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

**Microsoft Teams – 24 September 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 Clifford Kelly

Cllr Patricia Walsh

Cllr Trevor Smith

Cllr Madeleine Argue

**Apologies:** Mr Thomas Maughan, Social Inclusion

Cllr P McDonald

Mr J Donohue, Cavan County Council

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

1. **MINUTES**

On the proposal of Cllr T Smith, seconded by Cllr Walsh, the minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2021 were confirmed.

**2. 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 92 units are being provided by Approved Housing Bodies
* 4 units finished and let in Ballinagh in July
* 4 units will be ready for letting in Ballyjamesduff in next month
* 10 units approved by the Department for the Council’s 2021 acquisition strategy
* 5 units will be ready for in Rampart’s View (AHB) by end December
* 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

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

* Approved applicants for social housing support - 520 nett together with 605 on the transfer list making the total number approved 1125.
* A total of 732 have availed of the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme and there are currently 463 total active tenancies.
* There are 405 household in accommodation provided under the Rental Accommodation Scheme and 116 through the Approved Housing Bodies.
* 30% of offers of accommodation have been refused since beginning of year – 133 offers in total.
* 15 households were provided with homeless accommodation to date in 2021.
* Currently 5 households housed using the Housing First model and 2 further households being worked through. The tender for the Partners who provide the tenancy sustainment is due to be readvertised next year and this will be done through the Northeast Homeless lead authority.
* 32 Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan applications in 2021, 6 approvals in principle issued, 2 finally approved and 2 paid out.
* 11 Letters of offer have issued under the Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme this year, 1 house sale completed and 2 further sales at final stages.
* €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 €1,941,845 to date.

Members again expressed 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:

**Build Target:** Following discussion Members noted the 75% increase in the 5-year build programme to 490 units/98 per year and the challenges this would pose given the difficulties being encountered in getting jobs complete namely time delays in materials and supplies, lack of contractors/builders to tender for the jobs and the large amount of construction work ongoing in the county, need for additional staffing resources etc. JW confirmed that the 490 was a target to achieve and need not necessarily be considered a cap on numbers.

**LTL:** BMcB confirmed that the lease application for 4 units at Connolly Court was with the Department.

**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. DEMOUNTABLE DWELLINGS**

JW advised that the Council had provided 70 no. demountable dwellings between1993 and 2015, 59 of which were now either occupied or vacant/redundant. Due to the age, condition, difficulties being experienced with landowners in getting permission to remove such dwellings when sold and cost of demolishing a redundant unit it was now necessary to develop a policy to reduce the number in stock. He presented an issues paper outlining the three options available and advised that if Members are in agreement, he would prepare a draft policy following consultation with the law agents. Members confirmed their agreement to this approach.

**4.** **Draft ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR STRATEGY**

B McBrearty presented and went through the different aspects of the proposed new Strategy (as circulated) and welcomed members input into it. She advised that it was prepared based on the premise of both acting where incidents occur and on preventative mechanisms. The next steps are to finalise the draft for further consideration of the SPC following which it will be brought to the JPC meeting in December for consideration and input. Additional resources are being put in place in the housing section with a dedicated team in the office to deal with such issues at the beginning of the year. She advised that a first meeting with the Inspector and the new Community Gardai had been arranged for the 17th to meet and explore each other’s role in tackling ASB and agree how we could work together to deal with the issues.

Members welcomed the new strategy in that it provided for good estate management in addition to tackling the issues and confirmed their agreement with it. They welcomed the two new staff and the changes being made together with the assignment of the three additional community guards to Cavan Town.

**5. SOCIAL HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2021**

BMcB advised that the annual social housing needs assessment for 2021 was currently ongoing with the 17November being the date on which all qualified households will be included in the Summary. The Summary will be returned to the Department on 15 December at the latest. Currently SHS update forms have been issued to all those whose application needs to be updated with a return date of 8 October.

Date of next meeting: 2December 2021 at 11.30 to be held in person.

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

**Chairperson**