

DRAFT Minutes of Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

(LTACC) Meeting - Wednesday 29th January 2020

Council Chamber, City Hall, Galway

In Attendance: Mr. N. Crowley, Independent Chairperson
Cllr. D. McDonnell, Galway City Council
Cllr. F. Fahy, Galway City Council
Cllr. M. O'Connor, Galway City Council
Cllr. N. Larkin, Galway City Council
Cllr. O. Hanley, Galway City Council
Ms. B. Kelly, Galway Traveller Movement
Ms. M. O'Riada, Galway Traveller Movement
Ms. A. Delaney, Galway Traveller Movement Representative
Ms. J. Corcoran, Galway Traveller Movement Representative
Mr. P. Sweeney, Galway Traveller Movement Representative

Officials: Mr. D. Mahon, A/Director of Services, Housing Department
Ms. H. Martyn, A/Senior Executive Officer, Housing Department
Mr. T. Prendergast, A/Senior Engineer, Housing Department
Ms. S. Donoghue, Senior Social Worker, Housing Department
Ms. S. Carroll, Administrative Officer, Housing Department

Present: Ms. M. Kilgariff, A/Assistant Staff Officer, Housing Department

Apologies: Cllr. J. Connolly, Galway City Council

Mr. D. Mahon welcomed everybody to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. Introductions took place and the procedures for electing members to sit on the LTACC were outlined. It was noted that the procedures followed were those outlined by the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government with reference to the Housing Acts.

1. Election of Independent Chairperson

Mr. D. Mahon referred to previous discussions and a recent training event held with members of the LTACC. It was noted that a proposal to appoint an Independent Chair of the LTACC had agreement among the members.

On the proposal of Cllr. F. Fahy and seconded by Cllr. D. McDonnell, Mr. N. Crowley was elected as Independent Chairperson with the option to review this in 12 months. This was agreed by all present.

2. Working on Protocol to uphold the Public Sector Duty

Mr. N. Crowley went through an agreed Communication Protocol, highlighting the importance of the discussions which took place at the previous evening's training event for LTACC members. The importance of the liaison role of the LTACC and the need to be solution-focused were emphasised. Mr. Crowley advised that the Protocol should be for consideration at all future meetings. Cllr. M O'Connor agreed that the Protocol was concise and a clear reflection of the conversations that went

into its creation. Cllr. D. McDonnell highlighted the importance of working together to solve issues and Cllr. O. Hanley commended the focus on the liaison role, stating that issues should be solved locally where possible.

The adoption of the Communications Protocol was proposed by Cllr. F. Fahy, seconded by Cllr. N. Larkin and agreed by all.

3. Update on Traveller Profile in Galway City

Ms. S. Donoghue provided an update on the Traveller profile in Galway City. The increase in the numbers of Travellers housed by Approved Housing Bodies and the reduction of numbers housed through RAS was noted. Concern was expressed in relation to the rise in numbers of Traveller families availing of Homeless Services. Queries raised by members were responded to by Ms. H. Martyn, Ms. S. Donoghue, Ms. S. Carroll, Mr. D. Mahon and Mr. T. Prendergast, as follows;

- 8 Traveller families are pending a social housing allocation with a further 10 proposed once suitable accommodation becomes available.
- Figures given in terms of those who have been able to purchase homes through Tenant Purchase or through their own resources are estimates and Galway City Council will work with the Galway Traveller Movement to establish more accurate figures.
- Galway City Council have no local discretion in relation to the types of properties sold or the income requirements under Tenant Purchase. Traveller Specific Accommodation is excluded from the scheme. The income limits, including the requirement for an applicant to be in employment, were decided at a national level to ensure the sustainability of the scheme.
- Those housed through Long Term Leasing are considered housed by Galway City Council but are not excluded from other forms of social housing should the situation arise.
- Three extensions were completed for Traveller families in 2019. Extensions are generally expensive and are only undertaken where absolutely necessary. Other adaptations have taken and will continue to take place in line with consultations with Traveller families and the Social Work team.

A discussion took place in relation to the breakdown of the type of accommodation that Traveller families in homeless services are looking for long term. Ms. S. Donoghue outlined the general figures. Mr. N. Crowley noted that the level of people sharing accommodation, the needs of Travellers with disabilities, Tenant Purchase and moving from estimated figures to more accurate counts were items for discussion again at the next meeting.

4. Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2014 Update

Mr. T. Prendergast provided a presentation on the targets of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024. Mr. Prendergast and Mr. D. Mahon responded to queries raised by members as follows;

- Access to the proposed development at the Headford Road will depend on the planned ring road. If the ring road does not go ahead, alternative arrangements will have to be made with regards to access and discussions are ongoing with the design team in relation to this.
- The proposed change from Halting Site to Traveller Specific Accommodation with provision for touring caravans had required a reduction in the number of units at the Circular Road site from 5 to 4.
- Zoning at the proposed Merlin Woods site is Low Density Residential and a consultant has been engaged to advise on the most appropriate access route for the development.

- The development at Keeraun will constitute c.68 houses, with 8 planned for Traveller Specific accommodation. The site at Merlin Woods will have c. 50 houses, up to 8 of which are planned as Traveller Specific.
- In relation to the distribution of Traveller Accommodation across the city, the proposed Keeraun, Headford Road and Merlin developments are all in different areas of the city. The East side of the city is an area of preference for many Traveller families and this must also be taken into consideration.

Mr. N. Crowley advised that the topic of integration should be returned to at future meetings and Mr. D. Mahon agreed that integrated communities should be facilitated.

Mr. D. Mahon advised that the Galway Diocesan Trustees had requested that the land at Cúl Trá be returned to them by December 2022. The Housing Department will enter into formal discussions with the affected families in relation to the closure of the site. Mr. Mahon advised that the City Council is working under the premise that the site will be closing but that they may return to talks with the GDT on the matter.

Mr. D. Mahon advised that the replacement welfare units at Carrowbrowne Temporary Site would ensure better living conditions for the residents in advance of the closure of the site.

Ms. M. O’Riada welcomed the report and advised that any delays in the provision of accommodation should be avoided where possible. She queried if the provision outlined in the report matched the need and was advised that it did insofar as possible, and that there may be other developments in addition to those outlined, such as a proposed Group Housing Scheme up to 2025, which is outside of the current TAP.

It was acknowledged that while the proposed closure of 2 existing sites (at Cul Tra and Carrowbrowne) reduced the net gain in Traveller Accommodation proposed in the TAP, there will be an improvement in the quality of the accommodation provided. It was clarified that sanitary services are available at the Circular Road site.

Ms. S. Donoghue advised that consultation with the Galway Traveller Movement had begun in relation to the allocation process. 13 families in Carrowbrowne had an area of preference in the county and the Housing Department are waiting on a response from Galway County Council to establish if they intend to offer accommodation in the county to these families.

Ms. B. Kelly raised concerns that families are accepting standard housing rather than waiting for Traveller Specific Accommodation as a means to move from the Carrowbrowne site. Ms. A. Delaney advised that Galway City Council should move ahead with allocations while people were on board. Ms. B. Kelly advised that all sites should be considered for upgrades.

Mr. N. Crowley noted that the Carrowbrowne site was an issue that should be picked up again in future meetings. He also stated that the committee would return to the topics of the role of the committee in terms of targets, net gain of housing, integration and community, the importance of consultation, the Cúl Trá site and the refurbishment of sites.

5. Formation of Sub Groups and Agreed Themes

Ms. S. Carroll provided an update on the Estate Management sub group. She proposed that it would initially comprise of one to two elected members, two administrative staff members and two Traveller Reps. Ms. S. Carroll and Ms. S. O’ Donoghue were confirmed as members. Ms. J. Corcoran was nominated as a Traveller Rep. Cllr. O. Hanley expressed an interest in joining the sub group and it was

agreed that he would be the councillor representative, with the possibility of a second representative from the elected members joining the group after the next LTACC.

It was agreed to circulate Terms of Reference for the sub group for the next meeting.

Ms. M. O' Riada spoke about the Operations sub group and proposed that it should be more task based. Cllr. M. O' Connor, Ms. M. O' Riada and Ms. B. Kelly were nominated for this group. It was agreed that a request would be sent out for members and Terms of Reference would be agreed. Mr. N. Crowley advised that both groups meet and discuss outcomes at next LTACC meeting.

6. Dates of Future Meetings

It was agreed that the next meeting of the LTACC will take place on 8th April 2020 at 9.30am. The following meetings will take place on 1st July 2020 and 28th October 2020, with the times to be confirmed at the next meeting.

7. AOB

Mr. D. Mahon advised that, further to a Circular issued from the Department, that funding for Traveller Accommodation will in future be allocated for specific projects requested by the Local Authority under the various approvals stages and processes.

Ms. M. O' Riada requested an update at a later stage on the potential €1 million that was proposed for the CENA project.

The meeting then concluded.