

Minutes of Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) Meeting – Wednesday February 21st, 2024

In Attendance:

Mr. Niall Crowley, Independent Chairperson

Cllr. F. Fahy, Galway City Council
Cllr. Declan McDonnell, Galway City Council
Cllr. Noel Larkin, Galway City Council
Ms. Margaret O’Riada, Galway Traveller Movement
Ms. Angela Delaney, Galway Traveller Movement
Mr. Paddy Sweeney, Galway Traveller Movement Representative

Officials:

Ms. Lieze Fanning, A/Director of Services, Housing Department
Ms. Helena Martyn, A/Senior Executive Officer, Housing Department
Ms. Maria Fallon Ward, Administrative Office, Housing Department
Mr. Aidan Falvey, Senior Executive Engineer, Housing Department
Ms. Catherine Fahy, Senior Social Worker, Housing Department
Mr. Peter Barnett, Social worker, Housing Department
Ms. Edel Killarney, Traveller Accommodation Officer
Ms. Róisín Bourke, Traveller Liaison Officer

Apologies:

Councillor John Connolly, Galway City Council
Mr. Michael Cormican, Galway City Council

Niall welcomed all to the second last meeting of this period. He emphasised the importance of capturing learning from the previous TAP process and for this information to be captured and communicated to the next LTACC.

Apologies were presented on behalf of Mr. Nollaig McGuinness who has been unable to complete the work on intercultural estate management. Efforts will be made to conclude this work so that a final draft might be considered at the next and final meeting of this LTACC.

1. Minutes of the Meeting of December 11th, 2023.

The adoption of the Minutes was proposed by Cllr. Frank Fahy, seconded by Catherine Fahy and agreed by all present.

2. Matters Arising

Cllr. Frank Fahy asked about the Capital Programme update, as well as the progress of Japanese Knotweed removal from Doughiska. This is addressed in capital update below. He also asked about safety training at the Carrowbrowne site and wondered when a visit to the

sites was going to take place. It was agreed that this would take place at the next in-person meeting.

3. TAP 2025-2029: First reflections on relevant learning TAP 2019-2024

The discussion covered a wide range of issues, including:

The positive development of having a Traveller Accommodation Unit with new staff Traveller Accommodation Officer and Traveller Liaison Officer (Edel and Róisín) as a direct point of access for all families.

A positive move with the Traveller identifier question on the Housing Application Form which helps gather data on Traveller families, but only if they wish to identify as Travellers.

The need for the focus to be on relationship building through the new staff in the Traveller Accommodation Unit.

Communication is now the key, and it would be a good idea to review the communication protocol.

The value in deepening the participative approach to developing the TAP, including for a discussion on the draft of the TAP before its publication.

The value in working with social enterprise including assisting Travellers in partaking in apprentice courses. The GRETB provision was noted, but early school leavers are not prioritised, while long term unemployed are prioritised. Aidan Falvey had raised the prospects of apprenticeships within GCC and will liaise with HR on the matter.

It was agreed that a note based on this conversation will be prepared for further discussion at the next LTACC meeting and a final document will be made available for future reference by the next LTACC.

4. Capital Programme Update

Ms. Lieze Fanning gave an update on the Capital Programme.

- On the Keeraun site, there is no clear timeline yet – planning was refused twelve months ago. A multi-modality assessment was ordered and is almost completed and GCC will have to reapply for planning permission – there will be a lot of legal issues to be dealt with.
- There was no update yet on the Headford Road site.
- The Circular Road site is expected to be completed by the end of 2024.
- At the Doughiska Site there is the ever present, problem of Japanese Knotweed – a specialist contractor must be recruited to remove it.
- With regards to the Merlin Park site- there are access issues and new land must be purchased there – this site has been identified for culturally appropriate accommodation.

- The Terryland Waterworks is at stage 2 approval and six units have been approved for Traveller Specific Accommodation – the new housing development will include mixed tenure.
- There was no update on the Killtulagh site; it is currently with the Chief Executives of the city and county for consideration.
- No decision has been made on the Fana Glas site, and it will be addressed as part of the next TAP.

5. Sub Committee Updates

Ms. Maria Fallon Ward gave an Estate Management update.

- There has been very positive feedback from the caravan loan scheme – during 2023 & 2024, eight loans have been issued. By mid-March seven caravans will have been delivered on site. There have been questions raised over the repayment plans – this will possibly be over the next seven years – everyone will pay the same amount, which will be decided in conjunction with the finance department.
- The GTM will be notified when the department releases the application for 2024 – hopefully in the month of June, giving people a chance to clear their arrears.

In the ensuing discussion:

- Paddy Sweeney mentioned that there was an issue with a wall that was causing dampness in his bay, and asked whether the sites could be inspected before the caravans are delivered – this would be discussed at the next TAP.
- Angela Delaney enquired about the provision of steps at the last meeting, and she said that Limerick County Council supply steps – GCC thought that the suppliers would supply steps – this would have to be clarified. Angela asked that the matter of Limerick supplying caravan steps be checked with Limerick.
- Angela Delaney asked about plumbing, to which Aidan Falvey replied that he is awaiting an appraisal report from a consultant on plumbing and electrics, and this will act as a basis to be rolled out across all sites. Aidan Falvey said sewers /water connections will be different on every site.
- Limerick was cited as an example of addressing the above issues – and it was mentioned that GCC and the LTACC should be pushing the department for more funding.
- It was agreed that issues of plumbing, electric connection, and steps, looking at the Limerick model would be looked at in the next Operational subgroup meeting.
- The importance of 2 sub-committees continuing to meet was reiterated and agreed.

6. Maintenance update

Mr. Aidan Falvey informed that fire inspections had been carried out at Carrowbrowne Temporary and Transient sites and that Doughiska and the Tuam Road were due to be inspected at the end of the month. Once the reports are received, GCC will use these to request funding to complete fire safety works. Fire reels and fire safety breaks between Bays is to be included in this report. Fire packs are due to be delivered – these will be preceded by information letters. Smoke and carbon detectors have been upgraded and are inspected annually.

It was agreed that progress and sustainment of this work on fire safety into the future be included on the agenda of future meetings.

Aidan Falvey confirmed the Welfare units are inspected on an annual basis.

Aidan Falvey noted that the waste collection service was in the process of being changed from Walsh Waste to the City Bin Company.

The GTM reported positive feedback from the GCC maintenance logging system. It was noted that Galway County Council use an online logging system. The meeting acknowledged the positive progress being made and complimented staff in this regard.

7. Traveller Homelessness

Ms. Catherine Fahy noted the figures are stark and that GCC are fully aware of the situation. There are 23 families in private emergency accommodation – 20 of those are in occupation for more than six months. 10 families are in transitional units around the city leased by COPE and Galway Simon- 8 out of 10 of these are there for more than six months.

There were 7 properties purchased in 2023 to prevent traveller homelessness. Out of the 15 families from Peter McVerry – 7 are Traveller families. The PMVT lease came to an end on the 5th of March 2024. 15 families require a move on plan as a result. 6 properties were purchased under the tenant in situ scheme 2023 for Traveller families.

Cllr. Frank Fahy questioned why the PMVT had left and what plans are in place for the 15 units – it costs €3,500 a month to service them – he wondered why COPE or Simon could not run them, at a fraction of the cost.

Lieze Fanning noted that the PMVT contract came to an end and PMVT made the decision not to renew the lease – she said that that GCC are working with Simon and COPE and said that there is security on site. Housing solutions are being sought for all 15 families which is very positive, as 15 families are being housed and coming out of homelessness. The Department has supported the re-housing of these families.

Cllr McDonnell asked if the units could be run by GCC but was told that the staff are not available. Helena Martyn confirmed that the modular hub will remain in use for homeless/emergency accommodation service provision.

GTM referred to the Genio funding they have received for the recruitment of two staff to work with Traveller women and children experiencing homelessness in the city and county.

It was agreed that Traveller Homelessness remain on the agenda.

8. Intercultural Communities, input by Niall Crowley and discussion

A presentation on shared neighbourhoods and communities was made by Niall Crowley and discussed by members. The PowerPoint presentation will be made available to members.

9. Any Other Business

A site visit for April was suggested to be combined with the next meeting, although it was also suggested that advance notice be given to occupants so that they do not feel descended upon.

Cllr. McDonnell asked that in planning the next meeting, that it is not being held on the same day as another meeting.

GTM confirmed that the Carrowbrowne Community Centre lease is due to proceed.

The next meeting was planned for April 10th.

All attendants were thanked, and the meeting concluded.

10. Note on Reflections from the Work of the LTACC over the current TAP

Capturing the Learning for the Future from the Perspective and Experience of the Current LTACC

Context

There have been positive shifts in the context for preparing and implementing the next TAP during the life of the current LTACC that offer foundations to be built on:

- A Traveller Accommodation Officer and a Traveller Liaison Officer are now in place and hold potential to drive new progress.
- The LTACC is functioning well, with its two subcommittees, and it would be timely to review and update the Communication Protocol.
- There is additional data available with the use of the Traveller identifier on the housing application form, and it will be important to make full use of this data.

Process

There is a challenge to innovate in the development of a new TAP and the conditions have been created for this:

- New participative planning processes could be employed to generate new ideas and to embed these appropriately in the TAP and it will be important to create spaces for this.
- The conditions are in place to implement the public sector equality and human rights duty in the preparation of the next TAP with the assessment of equality and human rights issues undertaken and in place to be applied in developing the new TAP.

Priorities

Priority areas for attention in developing and implementing the next TAP might include:

- Emphasising communication and relationship building.
- Taking a regeneration approach.
- Innovating in the use of social enterprise approaches to such as transient sites.
- Finalising and implementing the new approach to estate management.
- Developing new approaches to stimulated 'shared neighbourhoods'.
- Engaging with expertise from mobile home suppliers in planning sites that include mobile homes.

- Implementing the culturally appropriate Traveller specific accommodation model that has been developing in Galway, and watching for new guidance emerging from national level.
- Innovating in the employment of Traveller apprentices, engaging as need with GRETB to facilitate this.

Issues

Issues noted over the last period, some of which are not in the control of the local level, include:

- Impossibility of meeting HAP/RAS/LTL targets.
- Missing targets set.
- Planning barriers experienced.
- Difficulty in securing resources needed from national level.