood watch meeting in Gort.

Cllr Hynes thanked E. Mulvey for his presentation and remarked that the legal process is slow and protracted. He discussed a number of issues in a Loughrea housing estate but advised that the injured parties were not willing to make any official statement. He acknowledged that the Housing Unit was understaffed and that the existing staff were doing the best they could. Mr Mulvey assured Cllr Hynes that if the injured parties made reports they would be supported. He also advised that he was already aware of some of the issues mentioned and reassured Cllr Hynes that these were progressing significantly.

4. Local Authority Land Activation and Affordable Housing 2018

Mr Owens gave a presentation on Local Authority Land Activation and Affordable Housing 2018. It raises some questions as it is not clear if subsidy can be applied to an already serviced site. An assessment of Galway County Council landbank would need to be conducted in relation to 1) viability assessment and 2) income assessment. There will be a workshop taking place on the 8th November so more details will be available after that as the information thus far is only preliminary.

Cllr Walsh queried why the build costs for a three bedroomed house were more expensive in Dublin than elsewhere. Ms McElmeel that the difference could be accounted for by market pressure and building premiums in Dublin.

Cllr Walsh highlighted the difficulties encountered by individuals seeking planning permission for private houses and the obstacles that they encounter in the process.

Cllr Hynes expressed his optimism that action is finally being taken and that the Department are updating the local authorities instead of issuing press releases.

Cllr Killilea expressed concern that the Longford costs outlined in the document mirror those in Tuam and whether it will truly apply to smaller towns.

Cllr Killilea proposed that the Director of Services write to the Department to ask them how relevant this document is.

Cllr S Walsh seconded this proposal.

5. Any Other Business.

Cllr Mannion enquired about repairs to doors and windows of Council properties and whether there was funding available.

Mr Owens explained that Galway County Council is at a transitional stage with the stock survey and that there are obligations for minimum standards to apply.

Cllr Mannion then asked about the new regulations recently announced in respect of Air B & B and whether these would apply to Clifden. Mr Owens confirmed that they would apply.

Cllr Killilea enquired about the purchase of a property for an individual to be housed by Respond. Mr Owens confirmed there was funding available to Respond for this and that it would not cost the Galway County Council

This concluded business

Next SPC Meeting Thursday 6th December 2018