

## COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

**Minutes of Housing, Culture and Recreation SPC Meeting held in the Room G01 on 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2015 at 11.00a.m.**

### **I Láthair :-**

**Baill:** Cllr. T. McHugh, Chairperson  
Cllr. M. Noone  
Cllr. M. Fahy  
Cllr. P. Hynes  
Cllr. E. Mannion  
Ms. Helena McElmeel

**Oifighigh:** Mr. P. Gavican, D.O.S.  
Mr. Michael Owens, S.E.O. Corporate Services  
Ms. M. Forde, Senior Social Worker  
Mr. M. O'Donnell, A.O. Housing  
Ms. M. Jordan, A.O. Housing  
Mr. T. Doherty, E.E., Housing  
Mr. E. Mulvey, A/S.O. Housing  
Ms. S. Slattery, A.S.O.

Apologies were received from Jean Brann, S.E.O. Housing.

Cllr. Fahy expressed a vote of sympathy to Cllr. Killilea, and also his father Mark, on the death of their aunt/sister Mrs. Marie Cummins. This was seconded by Cllr. McHugh.

### **1. Minutes of Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2015**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2015 were adopted on the proposal of Cllr. Fahy, seconded by Cllr. Hynes.

### **Matters Arising**

Cllr. Hynes suggested that the County Secretary write to Sean O'Mahony, author of the publication entitled "Frongoch: University of Revolution". This publication is now out of print, but Mr. O'Mahony may have some spare copies which the Council could obtain. Cllr. Hynes stated that he has contact details for Mr. O'Mahony, if required.

### **2. Presentation on Anti-social behaviour**

Mr. Mulvey gave a presentation on the proposed Anti-social behaviour Strategy. A multi-agency approach will be taken in partnership with the Gardaí, HSE and Tusla. It is hoped to install CCTV in high priority estates to prevent anti-social behaviour. He outlined the legislative framework involved, and the objectives of the Strategy. He also dealt with the Complaints and Appeals procedure.

Cllr. Hynes queried the procedure for dealing with a complaint regarding dogs barking. Mr. Mulvey replied that it was very difficult to prove this breach of tenancy, but the matter

would be referred to the Community Warden and the Dog Warden. He stated that the complainant should go to the District Court to obtain a Noise Order.

Cllr. Hynes requested clarification on the number of pets that a tenant can have. Mr. Mulvey replied that there were several Tenancy Agreements in place at present, but it is proposed to limit the tenant to one domestic pet in any new Tenancy Agreements.

Cllr. Fahy raised the matter of tenants who do not maintain their Council properties.

Ms. Jordan stated that it was hoped to deal with these cases during the planned maintenance programme.

The Anti-social behaviour Strategy was proposed by Cllr. Fahy, seconded by Cllr. Noone.

### **3. Social Housing Strategy Delivery Update**

Mr. O'Donnell outlined the challenges which face Galway County Council in meeting the needs of the 4200 applicants on the housing list. The housing list is increasing all the time due to the economic downturn, repossessions and rising rents in the private sector. There is no construction or new builds to cater for the demand. The Council faces a lot of competition trying to source private properties. The Council are trying to meet the demand through our existing stock, construction and purchase of houses, Part V's, RAS and Long Term Leasing. Approved Housing Bodies will also play an important role.

Galway County Council now provides housing support by means of the Housing Assistance Payment. The scheme commenced on 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2015, and it is intended to replace Rent Supplement. The payment is available for newly approved social housing applicants initially. It is intended to move existing applicants on rent supplement onto HAP on a phased basis, commencing in January 2016.

Cllr. Mannion queried if the landlord had to guarantee the house for a certain period of time under the HAP Scheme. Mr. O'Donnell said that the HAP Agreement was for two years, in order to provide stability for the tenants. Cllr. Hynes asked if the applicants for HAP remain on the housing list. Mr. O'Donnell replied that they can opt to go on a transfer list, which allows them to stay on the housing list.

Ms. McElmeel asked if the Housing Levy Scheme would be available in County areas. Mr. O'Donnell said that it was applicable to urban areas only. Ms McElmeel asked if the Department could be requested to include County towns on the perimeter of the City in the scheme. Ms. McElmeel also queried if the Strategic Policy Committee could work to encourage and improve the delivery of housing units. Cllr. McHugh stated that additional meetings of the Committee could be held throughout the year if required. It was agreed that Ms. McElmeel would forward items for consideration on the next Agenda.

### **4. Update on CCTV**

Mr. Doherty stated that four sites for CCTV would be completed by mid January, 2016. CCTV systems would be installed on Gilmartin Road, Tuam and Tirboy Estate, Tuam before Christmas. The schemes would be completed at the Halting Site, Tuam and Crowe Street, Gort early in 2016. New LED street lights will also be installed at these locations, to improve the quality of the images on the CCTV.

Negotiations are ongoing regarding the installation of CCTV at Ballygar, and it is hoped to finalise the matter in the near future.

## **5. Homeless Action Plan update**

Ms. Forde gave a presentation on the update for Homeless Services in Galway County Council. The Homeless Action Plan has been completed, with contributions from all the relevant Agencies, e.g. Gardai, Tusla, Threshold etc. Demand for homeless services is constantly on the increase. At the end of September, 2015, there were 118 people listed as homeless in County Galway on PASS, the National Homeless database. It is important to try to prevent homelessness by identifying “at risk” individuals and households, and providing them with tenancy sustainment supports and information. “Night Stop” is an initiative being rolled out by Galway Diocesan Youth Services which is designed to cater for young people aged 18-25 who are leaving care or other institutions, and provide them with immediate accommodation.

## **6. Tenant Purchase Update**

Ms. Jordan outlined the details of the new Tenant Purchase Scheme which will commence on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2016. Tenants who wish to purchase their house must have a minimum annual income of €15,000, other than social welfare income. They can purchase the house at a discounted rate. The discount applied is linked to the income of the household, not the number of years the tenant has been renting the property. Applicants may be disqualified from the Scheme on a number of grounds, e.g. if they are in arrears of rent or have engaged in anti-social behaviour. A charge applies to the house for a period of time, and will wither away to nothing over the charged period in annual releases of 2% of the value of the house. Valuations will be based on current market prices. Some houses will be excluded from the scheme, and these are set down in Regulations.

Cllr. Hynes asked if the Scheme allowed for a relative of the tenant to provide the money to buy the house, if the tenant was not in a position to do so themselves. Ms. Jordan stated that the buyer must be a tenant, or joint tenant of the property. It was agreed that clarification would be sought from the Department on this issue.

Cllr. Mannion asked when eligible tenants will be notified of the scheme. Ms. Jordan said that letters will issue in early January 2016.

## **7. Update on Library Fees**

Mr. Gavican stated that this item was being deferred as the County Librarian was unavailable, and was being replaced with an item “**Update on review of tenants details**”

Mr. Gavican informed the meeting that this matter had been raised at a recent Council meeting, and it had been agreed to deal with the matter at the next Housing SPC meeting.

Mr. O'Donnell stated that rents are paid under the Differential Rent Scheme, with a minimum rent of €27 and a maximum rent of €86, which includes a charge for LPT. A review of tenants' details commenced this year starting with the Loughrea Municipal District. Under both the Tenancy Agreement and the Differential Rent Scheme, tenants have a responsibility to notify Galway County Council of any change in their circumstances. In some cases tenants have taken up employment for a number of years, and have not notified the Council of this change of circumstances. It has been agreed to limit these retrospective adjustments to a six month period. Where arrears arise as a result

of this adjustment, tenants can contact their Revenue Collector to enter into an arrears agreement for stage payments of the amount.

Cllr. Mannion noted that if the arrears can be paid on a staged basis, no hardship will be caused to the tenants.

On the proposal of Cllr. Noone, seconded by Cllr. Mannion it was agreed to proceed with the updating of the tenants details.

## **8. 1916 Centenary Programme for the County of Galway – Update**

Mr. Owens informed the meeting that the 1916 Centenary Programme for the County of Galway was launched on 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2015. The publication “Cumann na mBan: County Galway Dimensions” detailing the important role of women in the events of 1916, and accompanied by a specially commissioned CD featuring the ‘Soldiers of Cumann na mBan’ was also launched in early December 2015. Cllr. Fahy and Cllr. Hynes complimented Mr. Owens and Galway County Council on these outstanding publications.

Mr. Owens stated that funding had been received in the sum of €30,000 from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, €32,000 from Irish Public Bodies and €32,000 matching funding from the Department of the Environment & Local Government. The Council also approved funding of €60,000 at their recent budget meeting. As a result, it is proposed to introduce a new grant scheme to fund projects which will provide a permanent reminder and legacy of the 2016 centenary commemorations. Mr. Owens advised that it was proposed to allocate grant funding of 100% of the approved cost, subject to a maximum grant of €5,000 for a single project in each of the Municipal Districts. He confirmed that a further memorial for the County was under consideration to be located in Rinville Park, Oranmore. On the proposal of Cllr. Noone, seconded by Cllr. McHugh it was agreed to proceed with this grant scheme.

Cllr. Hynes stated that there was a bust of Liam Mellows in the Garden of Remembrance in Athenry, which required remedial works. Mr. Owens confirmed that €4,000 has already been allocated to the Garden.

## **9. Any Other Business**

It was agreed that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2016.

This concluded the business of the meeting.