

Minutes of the Social Development Strategic Policy Committee Meeting

Friday 10th October 2025 in the Council Chamber (& via MS Teams)

In Attendance:	Cllr. D. McDonnell, Galway City Council (Chair) Cllr. N. McNelis, Galway City Council Cllr. H. Ogbu, Galway City Council Cllr. J. McDonagh, Galway City Council Ms. Olena Bratchenko, GCCN Representative Mr. A. Daly, ICTU Representative Ms. C. Baumann, GCCN Representative Mr E Waldron, Castle Group Modular GM
Officials:	Ms. E. Fanning, A/ Director of Services, Social Development Ms S. Carroll, SEO, Social Development Ms. E. Murphy, Senior Engineer, Social Development Ms. H. Martyn, Administrative Officer, Social Development Ms. A. Brett, Administrative Officer, Social Development Ms. M. Fallon Ward, Administrative Officer, Social Development Mr. M. McDonagh, Administrative Officer, Social Development Mr P. Fallon, Integration Support Co-Ordinator Ms. S Bowman, A/SSO, Social Development Ms M Kilgarrieff, Staff Officer, Social Development
Apologies:	Cllr. H. Ogbu, Galway City Council Cllr. T. O' Flaherty, Galway City Council Cllr A. Burke, Galway City Council

Cllr D McDonnell opened the meeting and welcomed all. Cllr McDonnell welcomed Ms C Baumann, who has joined the Social Development SPC in place of the outgoing Karen Golden as GCCN representative.

1. Minutes of Meeting – 28th May 2025

Minutes were proposed by Cllr J Mc Donagh, seconded by Mr A Daly and agreed.

2. Matters Arising

Mr A Daly advised that under Item 5 in the minutes from 28th May, he had stated that other Local Authorities have a fixed rent charge for subsidiary earners and he had requested that this be extended in Galway City. He asked that this be noted in the minutes and this was agreed. Mr. Daly had also noted at the previous meeting that, if the presentation was correct, the rent paid by a lone parent would increase by 100%.

It was noted that the Differential Rent Scheme is an Executive function, but Mr. Daly had sent a submission to the SEO prior to the meeting.

3. SPC Work Plan

Ms S Carroll gave an update on the 2025 work plan.

Ms Baumann queried the status of the Homeless Regional Action Plan and if there would be an opportunity for this SPC to feed into it. Ms H Martyn confirmed that the Plan has been adopted and will be in place for 3 years. Input was sought from Galway Simon Community and COPE, among other stakeholders.

Ms Martyn advised that the Housing Department are looking into the number of refusals of offers of allocation from families coming from Homeless Services. She stated that increased collaboration with Galway Traveller Movement is required. Cllr McDonnell asked if Galway City Council (GCC) can purchase properties for those in homeless services for more than a year. Ms Martyn advised that €4.5 million has been spent to 2025 on homeless services and that purchasing properties is often a more cost-effective option where

possible. The City Council has not stopped buying houses, especially under the Capital Acquisitions Programme.

A discussion took place in relation to the Tenant in Situ Scheme. Tenant in Situ has been reframed as second hand acquisitions. The first option for homeless clients is HAP or RAS. Tenants must be at least 2 years on HAP/RAS for GCC to consider purchasing their rental property. GCC cannot buy properties under the scheme for singles/couples on Notices of Termination. The Homeless HAP Placefinder role has been filled. Ms E Fanning confirmed there will be further direction from the Department of Housing on second hand acquisitions and that once this round of funding is finished there will not be any further purchases.

Cllr N McNelis asked if data was available on the amount that HAP tenants are paying in top-ups. Ms A Brett advised that the vast majority of HAP tenants do pay top-ups to landlords. Under the new Galway City Council Differential Rent Scheme the HAP team can now reduce the weekly differential payment paid by tenants under the Hardship Clause. The average rent in Galway City is now €2,000 per month. Different categories of need are prioritised in the Scheme of Letting Priorities which will be discussed later.

Following queries, Ms E Fanning confirmed that the LTACC is still functioning and the chair is still the same.

The 2025 SPC Work Plan was proposed by Mr A Daly, seconded by Cllr J McDonagh and agreed.

Ms S Carroll advised that the draft 2026 Work Plan will be presented for discussion at the next SPC meeting. Any suggestions for the 2026 Work Plan can be sent on for consideration.

4. Housing Delivery in Galway City – Update from Housing Capital Team

Ms E Murphy gave a presentation and update of current projects.

Mr E Waldron asked if there were design targets to be reached and Ms Murphy confirmed that there are national targets. The social housing target for 2025 was 241 units and 137 have been delivered so far. The affordable target was 50 and this will be reached.

Cllr J McDonagh asked if there was a plan in place for older people in private rented accommodation for whom renting is unsustainable who may not be on the housing waiting list for long. Ms Baumann stated that there has been a 6 fold increase in in the number of those age 66+ who have aged into homelessness and that this cohort need to be cared for. She acknowledged that private emergency accommodation is not a good use of public money.

Mr A Daly asked where the AHB LDA properties are located. He also queried if Galway City Council has a cost rental policy.

Cllr D McDonnell requested an update on the development at Merlin Woods and for a date of completion for the Day Centre. He asked about downsizing for people in 3-4 bed houses who may no longer need that number of bedrooms.

Ms E Fanning, Ms A Brett, Ms H Martyn and Ms E Murphy responded to queries as follows:

- Resources are being sought for Housing Capital.
- 74 homeless families have been housed from private emergency accommodation.
- The planning for Seamus Quirke Road Day Centre took 2.5 years. There was a 4 stage planning process at that time which has since been reduced.
- The pump at Merlin Woods did cause delays, meetings have taken place with Uisce Éireann and planning has now been approved
- The LDA sites are at the Dyke Road, the Harbour and Sandy Road. 1,000 properties will be delivered between the 3 and 290 at Crown Square.
- Provisions for older people can be examined in the revised Scheme of Letting Priorities
- GCC is actively reviewing the Scheme of Letting Priorities and units will have to be set aside for older

persons. There is a Financial Contributions Scheme being developed which would allow private rented tenants that are eligible for social housing to rightsize.

- The LDA run the Cost Rental Scheme so Galway City Council does not have a Cost Rental policy.
- The projected date for the completion of the homeless day centre is Q4 2026.
- Part 5 arrangements must be agreed in principle by the developer with the Local Authority in advance of planning.

5. Affordable Housing

Presentation from Ms E Murphy.

Cllr D McDonnell asked if workshops will be carried out again for these new schemes and Ms E Murphy confirmed that they will closer to the date of completion. Ms Murphy explained the calculation that is used to price affordable housing.

Cllr J McDonagh queries the criteria for bedroom size in social and affordable housing and Ms E Murphy advised that this is a decision that is made by the Department of Housing and the smallest acceptable bedroom size is what is funded. The single bedroom size is 7.1 sqm and a double room is 11.4 sqm.

6. Scheme of Letting Priorities

Ms S Carroll gave a presentation outlining the current Scheme of Letting Priorities and areas where improvements could be made as part of the planned review. A draft of the new scheme can be brought to next meeting.

The number of refusals of allocations was discussed and it was agreed that data on the reasons for refusals should be sought. Ms A Brett advised that many applicants do not want to live in apartments and refuse on that basis. Ms Fanning noted that these refusals can cause delays and increase the amount of time that properties are vacant.

Ms Martyn advised that this is an opportunity to manage the expectations of applicants and that the wording will have to be carefully considered. Refusals of accommodation by families in homeless accommodation are a particular issue that will need to be addressed and GCC will be looking at schemes in other Local Authorities to establish how they deal with this issue.

7. Housing Policy & Scheme Updates

It was agreed that this had been discussed under the previous agenda item.

8. AOB

It was agreed that the next meeting will take place on **Wednesday 19th November 2025 at 9.30am.**

The meeting then concluded.