

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

**Minutes of Housing SPC Meeting held on Friday, 13th June 2025 in the Council Chamber,
Galway County Council at 2.00 p.m.**

I Láthair:-

Baill: Cllr. Michael Maher (Chairperson)
Cllr. Eileen Mannion
Cllr. Shaun Cunniffe
Cllr. Gerry Finnerty
Cllr. Jimmy McClearn
Cllr. Declan Kelly
Cllr. Peter Keaveney
Ms. Helen Jennings
Mr. Rachel Stewart
Mr. AJ Dean
Mr. Seamus Duffy

Oifigigh: Mr. Damien Mitchell, Director of Services - Housing
Mr. Gerard Scully, Senior Executive Officer
Ms. Karen O'Donnell, Senior Executive Officer
Mr. Kieran Keon Senior Social Worker, Housing
Mr. Daithi Flood, Senior Engineer, Housing
Ms. Nuala Heffernan, Administration Officer, Housing
Mr. Brendan Kelly, Assistant Staff Officer, Housing

Leithscéal

1. Minutes of the meeting of the 20th of Feb 2025

- The minutes of the Housing SPC meeting held on the 20th of Feb were proposed by Cllr. Shaun Cunniffe and seconded by Cllr. Declan Kelly and agreed.

2. Safe Home Ireland –

Mr. Ger Scully gave a presentation to the committee that discussed the background to the Safe Home Ireland initiative and Cllr. Evelyn Parsons proposed amendment to the Housing Allocation Scheme 2024 (HAS). He outlined in detail the existing number of Local Authority and Approved Housing Body (AHB) 1 & 2 bedroomed units that are currently available to Galway County Council's Housing Support Applicants. A copy of Cllr. Parsons proposed Notice of Motion submission to Amend the Housing Allocation Scheme – Inclusion of Safe Home Ireland and Returning Irish-Born Emigrants under Sections 1.4 and 4.1 was provided to the members in advance of the meeting taking place.

The following areas were discussed in detail by Mr. Scully.

- Safe Home Ireland
- Key Services
 - Advice & Information
 - Outreach & Home Visits
 - Housing Assistance
 - Integration Supports for returning emigres aged 57 and over.
 - Eligibility for Housing Supports
- Review of existing LA & Non-La social housing units
 - **1038** 1 & 2 bed LA Units
 - **609** LA units are Ground floor Accommodation suitable for older applicants.
 - **635** Non-LA (Approved Housing Body) units
 - **158** non-LA units are Ground floor Accommodation suitable for older applicants

Property Type by Property Style 1 & 2 Beds

District Count of PROPERTY_IC			Property Type by Property Style 1 & 2 Beds					Column Labels		Family -		No		OAP		Grand	
Row Labels			All Others		Fam ily		Up to 2 Bedrooms		Flat ne		O.P.D. House		Traveller Group Scheme		Total		
LA																	
detached bungalow							117		2	11						130	
flat - ground floor							29	30	6							65	
semi-detached bungalow					1		180		4	89	2					276	
terraced bungalow				3			71		6	58						138	
semi-detached dormer							8			2						10	
flat - first floor							27	12	9							48	
detached two-storey							5			1						6	
detached specially adapted bungalow							1									1	
detached caravan															5	5	
semi-detached specially adapted bungalow										1						1	
semi-detached two-storey							138		6							144	
terraced dormer							4									4	
terraced two-storey				2			188		3							193	
unit							13	4								17	
LA Total				5	1		781	46	36	162	2				5	1038	
Non LA																	
detached bungalow							33		6							39	
flat - ground floor							29	3	13							45	
semi-detached bungalow				1			39	2	24							66	
terraced bungalow							7		1							8	
semi-detached dormer							1									1	
flat - first floor				1			16	37	6							60	
detached two-storey									1							1	
semi-detached two-storey							17		3							20	
terraced two-storey							18		9							27	
unit				2			168	43	154							367	
detached dormer							1									1	
Non LA Total				4			329	85	217							635	
Grand Total				9	1		1110	131	253	162	2				5	1673	

- Suitable LA and Non-LA properties from above list broken down by Area of Choice

Property Style by Area of Choice 1 & 2 Beds

Property Type by Area of Choice 1 & 2 Beds									
Distinct Count of PROPERTY_IC Column Labels									
Row Labels	All Others	Family y	Up to 2			OAP		Grand Total	
			Bedroo m	fla t	No ne	Hous e			
LA									
Tuam			100	11		29		140	
Ballinasloe South	3		61			33	1	98	
Loughrea and Environs			35	7		34		76	
Gort and Environs			37		8	6		51	
Connemara North-West			27		8	15		50	
Connemara South-West			34	1		12		47	
Athenry and Environs			28		2	13		43	
Portumna and Environs			27			8		35	
Ballinasloe North			20				1	21	
Connemara Central			6	6		4		16	
Galway North-East			12					12	
Headford		1	4			4		9	
Connemara				5				5	
			3					3	
Connemara Islands			2					2	
Connemara South-East			1					1	
LA Total	3	1	397	30	18	158	2	609	
Non LA									
Connemara North-West	1		26		19			46	
Ballinasloe South			21	2	10			33	
Tuam			23	2	6			31	
Connemara Central			21	1				22	
Gort and Environs			7					7	
Athenry and Environs			2		5			7	
Portumna and Environs			4					4	
Ballinasloe North			1		2			3	
Loughrea and Environs			2					2	
Connemara South-East					2			2	
Galway North-East			1					1	
Non LA Total	1		108	5	44			158	
Grand Total	4	1	505	35	62	158	2	767	

- Current Safe Home applicants place on the OAP List V total OAP per AOC (1Bed)

NAME	FIRST AREA OF CHOICE	POL	Total 1bed OAP	I
Applicant 1	Athenry and Environs	34	47	
Applicant 2	Athenry and Environs	43	47	
Applicant 3	Athenry and Environs	44	47	
Applicant 4	Ballinasloe South	16	21	
Applicant 5	Connemara Central	30	34	
Applicant 6	Connemara North-West	12	20	
Applicant 7	Connemara North-West	20	20	
Applicant 8	Connemara South-East	20	25	
Applicant 9	Connemara South-East	23	25	
Applicant 10	Connemara South-West	10	14	
Applicant 11	Connemara South-West	13	14	
Applicant 12	Loughrea and Environs	29	54	
Applicant 13	Loughrea and Environs	50	54	
Applicant 14	Tuam	5	30	
Applicant 15	Tuam	27	30	

- Mr. Scully outlined and explained Cllr. Parsons proposed Notice of Motion submission to Amend the Housing Allocation Scheme (HAS) to include Safe Home Ireland and Returning Irish-Born Emigrants as a distinct category type under Clause 1.4 & Section 4.1 of the current HAS 2024.
- Mr. Scully stated that the Tenant in Situ (TIS) scheme that was introduced in April 2023 was not added to GCC's Housing Allocation Scheme as a specific Allocation Category until May 2024 and yet TIS dwellings were successfully acquired and allocated to the sitting tenants under provision (k) of Clause 1.4 and item (xii) of Section 4.1 which reads as follows, ***Any projects or initiatives for whom the council in its discretion considers it prudent to provide accommodation.***
- He stated that Cllr. Parsons original motion would have required specific Older Persons Dwellings being set aside for returning Safe Home Ireland Applicants. He stated that this would have resulted in certain OAP applicants being bypassed for allocation by a returning Safe Home Ireland applicant.
- A submission from Cllr. Geraldine Donohue was emailed to the members before the meeting, and it was also read out and discussed at the meeting.

The Chair thanked Mr. Scully for his presentation, and he pointed out that Cllr. Parsons initial Safe Homes Ireland Motion to amend the Housing Allocation Scheme for returning emigres would have resulted in Safe Home applicants jumping to the top of the Housing Waiting list within each MD and housing units being set-aside for them. The chair stated that he had major issues with older persons being jumped on the list and he was not in favor of Safe Home Ireland applicants been added as special category.

Mr. Damien Mitchell (Director of Service - Housing) thanked Mr. Scully for his presentation and acknowledged that the proposal before the committee for discussion and approval was complicated. He outlined that Safe Home Ireland Applicants are already catered for under Clause 1.4 (k) and Section 4.1 (xii) of the existing Housing Allocation Scheme 2024. As per Cllr. Parsons Notice of Motion that went before the April 2025 Plenary

Council Meeting, he confirmed that if suitable Older Person Dwellings were set aside for returning applicants, then this would raise the priority status for these applicants. This would also require the setting aside of seven suitable OPD dwellings and in some instances, they may be left unoccupied due to the absence of a suitable Safe Home Ireland applicant in that MD. He concluded by saying that the adoption of the above amended proposal at plenary would not afford priority status to Safe Home Ireland applicants, but rather they would qualify for an allocation in the same manner as all other eligible older person applicants and no LA owned Dwellings will be set aside.

Cllr. Gerry Finnerty agreed with the Chair and the Director that Safe Home Ireland Applicants are already catered for under the existing provisions as set out under clause 1.4 and Section 4.1 respectively and he supported the current motion before the committee.

Cllr. Sean Cunniffe sought clarity as to the approximate number of safe home Ireland applicants that return to Co. Galway each year, and he suggested that specific wording could be included to allocate an unfilled Safe Home Ireland dwelling to the next OAP applicant from the HWL.

In response, **Mr. Mitchell** reaffirmed that Safe Homes Ireland Applicants are already being allocated suitable LA properties under Section 1.4 and Clause 4.1 of the HAS 2024 based on their individual needs and length of time on the HWL.

Cllr. Shaun Cunniffe, followed up by saying that due to the circumstances that forced these people to leave Ireland, he said that he would like to have some special priority or credit be assigned for these Irish citizens that now wish to return home and seek social housing supports. He stated that he was not in favor of leaving housing units vacant due to the lack of a suitable Safe Home Ireland Applicant.

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn thanked both Mr. Scully and Mr. Mitchell for providing some clarity on the specifics of the proposed amendment, and he said that it was important that returning emigres should have the opportunity to apply for housing supports in their original home areas. He said that the contributions from both Mr. Scully and Mr. Mitchell had brought clarity to the proposal before the committee and he was in favor of the current motion before the committee.

Mr. Scully confirmed that there was no issue regarding qualification for Housing Supports as most Safe Home Ireland applicants qualify under the existing scheme of allocation priorities that relate to persons in the OAP category.

Cllr. Declan Kelly said that he concurred with Cllr. McClearn regarding the importance of having a mechanism that allowed Irish emigrates to return home to their communities and seek Housing Supports. He stated that he was in favor of increasing the amount of OPD Housing units and that he was in favor of the proposed amendment.

Cllr. Eileen Mannion said that she was not in favor of the original proposal that would have resulted in specific Housing Units being set aside for returning applicants, and she said that Mr. Scully and Mr. Mitchells comments had explained clearly that these Safe

Home Ireland applicants were adequately catered for under the existing HAS provisions as outlined in Clause 1.4 and Section 4.1 of the HAS 2024.

The Chair, **Cllr. Mahar** asked that Mr. Mitchell read aloud the comments of Mr. Michael Owens from the SPC minutes of the 20th of Feb 2025 meeting, whereby” he stated that Safe Home Ireland Applicants would continue to be supported under the existing provisions of the current Housing Allocation Scheme, and their duration on the HWL would be the primary determining factor for their allocation”. Mr. Mitchell reaffirmed that Safe Home Ireland Applicants would qualify as normal and then be considered for an allocation when a suitable LA property becomes available.

The motion was proposed by Cllr. Eileen Mannion and seconded by Cllr. Gerry Finnerty.

The Chair, concluded by saying that the Safe Home Ireland motion would go back to the July 2025 Plenary Council Meeting for consideration and if approved the motion would be incorporated into the existing Housing Allocation Scheme 2024 under Clause 1.4 and Section 4.1. he added that this would allow returning Irish immigrants living abroad to apply for Social Housing supports from Galway County Council. **Mr. Mitchell** reiterated that no Local Authority Housing units would be set aside for Safe Home Applicants.

3. Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme (HAFH) - Update

Ms. Marie Nolan, Administration Officer, give a presentation to the committee members on the Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme. The following topics were discussed, **and a PDF copy of the presentation was emailed to the committee members after the meeting.**

- Demographic Change
- HAFH Programme & Services provided to persons over 65
- HAFH is a shared Service hosted by Meath County Council
- HAFH Programme Delivery
 - 44 Staff members based across 6 regions
- HAFH Aims & Objectives
- Holistic Person-Centre Approach
 - Needs Assessments carried out under 6 domains
 - Housing, Community, Finance, Health, Technology, Climate/Energy
- Role of the Co-Ordinator
 - The Co-Ordinator’s for Galway County are Franis Kane & Dónal Clancy.
- Referral Path & Consent
 - 11,822 Referrals Received Jan 2024 – May 2025
- Collaborations
- Referral Case Studie & Contact Details

The Chair thanked Ms. Nolan and her colleagues for their presentation he opened the topic to the members for any comments and questions they may have.

Cllr. Gerry Finnerty thanked Ms. Nolan and her colleagues for their presentation, and he said that the topic was very close to his heart as he believed that this service helped to keep older persons in their own homes for as long as possible. As public representatives, he stated that Councillors are uniquely placed to encounter older persons who are struggling and require support and services such as those provided by Age Friendly Homes Programme and he very much welcomed and acknowledged the services they provide within County Galway and across the country.

The Chair wished to acknowledge the fantastic work and services that Ms. Nolan and her colleagues Francis and Dónal have been doing across County Galway, and he enquired if there were any changes or issues with funding that are coming down the line for the shared service.

In response, **Ms. Nolan** outlined that the service was in a unique position to highlight and raise awareness of any current or potential issues that are affecting older persons. She outlined how Age Friendly Homes Ireland has helped to bring community-based services to the residents of Nursing Homes and they have collaborated with the Fire Service to carry out home fire safety visits. Ms. Nolan said that it is intended to upscale this collaboration with the Fire Service so as it can be extended and rolled out nationally. It is hoped that Age Friendly Homes Co-Ordinator's can directly refer clients to the Fire Service for a Fire Safety assessment. In 2024, she said that there was a lot of calls regarding the changes to the Housing Adaptation Grant whereby the installation of new boilers was no longer covered under the scheme. Ms. Nolan said that they are there to help older persons in need, but she stressed that they do not lobby. She concluded by saying that here is a misconception that persons who own their own house are wealthy, however it often disqualifies them from accessing services and the dwelling may not be very habitable.

Cllr. Shaun Cunniffe thanked Ms. Nolan for her presentation and for the amazing work that was being carried out daily by the staff of Age Friendly Homes. In Reference to the case study discussed in the presentation. He said that information was power and once people had access to it, they can begin to address their issues, and he commended the service for their hard work.

Mr. Dónal Clancy (Coordinator) explained that he himself had helped the couple that were mentioned in the presentation case study, and he explained that his work was challenging but very rewarding.

Mr. Francis Kane said that coordinators can visit clients in their own homes as many times as is required and it was his experience that many of the people, they encounter are often not proficient or comfortable with using the internet for information and services. He stated that his role was highly rewarding, and it was great to be able to help older people in this manner.

Ms. Nuala Heffernan said that it had been a very positive experience working with both Donal and Francis, and she outlined that there were significant daily interactions between both coordinators and the Housing Grant Application and Inspectorate teams.

Ms. Marie Nolan thanked Ms. Heffernan for her comments, and she stated that NAFH was only as successful as the collaborations they make with organizations that they work with, and this is why it is important to have a close working relationship with organizations like GCC's Housing Department.

4. Galway County Council's Draft Homeless Action Plan 2025 – 2027

Ms. Nuala Heffernan gave an update presentation on the Homeless Action Plan to the committee members. The following topics were discussed, and a PDF copy of the presentation was emailed to the committee members after the meeting.

- Current Homeless Service Statistics
- Housing First
- Homeless Services – Support Services
- Homeless Services – Social Prescribing
- Homeless Services – Future Plans
- GCC Homeless Services & Staffing Make Up
- Homeless Services Contact Details

The **Chair** thanked Ms. Heffernan for her informative presentation, and he welcomed the ambitious future-plans for Homeless Services that are planned for the second half of 2025 and in 2026. He praised the Homeless Services and Housing First policies that were outlined in the presentation, and he hoped that these ambitious plans can be implemented.

Mr. Mitchell commended and thanked Ms. Heffernan for all her work in the Homeless Services area and he said that she regularly goes above and beyond when it come to the implementation and provision of GCC's Homeless Services.

Cllr. Mannion thanked Ms. Heffernan for her presentation, and she stated that she is regularly contacted by working people and families who have bene issued with a notice to quit (NTQ) and can't find a property to rent and they do not qualify for social housing. She stated that an emergency should be called to help these working people who cannot find suitable rental properties or get on the property ladder.

Ms. Heffernan thanked the members for their comments and ongoing support.

5. Planned Housing Maintenance – Update

Mr. Daithi Flood presented an update on Planned Housing Maintenance to the committee. The following areas were discussed, and a PDF copy of the presentation was emailed to the committee members after the meeting.

- **Housing Maintenance Key Area's**

- Housing Maintenance
- Voids/Turnovers – GCC KPI
 - Target for as per Dept Circular on Voids Funding 2025 – 33
 - Number of Derelict units -30
 - Number Completed as of June 2025 - 28
- Energy Retro Fit
- Disabled Person Grants (DPG's)
- Planned Maintenance ***
- Halting Sites Maintenance
- **Planned Maintenance (To Date)**
- **Housing Maintenance 2024**
 - Housing Maintenance Statistics
 - Issues with Housing Maintenance
 - Repairs by Category
- **Planned Maintenance ADDJUST**
- **Planned Maintenance – Key Points**
- **Planned Maintenance – Next Steps**
 - Stock Conditional Survey
 - Radon Testing Tender Details
 - €186,000 granted to GCC in 2025 for Planned Maintenance.

The **Chair** thanked Mr. Flood for his detailed presentation, and he congratulated him and his staff for their work on returning voids and derelict units fit for new tenants. He stated that rents is a major issue for some constituents, whereby tenants are required to inform the council of any changes to their circumstances, and this is preventing people from purchasing their properties under the Tenant Purchase scheme due to arrears on their rent account.

In reply to a query from Cllr. Cunniffe, **Mr. Ger Scully** stated from a Tenant and Estate Management (TEM) point of view, the Housing Liaison Officers (HLO) are actively involved in each of their respective housing, and he outlined how a 'boots on the ground' campaign was introduced in 2024 to target specific estates in each Municipal District where issues had been identified. This involved Community Wardens, Dog Wardens, TEM and HLO staff going door to door in each estate to discuss any issues with active tenants. He said that 7 estates were visited last year, and they intend to visit 11 estates in 2025 and 20 estates in 2026.

Mr. Flood said that the Housing maintenance teams work closely in collaboration with the TEM and HLO staff to ensure that any unplanned maintenance repairs/works are sustainable so that they do not have to return to the property again and again to carry out the same repair works. He said this this helps to ensure that value for money is attained on any planned or unplanned repairs that are carried out.

Cllr. Mannion thanked Mr. Flood for his presentation, and she welcomed the support given to tenants in the boots on the ground campaign as mentioned by Mr. Scully.

In reply to a query from Rachel Stuart, **Mr. Mitchell** outlined that the Plenary Council have approved a borrowing facility for €10 million euros for GCC's Planned Maintenance programme. He stated that this finance facility will be available to GCC once the relevant surveys have been concluded, as the extent of the required planned maintenance works are identified.

6. Any Other Business

- **Future Housing SPC Meeting dates**

The Chair confirmed that the two remaining Housing SPC meetings will occur on the 25th of September and the 18th of December 2025 at 11am in the Council Chamber.

- **Anti-Social Behavior in Glenamaddy**

Cllr. Peter Keaveney wished to inform the committee about reports of anti-social behaviour that is ongoing in Glenamaddy. He stated that a local businessman has taken in approximately 10-12 housing clients from both Mayo and Roscommon County Council's, and he outlined that there is no 24hour back up service to supports these people who have complex needs. He outlined that there have been instances of anti-social behaviour by the residents and the building has been visited on a regular basis by both An Garda Siochana and the Ambulance Service. He also outlined that he has discussed the issue with Director Mitchell, and he wanted to bring it to the attention of the Housing SPC Committee.

In response, **Mr. Mitchell** outlined that a plan is now in place to resolve the issue in Glenamaddy, whereby both Mayo and Roscommon councils have committed to remove the individuals from the site. He explained that the property in question has been referred to GCC's Planning Enforcement section to check if the appropriate planning permissions are in place.

- **Derelict LA units**

In response to a query from **Cllr. Declan Kelly**, **Mr. Mitchell** outlined that the refurbishment and reoccupation of a derelict LA housing unit would depend on the cost of the works required to bring the building up to current building regulation standards. He stated that since the introduction of the Voids Programme in 2014, Local Authorities can only claim back €11,000 in refurbishments costs. Therefore, Housing must assess the properties' location, the urgency of the applicants housing need and the costs associated with the schedule of works that are required to bring the property back into circulation.

- **Ballymoe Village**

In response to a query from **Cllr. Peter Keavney**, **Mr. Mitchell** confirmed that the keys for the new Ballymoe Village units were received from the builder today and the delay was due to issues with the onsite ESB connection. He stated that these units will be allocated to tenants in the coming weeks.

- **Vote Of Sympathy**

On behalf of the committee members a resolution of sympathy was extended to the outgoing Director of Service for Housing Mr. Michael Owens & the extended Owens family of Castlegar, Mountbellew, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway.

Cllr. Eileen Mannion offered her sincere condolences to Michael Owens and his family following the sudden passing of his late mother Mary. She also wished to thank him for all his help and support during his tenure as the Director of Service for Housing and she wished him well in his new position. Cllr. Mannion welcomed Mr. Mitchell as the incoming Director of Service for Housing.

Mr. Mitchell thanked Cllr. Mannion for her kind words of welcome and he acknowledged the phenomenal contribution made by Mr. Owens during his tenure as the Director of Service for Housing. He pointed to Mr. Owens work ethic and attention to detail, and he wished him well for the future in his new role.

The Chair thanked all present and online for their participation and he confirmed that the next Housing SPC meeting is scheduled for 11am on the 25th of September 2025. The meeting concluded.

Minutes Confirmed by Chairperson

Michael Maher
Cllr. Michael Maher

Date: 25/09/2025