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

**OLD REFERENCE ROOM, ENV/WATER SERICES BUILDING, CAVAN**

**4th February 2020**

**Present:** Cllr Val Smith, Chairperson

Mr Eoin Doyle, Director of Service

Ms Lynda McGavigan, Cavan County Council

Mr John Donohoe, Cavan County Council

Mr John Wilson, Cavan County Council

Ms Bridie McBrearty, Cavan County Council

Cllr Paddy McDonald

Cllr Patricia Walsh

Cllr Trevor Smith

Cllr Madeleine Argue

Mr Thomas Maughan, Social Inclusion

Mr Paul Elliott, Development & Construction

Ms Theresa Thompson, Trade Unions

Ms Leanne Coyle, Community/Voluntary

**Apologies:** Cllr Clifford Kelly

Cllr Val Smith, Chairperson welcomed everybody to the first meeting of the newly formed Strategic Policy Committee for Housing, Social Inclusion & Corporate Services Committee and invited Eoin Doyle to address meeting. Mr. Doyle welcomed the new committee. He advised that training would be provided to the members to facilitate discussion and consideration as to what the Committee would examine in the next 5 years. The IPA is developing the training programme. He confirmed that it was the intention that the meetings would be held 4 times per year and advised that he looked forward to working with the committee over the period.

1. **MINUTES**

On the proposal of Cllr Argue, seconded by Mr Maughan, the minutes of the meeting held on 16th April 2019 were confirmed and signed.

1. **HOUSING ACTIVITY REPORT**

B McBrearty presented a report on activity in the housing office in 2019. Members noted the following:

* Approved applicants for social housing support in County Cavan are 617 nett together with 447 on the transfer list making the total number approved 1014.
* A total of 501 have availed of the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme and there are currently 355 total active tenancies.
* There are 430 household in accommodation provided under the Rental Accommodation Scheme.
* Of a total of 164 offers of accommodation in the County in 2019 23% refused the offer, with the highest refusal rate in Cavan Town
* A total of 156 new tenancies were set up in the County in 2019: 99 LA tenancies and 57 AHB tenancies.
* Emergency accommodation was provided to 31 households who were homeless in 2019
* 25 households were provided with tenancy sustainment in 2019, and currently working with 15 households
* The Housing First model commenced in the County January 2020 with a target of 3 tenancies per year. Work currently underway with 1 household and a further 5 identified.
* A total of 10 loans have been approved in principle under the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans Scheme with a further 5 loans approved and 4 paid out.
* Letters of offer have issued to 4 tenants under the Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme and 7 more are being progressed at present
* 10 households have been successfully housed under the Mortgage to Rent Scheme with a further 3 signed awaiting completion and 9 being processed.
* The 2019 allocation for grants amounted to €1,497,292, €299,458 (20%) of which the Council provide from own resources. A total of 151 grants had been paid with a further 22 with work in progress and 38 on hand but work not yet commenced.
* The Department has issued a new Application Form and Guidance for the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability by Circular 41.2019 dated 20th December. The new single application form is available on the Council’s website.
* All weekly rents are currently being reviewed in accordance with the Different Rent Scheme 2019 and new rents will take effect on 29h February.

A general discussion followed, with members expressing surprise at the level of refusals of offers. It was noted that if an applicant refused two offers of accommodation in a 12 month period then they would be suspended from the waiting list for a period of one year.

Clarification was provided on the make-up of the 1014 households on the list i.e. 60% single adults with no dependents, 25% single adult and one child and 15% larger households. The majority of approved applicants are in the Cavan Town area.

Staff were complimented on the way in which homeless presentations are dealt with and it was noted that further communication was required around boarding up of vacant stock. Ms McBrearty agreed to circulate the report following the meeting.

1. **HOUSING CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY REPORT**

J Wilson presented a report on activity in the housing construction section. The following was noted by the Members:

* 11 no. new builds were completed in 2019, 17 no. units are expected to be completed in 2020 and a further 62 no. units in 2021
* The acquisition of 45 units was completed in 2019. Funding for this purpose had not been advised from the Department for 2020 but it was expected that this would reduce significantly.
* Approved Housing Bodies had completed 37 no. units in 2019 and a further 36 no. units were expected to be completed in 2020.
* 188 no. vacant houses had been refurbished and made available for reletting in past four years with 29 no. of these refurbished in 2019. There are 85 vacant houses currently with work progressing on 25 of these. Preparatory work has commenced on 37 others and will be finalised in due course.

Following a general discussion it was noted that houses may be purchased by tenants under the terms and conditions of the current Tenant Incremental Purchase Scheme; that decisions as to ring fencing of rental income for repair of council houses was a matter for consideration as part of the annual Budgetary process; damage and abuse of property is not just in council houses and that private landlords have difficulties with this too and that regular inspection of properties would require significant resources.

1. **CORPORATE AFFAIRS & HUMAN RESOURCES ACTIVITY REPORT**

L McGavigan presented a report on the activities in the Corporate Services and Human Resources section in 2019. Points noted by Members were as follows:

* 413 no. staff were employed by the Council at 31st December together with 88 no. retained firefighters
* During 2019 the HR department organised 34 separate competitions for various posts.
* Staff welfare is part of the core work of the department to ensure that employees have access to the wide range of schemes available to achieve a proper work life balance.
* Training was provided to 987 indoor and 422 outdoor staff during 2019. Training was also provided to elected members following the elections in May.
* PMDS is the mechanism used to support and improve performance at individual, team and organisational levels in the organisation.
* A total of 110 Freedom of Information applications were received, 93 of which were granted
* 6 subject access requests were received under the Data Protection laws.
* Work is ongoing on the development of the Corporate Plan 2019 – 2024
* The section also has responsibility for the administration of plenary council meetings, provides support to the Cathaoirleach and Elected Members and organise both Cathaoirleach’s and Civic Receptions.
* There are 57,481 electors in the county who can vote in the forthcoming elections.
* The section is also responsible for the Protected Disclosures Act, 2014 and no such disclosures were received in the 12 month period ending 27th June, 2019.

1. **DRAFT STANDING ORDERS**

L McGavigan advised that the Draft Standing Orders which set out the rules and regulations that govern the running of meetings would be presented to the Members of the Plenary Council at the February meeting. The adopted Standing Orders will govern the business of the SPC.

1. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

It was noted that 59 people out of a total of 100 people (20 households) have been housed in the County under the Resettlement Refugee Programme since November. Funding is provided through the IRPP national programme, the project is coordinated by the Cavan Resettlement Interagency Working Group and the Programme Implementer is Breffni Integrated who employ two staff, a Resettlement and an Intercultural worker to work with the refugees to help them settle into their new communities and assist with access to the necessary services. Resettlement is based on availability of accommodation together with the availability of all the necessary support services in a town. It is anticipated that all families will have been resettled by the end of the first quarter.

Ms McBrearty agreed to follow up in relation to engagement with residents’ groups.

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on the **8th May 2020 at 9.15 a.m.** (venue to be confirmed) and that correspondence and all communications with the Members of the SPC would issue by email.

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

**Chairperson**