

DRAFT Minutes of Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) Meeting – Wednesday 1st July 2020 (Meeting conducted via Zoom)

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
Cllr. J. Connolly, Galway City Council
Ms. B. Kelly, Galway Traveller Movement
Ms. M. O' Riada, Galway Traveller Movement
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: Ms. A. Delaney, Galway Traveller Movement Representative

Ms. H. Martyn reviewed the Zoom meeting protocol. Chairperson Mr. N. Crowley welcomed all attendees.

1. Communication Protocol

Mr. N. Crowley referred to the Communication Protocol which was adopted at the meeting on 29th January. He noted its importance in establishing the parameters of engagement on the LTACC based on shared values of dignity, autonomy, and participation, and in emphasising a focus on solutions rather than problems. He noted previous agreement that the Communication Protocol would be a focus on LTACC agendas, and suggested that the development and inclusion of an agenda item in terms of 'shared understanding of the concept of and the building of integrated communities', based on the Communication Protocol, be discussed at the next LTACC meeting. This was agreed by all.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The Minutes of the Meeting dated 29th January 2020 were circulated prior to the Meeting and Mr. Crowley asked if there were any comments or corrections. Ms. S. Donoghue provided a brief update on Traveller Homelessness. A working group is to be created with Galway Traveller Movement, Galway Simon, COPE Galway and Galway City Council to support young Traveller families at risk of homelessness. Ms. Donoghue advised that the possibility of an ethnic identifier being added to the Housing Application Form could be considered in line with national guidelines, ensuring that any data captured is culturally sensitive and does not provide a barrier to services.

Mr. Crowley noted the following issues for transfer on to the agenda of the next meeting in October: Traveller Homelessness; Tenant Purchase and issues arising; sharing accommodation; specific needs of Travellers with disabilities.

The adoption of the Minutes was proposed by Cllr. F. Fahy, seconded by Cllr. D. McDonnell and agreed by all.

3. COVID-19 Update

Ms. S. Donoghue provided an update on the COVID-19 response to date. The Galway City Traveller COVID Response Group was set up in mid-March with weekly tele-conferences held. An audit of families was completed, and temporary measures offered to vulnerable families. A caravan was purchased for self-isolation purposes. Fortnightly meetings of the COVID Response Group continue to take place. A COVID nurse has now been appointed. The Department of Housing has advised of €46,000 in funding for the provision of 2 trailers and portaloos. It is not possible to identify specific numbers of Travellers who have had COVID-19 as the question of ethnic identity is not asked during testing. The outbreak in Carrowbrowne has been brought under control with no fatalities.

Ms. M. O' Riada noted that engagement with GTM has been strengthened through community initiatives which have improved the database of Traveller families held by the GTM.

Mr. Crowley asked that a short note on lessons learned through the process be presented at the next meeting. He acknowledged the effort of all involved, including Ms. S. Donoghue.

4. Capital Update

Mr. T. Prendergast provided an update on the schemes that have been progressed since the last meeting as follows:

The Headford Road scheme design is under review and 3 culturally appropriate Traveller units are proposed with an estimated completion of Q3 2022. The Keeraun site is due for completion at year end 2022; The Circular Road scheme is being planned in conjunction with CENA and approval has been granted for 5 units. The scheme at Circular Road may be 4 or 5 units depending on the design and consultation with proposed occupants. This scheme is due for completion by year end 2022; Merlin Lands scheme due for completion in early 2023; Respond site Doughiska delayed due to COVID-19 and Japanese Knotweed, completion estimated end 2022.

13 new welfare units have been installed at Carrowbrowne Temporary Site with the final 2 being installed on the 25th and 26th June.

Mr. D. Mahon stated that sites for 6 housing schemes with Culturally Appropriate Traveller Specific Units have been identified and 3 have been approved to date for €6.5 million. A 1-year update on the progress of the Traveller Accommodation Programme will be provided at the next meeting. Proposals to be looked at in relation to retrofitting at Group Housing Schemes. Accommodation at all sites should be improved by the end of the 5 year TAP term.

Funding for the Circular Road site is separate from the €1 million allocated to CENA previously. Galway City Council is open to further opportunities to work with Approved Housing Bodies, including CENA, on other developments where appropriate.

Regarding the Temporary Site at Carrowbrowne, Mr. Mahon requested that the LTACC endorse the approach taken by Galway City Council to acquire accommodation in Galway County to house families who had given areas of preference in the County. He advised that one property has been acquired but the potential second property has not yet been identified. Galway City Council is within its rights to exercise this power under the terms of Section 109 of the 1966 Act. The importance of providing support for families allocated to the County in integrating with the surrounding community was acknowledged.

The endorsement of Galway City Council's acquisition of 2 properties in Galway County was proposed by Cllr. M. O'Connor, seconded by Ms. J. Corcoran and agreed by all.
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5. Sub-Groups and Terms of Reference

Ms. S. Carroll provided an update on the Estate Management sub-group and advised that the group met on 6th March with Ms. B. Kelly and Cllr O. Hanley present with apologies from Ms. A. Delaney and Ms. M. O' Riada. The Terms of Reference were drafted and amended to expand the definition of Estate Management to include tenancy participation and community development. Ms. Carroll advised that a virtual meeting can be arranged, and the group will meet again before the next LTACC meeting.

Ms. S. Donoghue advised that the Operations sub-group were not able to meet due to COVID-19, but a meeting is being planned for the coming weeks. Ms. M. O' Riada, Ms. B. Kelly, Ms. S. Carroll, Ms. S. Donoghue and Mr. T. Prendergast will sit on the sub-group.

Mr. N. Crowley suggested that the Terms of Reference of the Operations sub-group be agreed by written procedure rather than waiting on the next meeting of the LTACC. This was agreed.

The adoption of the Terms of Reference for the Estate Management Sub-Group was proposed by Ms. B. Kelly, seconded by Cllr. O. Hanley and agreed by all.

6. Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission Request for an Equality Review

Galway City Council has been requested by the IHREC to conduct an Equality Review of its policies, procedure, and practices in relation to Traveller accommodation, following the report submitted to the IHREC in 2019. Ms. S. Donoghue requested the support of the LTACC to conduct the review. Cllr. O. Hanley requested that the report submitted to the IHREC in 2019 be circulated.

Mr. N. Crowley proposed that the LTACC support the implementation of an equality review and that the equality review be undertaken in the context of the Equality and Human Rights Statement of Galway City Council. It was agreed that Terms of Reference for the equality review would be drafted on this basis by Galway City Council and adopted by written procedure in advance of the next meeting.

The request for the support of the LTACC in undertaking the Equality Review was proposed by Ms. B. Kelly, seconded by Cllr. O. Hanley and agreed by all.

7. AOB

Cllr. F. Fahy suggested that the members of the LTACC be brought to see the current Halting Sites at Carrowbrowne and other locations around the city, as well as some of the proposed developments. Ms. S. Donoghue agreed to work with the GTM to arrange a tour in September, depending on the situation in relation to COVID-19.

Mr. N. Crowley requested that the Minutes of this and future meetings be issued as soon as possible following the meetings.

The meeting formally recorded its congratulations to Senator Eileen Flynn on her appointment to the Seanad.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the LTACC will take place on 28th October 2020 at 9.30am.

A tour of some of the current Halting Sites and proposed new developments was proposed by Cllr. F. Fahy, seconded by Ms. B. Kelly and agreed by all.

The meeting then concluded.