

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Minutes of Housing SPC Meeting held on Wednesday, 15th September 2021 via Microsoft Teams at 10.00am

I Láthair:-

Baill: Cllr. J. Byrne, Chairperson
Cllr. J. McClearn
Cllr. E. Mannion
Cllr. C. Keaveney
Cllr. S. Walsh
Mr. E McGuane (Business)
Ms. N Corcoran (Social Inclusion)

Oifigh: Mr. L. Hanrahan, Director of Services, Housing
Mr. G Scully, Senior Executive Officer, Housing
Ms. N. Heffernan, Administrative Officer, Housing
Ms. R. Lowe, A/ Senior Engineer, Housing
Ms. E. McKiernan, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies Ms T Flynn, Ms M Conneely and Mr K Keon

1. Minutes of SPC meeting 2nd June 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd June, 2021 were adopted on the proposal of Cllr. Jimmy McClearn and seconded by Cllr. Eileen Mannion.

2. Areas of choice – proposed changes

Mr G Scully explained the proposed changes to the existing area of choice Athenry / Oranmore into two areas by splitting the area roughly down the M18 using the townland boundaries creating two distinct areas of choice as Athenry and Oranmore / Claregalway. Oranmore / Claregalway key part of strategic City Metropolitan plan

Population averages 5,000 in each with split. High refusal from people who reside in Athenry when offered Oranmore or Claregalway. Inter country transfers not permitted at moment,

therefore a City applicant may not transfer with a County applicant. Any change to this would be a national policy and have to be created.

The current Athenry / Oranmore area of choice is twice the size of other areas. Splitting it will have a positive effect on allocations. There is an issue with Irish Water which is affecting development in the area but that Irish Water are due to commence a CPO to expand development in area. At present GCC have 58 in short term future. 7 acres of land in Claregalway with potential to create 80 to 85 units some of which would be affordable.

Cllr J Byrne proposed the changes to the area of choice and Cllr J McClearn seconded the proposal. This will now be brought before Plenary Council.

Cllr J McClearn sought clarity on area of choice selection for applicants. Mr G Scully explained that each applicant can select up to 3 areas of choice. Currently only 900 out of over 3,500 have chosen a third area of choice. An applicant's area of choice is not relevant in terms of Choice Based Letting properties and any applicant with the correct and approved bed requirement can bid on a CBL property in any area

3. Strategic Plan people with disabilities

The draft plan has been circulated to the PPN. SPC members have been issued with draft plan and are requested to consider same as it will be discussed at next SPC meeting before going before Plenary Council.

Linking and transitioning from congregated services into community & social housing settings. The inclusion of Autism is not yet recognised as a new and separate category and it will need to be addressed in the National Strategy. Taking a holistic approach from build to occupation. Up to now HSE Occupational Health Therapist had to sign off but GCC is now prepared to accept recommendations from other healthcare practitioners / service professionals to offer same advice / recommendations. G Scully met with Sub-group yesterday regarding this, Sub-group welcome the inclusion of autism as a separate category.

4. Capital Update

Roundstone 14 unit and Barrack Street Loughrea 5 units are finished & being allocated. Clifden 26 units are nearing completion, construction was held up due to COVID closure but is now progressing well

Fana Bhui Tuam there is a high provision of disability units at this scheme, 17 in total. Total of 49 units in scheme, approximately half should be delivered this year. This site also suffered from Covid site closure

Kinvara 10 units due for completion in late 2022.

Bridge Court, Ahascragh permission granted by An Bord Pleanala permission, there are ecological issues on sites etc, demolish 10 units refit 6 existing units and construct 12 units.

Gort Ui Lochlainn, Moycullen 31 units – refusal by Connemara Municipal District not to grant Part 8 permission

Weir Road Tuam 30 units (of which 14 are bungalows). Out of judicial review and has planning permission.

Caiseal Raithlin, Ardrahan 12 units.

6 rural units at various locations and all bungalows.

Kylebroughlan 49 units completed, allocations nearing completion.

Tullahill Apartments 10 two bed units.

Tubber Road 31 units of those 17 units nearing completion end of 2021.

Difficulties on sites, Brexit, covid, labour shortages and long lead in times for windows and doors.

Cllr E Mannion expressed her disappointment that the Part 8 was rejected by some of the Connemara MD councillors. Cllr J McClearn queried if Barrack Street Loughrea development could be replicated in other areas throughout the county as this would improve the Street scape. Ms N Corcoran asked if there was a retrofitting programme for existing LA properties to bring them up to the A energy rating standard of new units.

In response to the questions Ms R Lowe said that the Department are keen for LA to pursue similar renovation / renewal projects similar to Loughrea but there is reluctance from private owners to sell. St Brigids Road, Portumna and Dunlo Street, Ballinasloe are being looked at for this purpose. The LA do have a retrofit programme with a hope to do about 100 units a year subject to funding.

There was a query regarding cost overruns from Contractors and whether the Department will fund these or will LA have to? Cllr J Byrne asked if a footpath going to be constructed at Tubber Road for access to the town for the disability units?

Mr L Hanrahan said that Clifden is a good example of conservation and new build and this will be evident in new models going forward. More Part 8's will be going before the Municipal Districts. Purchase of land in Tuam will allow large development. Site at Poolboy will be developed. There are also a number of other towns around the county that are being considered for regeneration programmes (using CPO and Housing For All strategy) In relation to cost increases there will probably will be decided on case by case basis.

5. HOUSING FOR ALL STRATEGY

Meeting on Monday 13th September with Minister for Housing. Mr L Hanrahan and Mr J Cullen Interim CEO attended.

Galway County Council is one of 6 Local Authorities which has been included in Affordable scheme. There is a meeting scheduled on Friday 17th September.

There are four objectives in the new Strategy. Supporting home ownership, eradicating homelessness, increasing housing supply and addressing efficiency in existing housing stock. Taking on dereliction on as one of our strategies

Significant targets – affordable model. Cost rental model doesn't work in rural areas so not a focus for Galway County Council. Increasing income threshold for Rebuilding Ireland Loans to increase eligibility.

Galway County Council id to get an increase in capital funding and in staffing.

The question was raised as to whether we would receive our targets in advance of drawing up our actions plans for the strategy.

Mr E McGuane raised concerns about the regeneration and how buildings standards have changed so much that it can often be financially unviable.

6. Any Other Business

Review of planning laws in relation to sale of Part V to Council tenants

Next meeting 3rd November