

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Minutes of Housing, Culture and Recreation SPC Meeting held on Friday, 14th September 2018 in Council Chamber, County Hall at 10.30am

I Láthair:- Cllr. S. Walsh, Chairperson

Cllr. T. McHugh

Cllr. M. Noone

Baill:

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

Ms. Celine Delaney, Administrative Officer, Housing

Mr K. Finn, A/Senior Executive Engineer, Housing

Ms F. Holland, Senior Executive Engineer, Housing

Ms M. Forde, Senior Social Worker, Housing

Mr E. Mulvey, Tenancy Enforcement Officer, Housing

Ms. E. McKiernan, A/Assistant Staff Officer, Housing

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 22nd March 2018

The minutes of SPC meeting held on the 22nd March 2018 were proposed by Cllr. Fahy, seconded by Cllr. Hynes.

Ms. McElmeel requested an amendment to the minutes in relation to the reliance of volunteerism in County events and of artists in the creative sector at such events.

The Chairperson in response to Cllr. Fahy advised that individuals cases should be discussed directly with the relevant staff in the Housing Unit.

The minutes as amended were agreed.

2. Review of Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy - presentation

Ms. Delaney delivered a presentation on the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy. This strategy is currently under review. The strategy is governed by the relevant legislative framework provided by the Housing Acts. ASB predominantly relates to drug activity and related anti-social behavior associated with that activity.

Number of complaints received from September 2017 to date are 103

- Drug related – 8
- Non-drug related including violence, vandalism and racism – 32
- Estate Management issues including nuisance, animals and dumping – 63

This does not include visits and reports by HLO's, TEO and TLO.

Mr. Delaney further explained that the avenues available for resolution are engagement with both the alleged offenders and the complainants, liaison with Social Workers, Tenancy Enforcement Officers and other Agencies (Gardai, Probation Service, Health Workers)

Ms. Delaney outlined that there is confusion between nuisance and anti-social behavior by people in general. Suggestions and opinions were invited for inclusion in the review of the strategy

An outline of the matrix used to inform Housing Allocations was provided noting that applicants with a high matrix score are deferred for a year and then subject to reassessment.

Ms. Delaney acknowledged that this is a difficult and sensitive area to work in. Ms. Delaney welcomed questions and Mr. Mulvey was also in attendance to answer any questions.

Ms. Delaney advised that there is a formal complaints process that the individuals should be directed to follow to resolve the issues. Ms. Delaney noted that it is a confidential process and that the forms are available on-line. However, Ms. Delaney advised that while it is confidential the details of the alleged offenders are required in order to investigate the complaint. Complaints are then dealt through discussion with HLO and TEO.

Cllr M Noone asked what happens in relation to nuisance cases.

Ms. Delaney in response to Cllr. Noone outlined the process for nuisance behavior including logging and investigating these with the involvement of HLO, local intelligence (Community Wardens) and Gardai. It was noted that the establishment of Residents Association in LA estates is actively encouraged so that the community engage with one another.

Cllr. McHugh acknowledged that dealing with nuisance was time consuming and in his experience people don't like being confronted. Cllr. McHugh asked if GCC could bring in an outside agency to deal with such problems as the outside agency could be firm with individuals and would not be known to the individuals.

3. Housing Capital Programme

Mr. Owens circulated the guidelines that the Dept. have issued to all LA's in respect of submissions for Local Authority Housing Construction Projects. (see attached)

Mr. Owens focused on Stage 1 of the guidelines as outlined on pages 3 and 4 of the document. He outlined that the LA must produce a cost benefit analysis of projects and that there is a requirement from the Department to maximize density therefore terraced housing is preferable.

He explained that GCC has clustered the areas on choice for social housing applicants from 56 areas to 15 areas. This is to deliver on the Department's requirement for sustainable community proofing and to ensure adequate housing need to support full occupancy in the longer term.

He outlined the issue of waste water as a site constraint and abnormal costs that can generate because of these site constraints.

Mr. Owens welcomed questions of which there were none.

Mr. Finn gave a presentation on the GCC construction programme. He circulated a letter that has been issued to GCC from the Dept. outlining the targets for the building, Acquisition and Leasing for the period 2018 – 2021 of 926 units in total.

There are currently 23 capital housing schemes in the construction workflow 2018 – 2021

There are 78 units currently under construction

- 238 units to be built by 2021 ranging from single rural development to large scale refurbishments and new builds on Gilmartin Road Tuam (67 units).
- 274 acquisitions currently in our workflow
- 226 through Part V in our workflow
- 215 units by Approved Housing Bodies (e.g. Cluid, Respond)
- 114 Acquisition

Cllr. Hynes raised queries in relation to construction in rural areas, noting the absence of a construction programme over the previous 10 years.

Mr. Owens responded that there are 6 single rural dwellings completed / under construction and that the Department will only approve single rural developments in exceptional circumstances (disability, local requirement / connection) with consideration required to be given to meeting housing needs through HAP, RAS or local developments.

Cllr. McHugh said that there are a lot of enquiries in respect of derelict and semi derelict properties in the County and are there any plans for GCC to release these for sale and that this would be prudent to do and the income generated would be beneficial to GCC.

Mr. Owens responded that there has been a lot of work down in respect of rural derelict houses, whether its economical to knock and rebuild and a proposal regarding this has been sent to the Department. All single rural units must be assessed by the Department in line with sustainable community proofing. The matter was raised with Minister English on his recent visit to GCC and the challenge to get funding for this

programme. He confirmed that following the conclusion of the assessment it was intended to dispose of some units subject to Section 183 approval by members.

Cllr. Hynes spoke about the large coverage in the media and press regarding the housing and that there is a lot of land in the ownership of GCC. He also added that the Housing SPC must intensify efforts to get information out in the public domain as to what is being done with land in state ownership.

Ms. McElmeel requested an outline of the stage of development of the various construction projects.

Mr. Owens detailed the projects at Stage 4 construction as follows:

- 6 single rural units
- 40 units Gilmartin Road
- 21 refurbishments
- 12 units at Garbally Drive/Esker Fields, Ballinasloe

He added that at Stage 3 includes a unit at Creggane and the redevelopment of Craughwell Halting Site under the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

Stage 2 included 5 units in An Cheathru Rua and 14 units in Roundstone subject to Part 8.

At Stage 1 are the following:

- 23 units St Josephs, Clifden
- 10 units Claremount Oughterard
- 30 units Moycullen
- 5 units Loughrea
- 10 units Kinvara
- 10 units Ardrahan
- 16 units Bridge Court

Mr. Owens in reply to the Chairperson responded that all developments come back to sustainable community proofing in order to avoid large scale social housing in one area resulting in an over concentration of social housing. Mr. Owens outlined the constraints associated with the land bank including zoning, services, extent of existing social housing and current housing need.

He advised of the completion of a master plan for Station Road, Oughterard and the challenges presented in advancing development of the site.

Cllr. Hynes enquired about schemes for affordable housing and the potential to engage with Approved Housing Bodies in relation to the development of Council lands to meet housing need.

Mr. Owens advised that Mr. Finn's presentation included developments by AHB in the Capital Programme. He confirmed that the Council were engaging with AHB's in relation to the potential to deliver additional units.

Cllr. Noone commented that those on HAP and rent allowance schemes are the lucky ones those that don't qualify are stuck in private rented and the cost of building is beyond their reach. He noted that the cost of building a 4-bedroomed house has risen and the cost of construction needs to be addressed.

Ms. McElmeel said that there had been a 20% increase in the cost of a block layer and that affordability was a massive issue. She asked if we could rezone sites that comply with phase 1 of the guidelines and push this even though it goes against our existing development plan.

The Chairperson noted that the Council and Members cannot do all they would wish to respond to the need for housing and that personally he was not in favour of urban density and would prefer lower density development.

Cllr. McHugh suggested that GCC would be involved in the developing of sites – roads, waste water, broadband – and then make those sites available to the public allowing individuals to build at cost. Cllr. Noone advised that such a practice exists in Australia.

Mr. Owens in reply to the Chairperson outlined the criteria involved in the Rebuilding Ireland Home loans

- Eligibility
- Two refusals from other lenders
- Fulltime employment for two years
- Income €50k for single applicant, €75k for joint applicants
- Over 18yrs to 70 yrs.
- Load of 90% market value (up to max €320k)

He advised that GCC have received 90 applications to date with the Housing Agency carrying out the credit check. He confirmed that approval in principle has been given to 20 applications.

Mr. Owens outlined the development affordable cooperative housing delivered by O’Cualann Cohousing Alliance and Dublin City Council. He suggested that the SPC may wish to invite O’Cualann to present to a future meeting of the SPC on the model with a view to Galway County Council considering the suitability of same for County Galway.

It was proposed by Cllr. Hynes, seconded by the Chairperson and agreed to invite O’Cualann to present at the next meeting of the SPC to be held on Thursday, 25th October 2018.

Cllr. Fahy spoke of the hypocrisy of the Minister not to allow one off rural housing and how this impacts on the local communities and how they will be decimated.

Cllr. Walsh expressed the view that one off housing would decimate the countryside and that open planning is not desirable. He also outlined that the discussion had gone off topic and that this was more relevant to the Planning SPC

Cllr. Fahy suggested that the DOS of Planning attend the next Housing SPC. The Chairperson advised Cllr. Fahy to make representation directly to a member of the Planning SPC re his concerns.

4. Preventative Maintenance.

Ms. Holland gave a power point presentation on Preventative Maintenance.

Ms. Holland in reply to Cllr. Mannion detailed the number of units in each lot for the purpose of the initial stock survey to inform the development of the programme as follows Connemara / Oranmore 496 units, Tuam 504 units, Loughrea 784 units, Ballinasloe 499 units.

In reply to Ms. McElmeel it was confirmed that ventilation and condensation will be included in the inspections checklist via the GeoPal system.

5. Housing Strategy

Mr. Owens detailed the Housing Needs Assessment of 2018 where 1,800 applications were reviewed. It is part of a National housing needs assessment. It is a validation exercise used by the Housing Agency. GCC is required to do one annually also. Text messaging increased response rates. There is only a preliminary outcome as there is some cross-over of applicants on the both the City and County lists. The net needs in the County remains the same. The assessment does not include transfer applications, HAP, RAS and City Council applicants with a Country area choice.

350 applicants were removed from the list, the majority because of their income exceeding the limits set while a total of 815 new applications have been received since 1st January 2018.

- Disability Strategy

Ms. Forde gave an update on the Disability Strategy and Traveller Accommodation Programme. There has been increased emphasis on requesting supporting documentation from medical professionals for any application with a medical category so that these can be assessed and given the correct priority. Prior to the HNA 2018 there were in excess of 700 applications with a priority 1 medical following completion of the HNA this have been reduced to 516 priority 1 medical comprising of:

- 231 mental health illness
- 217 physical disability
- 59 other intellectual disability
- 9 sensory disability

Areas of focus are stability of accommodation and proximity to services for these applicants. There is a steering group who meet four times a year. Approved Housing Bodies are very much involved.

- Traveller Accommodation Programme

In the process of drafting the fifth Traveller Accommodation Programme for the period 2019 – 2024. Its purpose is to draft a programme to deal with the existing and projected housing needs of the Traveller Community. There is to be a meeting on the 4th October of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. They will examine the annual traveller census. There is a requirement on the housing needs application forms for applicants to be able to select traveller specific accommodation. It also needs to be identifiable in the HNA.

- Homeless

Ms. Forde also provided an update on the current homeless situation in Galway County. There are currently 26 families in emergency accommodation. There are 17 traveller families. All have been accommodation in some form of hotel / B & B type accommodation. There are 70 applicants listed as homeless on ihouse. COPE and Galway Simon are the support services used by GCC. There are two families suspended from the service in line with their protocols.

HAP Placefinder administration post at Grade V level is to be appointed shortly for a two-year contract period. It is hoped that his will improve the ability of GCC to tackle the difficulties for applicants in securing

suitable accommodation in the private sector as the HAP finder will have access to a budget to provide a deposit and first months rent. It takes the Department of Social Protection time to allocate this to the applicant.

Ms. Forde in reply to Cllr. Mannion confirmed that private emergency accommodation includes Hotels, B & B's and self-catering accommodation.

6. Notices of Motions

Cllr. Fahy outlined the background to his Notice of Motion detailing the urgent need for 100 houses to accommodate the different nationalities with young families living in Gort. He described the situation as critical where there are 3 and 4 families sharing the one house.

Mr. Finn responded by advising that the Local Area Plan has been extended to 2023. A number of potential areas for development have been identified however, challenges include zoning, services and access. He noted the Stage 1 of any proposal

7. Any Other Business

Ms. Brann briefed the meeting on the schedule of meetings and work programme for the SPC and same was noted and agreed.

Cllr. Hynes referenced estate maintenance in Fahy Gardens, Loughrea and a request from the Municipal District of Loughrea for a representative of the Housing Unit to attend a meeting on Thursday 11th October. Mr. Owens confirmed that a representative of the Housing Unit would be in attendance.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Next SPC Meeting Thursday 25th October 2018

