

Minutes of Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) Meeting – Tuesday March 11th, 2025

In Attendance:

Mr. Niall Crowley, Independent Chairperson
Cllr. Helen Ogbu, Galway City Council
Cllr. John McDonagh, Galway City Council
Cllr. Eibhlín Seoighthe, Galway City Council
Ms. Margaret O’Riada, Galway Traveller Movement
Ms. Nora Corcoran, Galway Traveller Movement
Ms. Joanna Corcoran, Westside Traveller Representative
Mr. Ian McDonagh, Eastside Traveller Representative
Mr. Edward McDonagh, Ballinfoyle/City Centre Representative
Mr. John Ward, Westside 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
Ms. Sharon Carroll, Senior Executive Office, Galway City Council
Ms. Edel Killarney, Traveller Accommodation Officer
Mr. David Finan, Assistant Staff Officer, Galway City Council

Apologies:

Cllr. Aishling Burke, Galway City Council
Mr. Michael Cormican, Galway City Council
Cllr. Alan Curran, Galway City Council
Cllr. Alan Cheevers, Galway City Council

Lieze Fanning opened the meeting, welcomed all in attendance and proceeded to arrange for the election of the Chairperson.

1. Election of Chairperson

The Independent Chairperson, Mr Niall Crowley, was proposed by Elizabeth Fanning and seconded by Nora Corcoran, GTM and was duly agreed by the meeting.

2. Welcome & Introductions

The Chairperson opened the meeting, outlining his experience in Human Rights and Equality and advised that if at any time the committee believe the Independent Chairperson role is not working the role can be terminated.

Members were asked to introduce themselves and outline their vision for the LTACC.

The meeting agreed the agenda with two additions under AOB

3. Minutes of the Meeting of April 10th, 2024.

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

4. The LTACC & the Communication Protocol

The purpose of the protocol was outlined, the document was read aloud and a discussion followed regarding changes required. It was agreed to review the protocol to capture previous LTACC learnings and draft a document for circulation in advance of and discussion at the April meeting.

Cllr John McDonagh asked how many LTACC meetings are held each year and enquired about the delay in holding a meeting since April 2024. The Chairperson outlined that a minimum of four meetings is required and more can be convened if necessary. Council elections resulted in a delay in holding this meeting.

Cllr Eibhlín Seoighthe asked about the timeframe for achieving co-chairing the meetings, outlining the value in having a member of the Traveller community chairing. The aspiration for the LTACC is agreed as being to achieve the objective of co-chairing meetings.

It was agreed that Traveller homelessness should be included in meeting agendas.

5. Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 Review

The achievements and challenges for the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 were outlined. The last programme projected a need for 242 units of accommodation for Traveller families in the city. Galway City Council delivered 75% of its programme targets through the allocation of Standard Local Authority/AHB Housing, Halting Site and Private Rented accommodation. In addition, 5 extensions and 8 property acquisitions were made to accommodate Traveller families. Challenges to delivery of accommodation were outlined and included Covid '19, planning refusals, Knotweed growth at Doughiska Respond site, few opportunities for accommodating Travellers in private rental accommodation, identification of landbanks and appropriate zoned land for Traveller accommodation.

Helena Martyn queried the figure submitted by the Acquisitions department to the review, suggesting it may be higher as many Traveller families do not identify as Traveller which impacts on figures returned.

GTM raised the HAP figures contained in the review, the challenges facing Travellers in the private rented sector and pointed to the need for action to be taken if the HAP figures are to improve and targets met going forward.

It was agreed that tracking against targets of acquisitions, allocations, and private rental take-up; tracking of experiences of those in private rental or seeking private rental, and

tracking of landbanks planning and site identification are key to progressing the new programme and will need to be a focus for the LTACC.

Cllr. John McDonagh queried whether there are any new sites identified for Traveller Specific Accommodation. GTM noted the importance of targets for culturally appropriate provision. Lieze Fanning replied that the Council are exploring options. This will be a key focus for the LTACC over the period of this programme.

6. Capital Programme Update

No update.

7. Maintenance Update

An overview of the spend on maintenance works completed in 2024 was delivered. €745,000 was spent on maintenance works during that year, with €118,000 of a budget overspend. 79 Conditions surveys were completed, results will inform a plan of works at Traveller specific accommodation over a three-year period subject to funding being granted by the DHLGH representing a move by Galway City Council from reactive to planned maintenance works and a positive development for the department. This was welcomed by all and it was agreed that the impact of this will be an ongoing focus for the LTACC.

Funding to the value of €320,000 was secured from the DHLGH for sewage works at the Tuam Road Halting site.

140 Maintenance requests were received in 2024, the majority were closed out with elements remaining at the Cúl Trá site. Maintenance requests must be logged by phone or email, as outlined in the Tenant Handbook. The staffing complement to maintain the sites has increased in recent years, there is now a Caretaker, Foreman, Clerk of Works out on the ground trying to maintain the sites. One of the remaining challenges is to get contractors to complete work on the sites. GTM raised the need for the matter of open sewage at Cul Tra to be addressed. GTM extended an offer of assistance to support access for the Council to Cúl Tra site.

GTM pointed to the importance of developing storm defences at sites to prevent units overturning.

8. Sub Committee Updates

Estate Management

A subcommittee meeting took place in January 2025.

An update on the 2025 Caravan Loan scheme was provided. There was a total of 12 applicants. Funding allocated for the scheme will cover three loans. There was a lot of applications but insufficient funding to meet the demand. Correspondence regarding loan offers is due out to families. The Department were approached for additional funding.

GTM noted that the Caravan Loan scheme is relevant to both sub committees and the ongoing issues with the scheme need to be highlighted to the department by the LTACC. GTM raised the need for the plumbing of units at sites. It was agreed that the level of funding available was the core issue now that the scheme has been made permanent, and that the chair would write to the Minister on behalf of the LTACC to seek increased funding and point to the inadequacy of current funding levels.

Ian McDonagh queried who are the suppliers of the caravans and are GCC getting the best value for money. It was noted that GCC procurement are involved in the process and the purchasers can choose their own supplier.

An Estate Management strategy for Traveller specific Halting sites is in progress. The importance of devising and developing a culturally specific approach was noted. The LTACC agreed to give some priority to completing this work.

Operational Subgroup

A meeting is scheduled for March 25th.

It was agreed to continue with the two separate sub committees, keeping the matter of the range of subcommittees under review. The need to have an elected representative for each sub-committee was noted and this was resolved by those present.

9. Traveller Homelessness

GTM asked if modular homes could be explored as a form of homeless accommodation for Traveller families. Lize Fanning agreed to explore the option of modular homes as a source of traveller specific accommodation.

The work being done by GTM, funded by Genio, in this field was noted and would be a focus for future discussion at the LTACC.

Ian McDonagh asked how many Travellers are availing of Homeless services. Helena Martyn asked why Homeless Traveller families are refusing accommodation offers. Discussion took place around the reasons for refusals. All parties agreed to explore the issues arising collaboratively. A time limited LTACC task group will be formed to explore actions to resolve this issue. Two meetings will be held, group to report back to the LTACC meeting in April.

10. Any Other Business

The LTACC is to convene a meeting with all LTACCs later this year and have sought input as to the agenda for this meeting. Examples of best practice in Traveller Accommodation are being sought. Items mentioned included the Circular Road Scheme, Estate Management Strategy. This issue will be further discussed at the next meeting.

Electricity supply at the sites was raised by GTM, outlining the system for electricity supply was working fine and requested a six-month postponement of the decision by GCC to switch

over electricity accounts. It was agreed to discuss the issue at the Estate Management sub-committee.

11. Next Meeting

A Halting site visit was suggested for a future meeting. It was noted that this had been discussed by the previous LTACC and was seen as useful provided it was done with a specific purpose.

It was agreed that the new programme would be a focus at the next meeting. The next meeting will take place in person at City Hall, on April 9th, 10:30 am to 1 pm to include training. All attendants were thanked, and the meeting concluded.