

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Minutes of Housing SPC Meeting held on Wednesday, 7th June 2023 in the Council Chamber, Galway County Council at 10.00 a.m.

I Láthair:-

Baill: Cllr. Joe Byrne, Chairperson
Cllr. Jimmy McClearn
Cllr. James Charity
Cllr. Thomas Welby
Cllr. Eileen Mannion
Cllr. Seamus Walsh
Mr. Mark Coffey
Mr. Kenny Deery
Mr. Martin Ward
Ms. Marcella Conneely (remote),
Ms. Antoinette Hayden (remote)

Oifigigh: Mr. Liam Hanrahan, Director of Services
Mr. Gerard Scully, Senior Executive Officer
Ms. Carmel Kilcoyne, Senior Executive Officer
Mr. Kieran Keon, Senior Social Worker
Mr. Damien Mitchell, Senior Engineer
Ms. Nuala Heffernan, Administrative Officer
Ms. Angela Spelman Administrative Officer
Ms. Kathleen Lohan, Staff Officer, Housing
Mr. Brendan Kelly, Assistant Staff Officer

Leithscéal

- Mr. Hanrahan confirmed that PPN and Galway Chamber have been contacted regarding the filling of vacancies on the SPC. Mr. Martin Ward is replacing Ms. Nora Corcoran as a member of the SPC.

1. Minutes of the meeting of 5th April 2023

- The minutes of the SPC meeting held on 5th April, 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Walsh, seconded by Cllr. Welby and agreed.
- **Matters of Accuracy** – None
- **Matters Arising**

Mr Hanrahan confirmed that the Affordable Dwelling Purchase scheme which was discussed at the last SPC meeting was approved by the full council meeting and subsequently approved by the Minister.

2. Presentation on the new Capital Advanced Leasing Facility (CALF) review Scheme and funding Model by Cluíd.

Ms. Antoinette Hayden provided a detailed summary to members of the new CALF review scheme and the resulting new funding model that was introduced in April 2023. In particular Ms. Hayden outlined the following:

- CALF is a loan Facility which is available to AHBs to assist them in the acquisition, construction, and refurbishment of Social Housing projects.
- The loan facility is only available as part of a project where the AHB makes homes available under a Payment and Availability agreement with Local Authorities.
- Payment and Availability (P & A) Agreements were previously based on 92% of the current market rent, this restriction has been removed and there is now potential to allow previously unviable projects use CALF funding in both rural and urban areas.
- A minimum floor of 25% is available for CALF funded projects.
- The application form for CALF funding has been revised.
- Funding approval letters now allow for greater flexibility to deal with changing interest rates and the removal of a market valuation requirement.

In conclusion, Ms. Hayden listed some of the projected long term benefits of the new CALF and P&A funding model to include greater project viability particularly in rural areas, increased funding for higher density apartment type developments, a streamlined funding model and a concise excel based application form.

Following the Cluíd presentation, Mr. Hanrahan acknowledged that the review of the CALF Scheme took a considerable amount of time to complete and that its delay had been a source of concern for both the Local Authority and Approved Housing Body sectors. He acknowledged and welcomed the removal of the 92% market rent valuation requirement of the previous funding model and that the overall P&A amount now goes toward the overall capital and operational costs of a project and that this will make both urban and rural projects more viable and sustainable in the its future. Mr. Hanrahan also highlighted the hope that this new application process should allow the Department of Housing to assess and authorise decisions in a more streamline manner. He confirmed a meeting of the Joint Approved Housing Body Forum would be held with Galway City Council and Approved Housing bodies representatives in the coming weeks. Galway County Council would also meet with individual Approved Housing Bodies to discuss their plans and identify developments which are ready to proceed and where the council can work with Approved Housing Bodies to accomplish their respective plans.

Mr. Hanrahan acknowledged that there are a number of sites both owned by the council and private turn keys developments that are of particular interest to the AHBs and that Galway County Council would be working on those sites in conjunction with the AHBs as means of achieving the Housing for All targets.

The Chair, on behalf of the members, thanked Ms. Hayden for her presentation and welcomed the changes to the CALF model.

He, (Cllr. Joe Byrne) also welcomed the new funding model on the basis that these developments represented 40% of the council's overall Housing for All target.

Cllr. Thomas Welby requested to know how an application could be tracked from beginning to end to ascertain how fast the new application process could be assessed.

In response to queries raised by members Ms. Hayden and Ms. Conneely advised as follows:

Ms. Hayden outlined the timeframe for an application, whereby the first step in the application process was to reach out to the LAs to discuss the projects suitability. If deemed suitable, then Clúid begin working on the funding application with the Local Authority completing their respective section and it is then sent to the Department of Housing to assess and issue the CALF approval letter. She also stated that Clúid worked closely with both LA's and developers to identify specific land banks to develop suitable projects on local authority lands within each county.

Ms. Hayden and Marcella Conneely both outlined that Clúid always look at the location in terms of the availability of public services, in terms of proximity to commercial units, public transport and community amenities like schools and playgrounds etc. Ms. Hayden also confirmed that developments that include apartments were more likely to occur in urban settings as opposed to smaller rural communities.

3. Housing Delivery Action Plan Update

Mr. Mitchell provided a detailed summary to members of the various projects and targets under Housing for All for 2023. He confirmed that work was continuing to ensure delivery of housing units and to increase Galway County Council's landbank for housing purposes. Mr. Mitchell also confirmed that a number of proposed Turnkey projects are currently going through the Planning Process and that one such project had been refused.

In response to queries raised by members Mr. Mitchell advised as follows:

- He confirmed to members that the proposed development at Kilcummin Field would be comprised of Social Housing units.
- **Housing in Carna** - Galway County Council have received a report on the waste water treatment capacity for the proposed developments in Carna. Mr Mitchell

confirmed that that they are in discussions to see if anything can be done with the existing waste water treatment plant to see if it can be upgraded.

- **Dunkellin Terrace Portumna** – Galway County Council have received a proposal from an AHB to develop 6 units on the site.
- **Planning Refusals for Social Housing** – Galway County Council confirmed that there are several current developments that have received further Information requests regarding their planning applications. Mr. Mitchell stated that the planning process has to be adhered to and there are varied reasons for why planning is being refused. He also confirmed that the Housing section is engaging with the Planning team to identify and address any issues that may arise as part of a proposed Development in advance of making a submission for Part 8 planning.

In response to queries raised by members surrounding the Planning process Mr. Hanrahan advised as follows:

- He stated that Town Planners are professional, and it is their role to look at proposed layouts and designs of each development. He stressed that turnkeys come to the Council by way of an Expression of Interest from a developer, normally after the planning process unless they require a change of use for planning. He stated that these proposals relate to developments in good locations that help meet Galway County Councils demand to provide housing stock as part of their Housing for All targets.

Cllr. Welby requested that a new club house for the Oughterard Boxing Club would be facilitated on council lands designated to the provision of recreational and amenities with the town.

4. Draft amendments to the Housing Allocation Scheme 2020

Mr. Scully provided a detailed summary of his memo already circulated to members of two proposed amendments to the Social Housing Scheme 2020. He outlined changes to qualifications under bed categories (3.8) and the addition of new schemes in the special allocation category (4.2).

- The first proposal, if accepted would allow any lone parent or family with one child to move to the 3 bed category. The latter would have a substantial effect on the demand side of GCC's social housing waiting list, whereby the demand for 2 bed units would significantly decline from 73.98% to 57.05%. The net result of this proposed change would see the demand for 3 bed units increase from 20% to 37%, thus bridging the gap between Galway Co Co's supply and demand.
- The second proposed amendment outlined the inclusion of several new housing schemes that have been introduced by central Government since the adoption of the Galway County Council's Social Housing Allocation Scheme in 2020.

In response to queries raised by members officials advised as follows:

- Once adopted by Council it is envisaged these changes would come into effect from 1st of September 2023. Mr. Scully welcomed the input from the councillors and members of the committee, and he advised that the Supply and Demand figures/data are on the council's website. He outlined that these amendments would represent big changes to the councils supply and demand figures as approximately 600 families will effectively move bed size category.
- Domestic Abuse Category – Mr. Keon advised that the list included on the Memo was *not* a Priority list and that it allowed certain categories to be considered when making an allocation and Domestic Abuse is identified as one of these categories.
- Mr. Mitchell advised that many developers were using the housing information statistics on the webpage to specifically target and cater to Galway County Council's housing needs prior to submitting their proposed planning applications.

Members of the committee welcomed the proposed changes to the Social Housing Allocation Scheme 2020 and they also commented on the price variation and viability of building smaller units as opposed to three bedroomed homes.

It was proposed by Cllr. Welby that:

“The proposed amendments to Galway County Council's Allocation Scheme 2020 be presented to the full Council at its next meeting with a recommendation from the SPC for approval of amendments”.

This was seconded by Cllr. McClearn and agreed unanimously.

5. Vacant Homes Refurbishment Grant

Mr. Hanrahan outlined that since the last SPC Housing Meeting, the Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund Grant had been expanded to include rental properties.

In response to queries raised by members Mr. Hanrahan and Ms. Kilcoyne advised as follows:

- Applicants must inform the Council what goods/services/works they are seeking the grant for.
- Applicants must adhere to all planning regulations to receive monies under the scheme.
- Septic tanks are not covered under the scheme.
- A certificate from an engineer will be required to state to works are completed.
- The three main changes to the scheme included the increase of funds available from €30,000 to €50,000, plus the additional €20,000 top up grant if the property is listed as being derelict. The grant is now available to properties that were constructed before 2007. The scheme is now available to properties intended as rental properties.

- Galway County Council are advising applicants to identify elements of the project that could be entirely funded by the grant (i.e. the entire tiling or roofing costs).
- If the structure is classified as derelict and they are they are looking for the additional €20,000 top up payment a structural report by an engineer is required.
- Information sessions on Croi Conaithe and other local authority initiatives were included in a community organised workshop in Carna in May and a similar session is taking place in Glinsk tomorrow.
- Applicants may separately apply to avail of an S.E.A.I. grant.

6. Any Other Business

- The chair confirmed that the next Housing SPC meeting will take place on the 6th of September.
- Cllr. Byrne concluded the meeting.