**MINUTES OF STRATEGIC POLI CY COMMITTEE MEETING ON HOUSING, SOCIAL INCLUSION & CORPORATE SERVICES**

**Microsoft Teams – 2 July 2021**

**In attendance:** Cllr Val Smith, Chairperson

Mr Eoin Doyle, Director of Service

Mr John Wilson, Cavan County Council

Ms Lynda McGavigan, Cavan County Council

Mr John Donohoe, Cavan County Council

Ms Bridie McBrearty, Cavan County Council

Mr Paul Elliott, Development and Construction

Cllr Paddy McDonald

Cllr Clifford Kelly

Cllr Patricia Walsh

Cllr Trevor Smith

Cllr Madeleine Argue

Mr Thomas Maughan, Social Inclusion

**Apologies:** None received

Cllr Val Smith, Chairperson welcomed everybody to another meeting on Microsoft teams.

1. **MINUTES**

On the proposal of Cllr Argue, seconded by Cllr Walsh, the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2021 were confirmed.

1. **HOUSING PROGRESS REPORT**

B McBrearty presented a report on progress in the housing office since previous meeting. Members noted the following:

* Approved applicants for social housing support - 522 nett together with 586 on the transfer list making the total number approved 1108.
* A total of 714 have availed of the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme and there are currently 465 total active tenancies.
* There are 407 household in accommodation provided under the Rental Accommodation Scheme and 113 through the Approved Housing Bodies.
* 26% of offers of accommodation have been refused since beginning of year – 127 offers in total
* 66 new tenancies were set up and 40 tenancies were terminated.
* 7 households were provided with homeless accommodation to date in 2021
* 34 active cases with tenancy sustainment
* The Housing First model commenced in the County in January 2020 with a target of 3 tenancies per year. 5 households currently in the Scheme and working towards providing an accommodation solution for 4 further identified.
* 21 applications in 2021, 2 approved and 1 paid out.
* 8 Letters of offer has issued under the Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme this year
* €1,519,168 is the total allocation for grants in 2021 which is a small increase on 2020 allocation. Total committed expenditure for 2021 is €1,637,593 to date.

Members noted the progress report presented by J Wilson on the build programme

* 300 units are at various stages of planning, design and construction
* An additional 92 units are being provided by Approved Housing Bodies
* 4 units should be ready for letting in Ballinagh by end July
* 4 units will be ready for letting in Ballyjamesduff in next month
* Stage 3 approval received from Department for Elm Grove yesterday
* The council’s acquisition strategy for 2021 has been submitted to the Department however approval/targets have not as yet been received
* 6 units will be ready for in Rampart’s View (AHB) in next month
* Funding approval was received for 73 void units at €11,000 each and 9 long term voids at an average of €50,000 each. In 2021 38 no. voids have been returned to stock and work is ongoing on a further 11 no.
* 90 is the target number of units to be brought back into stock in 2021
* Work is continuing on the preparatory work required to undertake the retrofitting of 24 no. properties

Members expressed their concern at the continued large number of refusals of accommodation. However, noted that an approved applicant may not be suspended from the list for a one-year period unless they refused to valid offers of accommodation within a 12-month period.

The following clarifications were provided in relation to queries raised:

**Proposed social housing development at Swellan:** The feasibility study is continuing. 50 units to be provided to cater for a range of housing need, standard, sheltered type accommodation for older people, people with disabilities in conjunction with the Housing and Disabilities Steering Group and the HSE. A Traffic Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the planning process.

**Lakeview:** The council will examine the possibility of the purchase of vacant houses in the area with a proposal to carry out a refurbishment programme in the area.

**Housing for people with specific disabilities:** 4 units had been purchased and specific adaptations were carried out for approved households with specific in conjunction with the HSE.

Members noted that significant progress had been made in the voids programme in dealing with the legacy issues in getting vacant units back into stock. 3 times as many units are in progress as had been done in 2019. However, it was unlikely that the funding requirements would alter in the coming years and more funding will need to be provided for this purpose in the annual Budgets.

**3. NATIONAL DISABILITY STRATEGY – Local Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability**

B McBrearty informed the Group that the Local Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability for Cavan (as circulated) has been agreed by the Housing and Disability Steering Group and submitted for consideration of the national group tasked with developing the National Disability Strategy. The aim of the Plan is to develop specific strategies to meet the identified needs for persons in each of the four categories of disability – sensory, mental health, physical and intellectual and set out plans for meeting the need over the 5 year period. Providing accommodation is just one piece of the jigsaw and without the appropriate care packages being provided by HSE often people cannot take up the offers. The HDSG is awaiting further information from the national group but in the meantime continue to work with the HSE in identifying the need.

Members noted that there is an underrepresentation of people with disabilities on the approved waiting list and there is a substantial body of work on an interagency basis to resolve this issue. P Walsh thanked staff for the recent offers for permanent housing solutions to households with disabilities.

Together with this it was noted that all council new builds incorporate houses which are suitable for people who use wheelchairs, and it is the intention to have 25% of the stock accessible.

**4.** **Draft NE REGION HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN 2021 - 2023**

B McBrearty advised that the North-East Region: Louth, Cavan and Monaghan homeless services are managed locally, and the strategic and administrative obligations are the responsibility of the Regional Homelessness Strategic Management Group with Louth County Council as lead.

She wished to bring to attention the new draft Plan as circulated. The main objective for 2021-23 is to build on the achievements of the recent three years while continuing to develop services in each of the counties in response to emerging need. The Region regards its current service provision as adequate to meet need having made use of funding available to bring stock back into use, using existing stock and working with AHBs to increase the housing stock. The Region is committed to providing emergency accommodation to all people who experience homelessness and to continue to develop preventative responses which has transformed over the term of the last plan. The key actions are set out in the table on page 16 and include

1. Prevention of Homelessness

2. Protection of service users through emergency, accommodation, and support services

3. Progression to longer term/permanent accommodation

4. Oversight and Governance

She sought members approval to present the Plan to the full Council for adoption at

its next meeting.

Following clarifications on the proposal of Cllr Argue, seconded by T Maughan it was

agreed that the Action Plan as presented be submitted to the Council for formal

adoption.

**5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Application Form:** BMcBrearty advised members that a new application form for Social Housing Support had been implemented by the Department recently and that this is the only form that can now be used. A new medical form had also been introduced which has to be completed and submitted by any applicant seeking priority on the basis of a disability or medical issue. Both forms are available on the Councils website or directly from the office.

**Income Limits:** Together with this there has been a change in the determination of income in the new legislation and there is now a requirement to assess eligibility for social housing support based on an average of the total income received in the preceding 12 month period prior to date of application.

**Tenders:** JWilson confirmed that the Council had sought tenders for an Architect Led Design Team to carry out feasibility works on a site in Belturbet that has been offered to the council for social housing. There are 13 units partially completed on the site with a potential for a further 17 to be provided.

PMcDonald wished to compliment the workers and contractors on the high standard of work in vacant houses but reiterated that the Council needs to have an inspection process in place to ensure the houses are kept the way they should be. Members agreed that this coupled with ASB issued needs to be tackled effectively. EDoyle advised that to do so would have significant resource issues but that there is currently a proposal internally, that if approved would move towards having this issue resolved.

Date of next meeting to be confirmed at later date.

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Chairperson**