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

**Microsoft Teams – 24 June 2022 @ 11.30 a.m.**

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

Mr Eoin Doyle, Director of Service

Mr John Wilson, Cavan County Council

Mr Tom Carty, Cavan County Council

Ms Lynda McGavigan, Cavan County Council

Ms Bridie McBrearty, Cavan County Council

Cllr Patricia Walsh

Cllr Trevor Smith

Cllr Madeleine Argue

Cllr Paddy McDonald

Mr Thomas Maughan, Social Inclusion

Mr Paul Elliott, Development and Construction

Ms Leanne Coyle, Community/Voluntary

**Apologies:** Mr John Donohoe, Cavan County Council

Cllr Clifford Kelly

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

1. **MINUTES**

On the proposal of Cllr P Walsh, seconded by Cllr McDonald, the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2022 were confirmed.

**2. HR/CORPORATE UPDATE**

LMcG provided an update on the activity of the HR and Corporate Section for the previous year including numbers recruited, freedom of information requests received etc.

**3. HOUSING PROGRESS REPORT**

J Wilson presented the report on the capital and void programme of work as follows:

* 272 units are at various stages of planning, design and construction
* An additional 56 units are being provided by Approved Housing Bodies
* Acquisitions to be concentrated on meeting specific need e.g. disability. 5 currently being acquired
* 6 units expected to be completed in Butlersbridge July 2022
* 8 units in Ballyconnell to be complete June2 022
* 2 units Kilnavara complete July 2022
* 15 units at Ballinagh to be completed Q4 2022
* 3 units at Fairymount Close, Kingscourt to be completed Q2 2022
* 13 units at Elm Grove, Cavan commenced April
* 20 units at St Brigid’s Tce – Part 8 Planning process commenced June 2022
* 8 units at Widows Row, Belturbet Part 8 process to commence Q3 2022
* 3 units at The Duckin Stool, Belturbet being designed
* 5 units will be ready for in Rampart’s View (AHB) due October 2022
* 4 units in Mullagh under CAS to be completed end July 2022
* 25 units Drumalee – CALF, 12 complete and let and further 13 complete in 2023
* 24 units Gallops – CALF, to be complete and let
* 21 vacant units returned to use, work ongoing/commencing on 29 no.
* Contract awarded for refurbishment of 10 vacant units in Cavan Town under the Energy Retrofit Programme. Work will also progress on Laragh Crescent.

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

* Approved applicants for social housing support - 501 nett together with 585 on the transfer list making the total number approved 1086. Represents in increase overall of 55 on waiting lists.
* A total of 797 have availed of the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme and there are currently 436 total active tenancies. Reduction in number currently on HAP represents the current market conditions.
* There are 378 household in accommodation provided under the Rental Accommodation Scheme and 120 through the Approved Housing Bodies. Reduction in numbers relates to the number of landlords getting out of scheme and selling their properties.
* 20% of offers of accommodation have been refused since beginning of year – 86 offers in total – down from 25% in previous quarter.
* 12 households were provided with homeless accommodation to date in 2022 which represents an increase on same time last year.
* Currently 6 households housed using the Housing First model and 2 further households being worked through.
* 24 loan applications to date this year, 3 approvals in principle issued, 3 finally approved and 5 paid out.
* 7 Letters of offer have issued under the Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme this year, 4 house sales completed.
* €1,541,043 is the total allocation for grants in 2022. Total committed expenditure is €2,871,515 to date. The large number i.e. 236 approved for which work is yet to commence reflects the difficulties in securing contractors to undertake works.
* NTQs – a total of 41 RAS tenancies since June last year, 20 households have been sorted with 26 HAP tenancies on hand currently
* ASB – team now in situ to deal with complaints/issues received

Members again expressed concern at the continued large number of refusals of accommodation. It was noted that the monies collected as part of the Differential Rent Review enabled the Council to seek additional funding from the Department to get vacant stock back into use. Together with this there is need to continue making monies available as part of the budgetary process for this purpose.

Repair requests: it was noted that repair requests have increased by over one third on this period last year.

In response to a query from P McDonald, BMcB advised that Notice to Quits are issued when a landlord wishes to get the property back. She advised that the difference in RAS and HAP is that the Council is responsible for the accommodation needs of RAS tenants and therefore an accommodation solution must be found for the 21 remaining RAS tenants who have an NTQ. She further advised that the private market is very limited at present which leads to very high rents being requested which presents affordability issues for people seeking accommodation. In turn people are very distressed as are landlords who have sold properties and tenants have and cannot move out and are overholding which leads to significant challenges for staff in dealing with people. Cllr Walsh confirmed that she had been approached as a landlord was increasing rent on a three bed in Cavan Town from €950 to €1,400, it was agreed that very little can be done to stop this practice. Following discussion on this matter ED expressed sympathy with staff and people who face daily pressures because of the change in the market conditions.

In response to a query JW confirmed that acquisitions are limited to be focussed on the following priority areas: one-bedroom units to deliver on Housing First and meet the short supply in this category; other properties that allow persons/families to exit homelessness; and specific housing required for/suitable for individuals with a disability or other priority need. The primary reason for the restrictions is to avoid undue impact on the private housing market including avoiding competition with first time buyers or other households.

P Elliott advised that the initial signs are that OGP framework will give some compensation for losses due to inflation. This should assist in alleviating the problem for contractors as if there is cost uncertainty it is very difficult to commence house building schemes.

ED complimented JW and his team on the ongoing work with the Department in providing templates which are now used nationally when reviewing scheme costings – this has the potential to save housing schemes which have been stalled due to market difficulties.

**4. DRAFT POLICY - DEMOUNTABLE DWELLINGS**

On the proposal of Cllr V Smith, seconded by Cllr T Smith it was agreed that the draft policy on Demountable Dwellings be brought before the full Council for formal adoption.

**5. GRANTS – HGD, MAG & HOP**

Following a request from Cllr Kelly B McBrearty presented a report outlining the overall position in relation to the three grants for past 4 years. A total of 567 grants have been paid out in this period at a cost of €5,345,842 which includes a contribution of 20% by the Council which equates to €1,069,168:

A summary for each year is outlined below.



Points to note:

* There is continued need to provide grants under each of the three schemes.
* There has been a steady increase in the total monies committed year on year apart from 2020 which was due to covid lockdowns and restrictions.
* The large number of grants approved in 2022 where works have not yet commended is not helped by the lack of availability of contractors to do works and increased material costs.
* The total monies committed is greater than the allocation of €1,541,043 however getting approval for an increased allocation is not an issue rather the ability to get works completed.
* The amounts available for the Council’s contribution (20%) will have to be reviewed as part of the budgetary process and it may mean that monies will need to be provided for this purpose in the Revenue Budget. Based on existing commitments alone the Council has a commitment of €574,194 if all work was to be completed and grants paid.

Members welcomed the report

**6. AOB**

BMcB advised that the Department has committed to having the revisions on the Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme details to Local Authorities for use in the next week. She will forward details to Members once received.

Date of next meeting 16 September 2022 at 11.30 – venue to be determined at a later date subject to covid restrictions/situation.

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

**Chairperson**