TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME
2014 – 2018

Adopted by the Members of Leitrim County Council on 13th January 2014
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1. Introduction

1.1 Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998

Under the 1998 Act Leitrim County Council has certain obligations in relation to the preparation, adoption and implementation of a Traveller Accommodation Programme. In summary, Leitrim County Council is required to:

- prepare and adopt an Accommodation Programme to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers in County Leitrim
- allow for public input to the preparation and amendment of the Programme.
- take appropriate steps to secure implementation of the Programme.
- include objectives concerning Traveller Accommodation in the County Development Plan.

The Minister for Housing & Planning has set the latest date for the adoption of the Accommodation Programme as 30th April 2014. The Minister has also directed that a review of this Accommodation Programme should be carried out not later than 31st December 2016.

1.2 Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
In accordance with the provisions of Section 21 and 22 of the 1998 Act a Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee has been established. The Committee meets on a quarterly basis to advise Leitrim County Council on the provision and management of accommodation for Travellers.

The Consultative Committee plays an important role in the development of the Traveller Accommodation Programme and the views of the Committee, including in relation to the assessment of needs, have been taken into account in the preparation of this Programme. Implementation of the Programme will be monitored by the Committee and issues arising addressed. Membership of the Leitrim Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee comprises four elected Traveller Representatives, six Members of Leitrim County Council and two Council Officials (see Appendix 1).
There is currently one Traveller Representative vacancy on the Consultative Committee. This vacancy is being filled from within the Carrick-on-Shannon Traveller population, with the nomination process being co-ordinated through the Leitrim Development Company Traveller Development Worker.

In terms of the structure and operations of the Consultative Committee the following proposals will be brought to the Committee for consideration/implementation from 2014:

- review of the membership of the Committee (Elected Member representation will be reviewed following the May 2014 Local Elections)
- consideration, in view of the size of the Carrick on Shannon Traveller population, to be given to an additional Traveller representative from Carrick on Shannon
- at least one meeting annually to be held outside of the Council Offices – to rotate between Playschool, Rosebank, Carrick on Shannon and Community House, Mohill (subject to the facilities being made available)
- County Leitrim Traveller Support Group to be involved, once established, in the Traveller Representative nomination process – ideally at least one of the Traveller Representatives on the Consultative Committee should come from this Support Group
2. Review of Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013

The overall targets for delivery under the Leitrim Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013, following Mid-Term Review in 2011, were as follows:

1. Develop a group housing scheme with family type houses in Tawlaughtmore, Mohill subject to agreement with relevant parties, funding approval and project planning permission. (These units were included, following the Mid-Term review in 2011, as a target in 2013 with a view to the project having progressed to construction stage prior to the end of the Programme).

2. Allocate vacancy arising in Group Housing Scheme in Rosebank, Carrick on Shannon

3. Allocate three standard Council houses to Traveller families in the Carrick-on-Shannon and Mohill areas.

4. Additional standard housing needs arising to be provided for under the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

These targets are summarised in the Table 1 below:

Table 1: Targets under the 2009-2013 Traveller Accommodation Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Housing Scheme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6*</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning/Development</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>See Note 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Housing Scheme –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Existing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority Standard</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Block Bedroom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental Accommodation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NOTE: These units are included as a target in 2013 with a view to the project having progressed to construction stage prior to the end of this Programme.

Proposals to develop bedroom extensions at two halting site service blocks, to meet the accommodation requirements of persons with a disability in Shannonside View, Rosebank, Carrick-on-Shannon, which were included in the original Programme were delayed, and
subsequently removed at the Mid-Term review of the Programme in 2011, due to difficulties arising in relation to the tenancies in both cases. One of the families had, at that stage, moved off the Site and there was no longer the requirement for the proposed extension. In relation to the second tenancy a second Caravan Loan had been provided to meet this family’s accommodation needs and, pending a sustained effort to address the ongoing tenancy issues, it was not proposed to proceed with this extension.

2.1 Progress to December 2013
Details of the progress to 31st December 2013 on implementing the 2009-2013 Programme are outlined in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Outputs achieved under 2009-2013 Traveller Accommodation Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation Type</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Housing Scheme Planning/Development</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Housing Scheme – Existing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority Standard Housing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Block Bedroom Extensions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Block – Casual Vacancy/Succession of Tenancy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Adaptation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental Accommodation Scheme</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term Leasing Scheme</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance Towards Securing Private Rented Accommodation (Rent Deposit)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halting Site Refurbished Bay</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caravan Loans</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation Offered but Refused (RAS)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation Offered but Refused (Std Local Authority)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Delivery Issues Arising

- **Group Housing Scheme Planning/ Development – Tawlaughtmore, Mohill**
  
The original Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013 proposed the redevelopment of Tawlaughtmore Halting Site in Mohill to provide for Group Scheme Houses to meet the accommodation needs of the Mohill Traveller families. The original time-frame for the delivery of this project was not achieved for various reasons including the following:

  - The specific accommodation preference of the Travellers residing on the Site was subject to change on a number of occasions in terms of on-site or off-site accommodation
  - Issues in relation to vandalism, malicious damage and anti-social behaviour continued to be a significant feature on the Site notwithstanding ongoing dialogue with the families in an effort to identify and resolve these issues.
  - Efforts to engage an Approved Housing Body in a partnership approach in relation to the delivery of the project and possible future management and maintenance of the Site were unsuccessful.

In the context of the Mid-Term Review of the Programme in 2011 the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee discussed the options in relation to meeting the accommodation needs of the Mohill Travellers in detail. The view was very strongly expressed by the Mohill Traveller representative, as subsequently supported by the submission received from the Mohill Traveller Development Group, that the preference of the Mohill families was very clearly to have the existing Halting Site redeveloped, as originally proposed and provided for in the Programme. In that context the Local Traveller Consultative Committee agreed that the redevelopment of the Tawlaughtmore Halting Site should remain an objective of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013. It was outlined however that any redevelopment works proceeding would be subject to the availability of Capital funding and Departmental approval and would also be subject to full co-operation from the local Travellers and ongoing compliance with tenancy obligations. Given the detailed design, planning and consultation requirements it was unlikely that this redevelopment project would be complete within the remaining lifetime of the 2009-2013 Programme and the provision of these units was included as a target for 2013 with a view to the project having progressed to construction stage prior to the end of the Programme. In the event of the redevelopment project not being progressed as a result of lack of funding or other issues, alternative delivery options would have to be considered.

Leitrim County Council, in conjunction with Leitrim Development Company, subsequently secured funding under the PEACE III Programme for a Traveller Integration Project – a key
The strand of this project, which has been ongoing throughout 2013, is working directly with the Mohill Travellers and in particular to provide:

- A detailed profile of the individual family units at the Mohill site to include identification of current and required supports.
- Provision of assistance in relation to accessing supports where gaps are identified.
- Overview/assessment of inter-family relations/dynamics and issues both on site and within the wider local community.
- Delivery of mediation and conflict resolution support.
- Review of previous successful / unsuccessful transitions off site to include identification of learning.
- Delivery of tenancy sustainment training/supports and pre-tenancy training.
- Detailed assessment/appraisal of accommodation needs for individual family units, to include development of awareness of limitations/ constraints in relation to accommodation options, and identification of accommodation solutions/options.
- Develop/progress approved accommodation solutions in conjunction with the Housing Department of Leitrim County Council.
- Preparation and implementation of approved transition plans for individual family units in conjunction with the Housing Department of Leitrim County Council.
- Work in conjunction with Traveller Support Groups and other communities/ groups involved/impacted by the project.

Conditions on the Site deteriorated however to such an extent, particularly in 2012/early 2013, as a result of fire incidents, anti-social behaviour and vandalism, health & safety issues associated with carrying out works on site (sanitary conditions, dumping, unsupervised children etc) and lack of available financial resources, that the site became effectively no longer habitable. The unprecedented decision had to be taken, in April 2013, to close and secure the Site, with a plan to be developed for its full decommissioning. This decision was in line with the expressed preference of the families on the Site. All bar one of the families involved have been provided with appropriate alternative accommodation, with the remaining family currently sharing involuntarily with other family members, and their accommodation needs to be met under this Accommodation Programme.

Our objective has been to provide appropriate accommodation to meet housing needs and to work closely with the families and the local and wider community to ensure that families are integrated and that the issues that presented at Tawlaughtmore are not permitted to be
replicated in their new accommodation and communities. In this regard significant effort, in conjunction with a range of agencies and with the assistance of the PEACE III Project, is being put into tenancy sustainment and liaison with the families, residents associations etc to ensure that this transition is a success for all involved.

- **Rental Accommodation Scheme**
  The anticipated level of outputs under the Rental Accommodation Scheme has not been achieved under the 2009-2013 Programme as a result of significant rent arrears issues in relation to a number of the RAS transfers completed. This issue is being addressed with the individual families involved and the RAS Programme/any successor to this programme will continue to be an important aspect in addressing Traveller accommodation needs under the 2014-2018 Programme.

- **Local Authority Standard Housing**
  While the targets in relation to the provision of Standard Local Authority Housing were exceeded over the period of the 2009-2013 Programme, Leitrim County Council’s capacity to deliver units of standard local authority housing is negatively impacted by the suspension of the Housing Construction programme nationally, the curtailment of the Voluntary Housing Programme and cancellation of proposed voluntary housing development in Carrick on Shannon, the limited family type accommodation vacancies arising and the limited availability of larger family type dwellings which would be required for the family profiles involved. These issues will continue to impact on the capacity of Leitrim County Council to deliver standard local authority housing over the period of the new Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018.
3. Public Consultation Process

Leitrim County Council, in accordance with the requirements of Section 8 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, gave public notice on 23rd August 2013 of its intention to prepare a Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme for the period 2014-2018 and to carry out an assessment of existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers.

Notice of our intention to prepare a Draft Accommodation Programme was also given to the following:

- Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- The Elected Members of Leitrim County Council
- Housing & Corporate Services Strategic Policy Committee
- Oireachtas Members for Sligo North Leitrim & Sligo South Leitrim
- Adjoining Housing Authorities
- Health Service Executive West
- Leitrim Inter Agency Traveller Services Group
- Rosebank Traveller Development Group (Carrick-on-Shannon)
- Leitrim Development Company
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Pavee Point
- PEACE III Traveller Integration Project Consultant – Breakthrough Consultancy

Submissions were invited for consideration for inclusion in the new Programme. A total of 3 submissions were received before the closing date for submissions of Friday 27th September 2013. Submissions were received from the following:

- Irish Traveller Movement
- HSE – Floraidh Dunn, Public Health Nurse, Traveller Health
- Leitrim Development Company

The contents of these submissions were noted and taken into consideration in the preparation of the Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018.

Consultation also took place with the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and with individual Traveller families in relation to their accommodation needs.
Following approval by the Council at the October Council meeting, Leitrim County Council, in accordance with the requirements of Section 9 of the Act, gave public notice on 11th October 2013 that it had prepared a Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018 and that a copy of the Draft Programme was available for public inspection and that regard would be had to any submissions received on or before 12th December 2013.

A copy of the Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme together with a copy of the public notice was also circulated to the following:

- Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- The Elected Members of Leitrim County Council
- Housing & Corporate Services Strategic Policy Committee
- Oireachtas Members for Sligo North Leitrim & Sligo South Leitrim
- Adjoining Housing Authorities
- Health Service Executive West
- Leitrim Inter Agency Traveller Services Group
- Rosebank Traveller Development Group (Carrick-on-Shannon)
- Leitrim Development Company
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Pavee Point
- PEACE III Traveller Integration Project Consultant – Breakthrough Consultancy

A total of 3 submissions were received by Leitrim County Council during the public consultation period as follows:

1. Cena Culturally Appropriate Homes Ltd
2. National Traveller MABS
3. Breakthrough Consultancy

The County Manager’s report to the Members on the public consultation process summarised the matters contained in the individual submissions, specified the names of the persons who made submissions, specified the response of the Housing Authority to these submissions and indicated that it was proposed to proceed with the Draft of the Accommodation Programme subject to modification as outlined in the report and recommended its adoption. The matter was considered at the January 2014 meeting of Leitrim County Council held on 13th January 2014 and the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018 as amended in line with the County Manager’s report and recommendation was adopted.
4. Assessment of Need/Projected Need

4.1 Assessment of Need

In accordance with Section 9 of the Housing Act 1988, as amended, and Section 6 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, Leitrim County Council assessed and identified the accommodation needs of Traveller families to be met during the period of this Programme, from 1\textsuperscript{st} January, 2014 to 31\textsuperscript{st} December, 2018, including the need for sites.

This assessment relates to the existing accommodation need and the projected need estimated to arise across the range of Traveller Accommodation options, including group and standard housing, long term leasing, rental accommodation scheme, proposed new housing assistance payment scheme, permanent residential sites for caravans and transient sites.

The assessment of need is based on the following:

- Annual Count of Travellers recorded on Friday 30\textsuperscript{th} November, 2012
- Housing Needs Assessment completed as at 30\textsuperscript{th} April 2013 – which included an assessment of the need for residential caravan parks for Travellers.
- Cross-reference of Traveller households with Traveller Development Worker, Leitrim Development Company
- Meetings with individual Traveller households – each individual household (with the exception of households whose housing needs assessment had been completed in the very recent past and a number of the Mohill families who have had their accommodation needs addressed in recent months), including households already accommodated by Leitrim County Council, was invited to a meeting to discuss their specific family and accommodation circumstances and requirements with the Housing Officer / Housing Assessments Officer. These meetings have informed the Projected Need over the period of this Accommodation Programme, including the estimate of new family formations, and the accommodation proposals to meet that projected need.

A total of 57 households were invited to individual meetings as part of the consultation process and in order to complete the assessment of need. The attendance level was low however with only 23 of the 57 households (40%) attending - 34 households (60%) did not attend and did not avail of the facility provided to reschedule meetings to suit personal circumstances. In terms of the households who did not attend for assessment a desktop review of their applications and household circumstances was undertaken and a cross-referencing exercise was completed with Pat Fitzpatrick, Leitrim Development Company.
Traveller Development Worker to ensure that our data was fully up to date and in order to
determine individual accommodation requirements.

A total of 62 Traveller families were residing in County Leitrim as of 27th September 2013 with
one additional household on the Housing Waiting List currently sharing involuntarily with
family members in County Sligo. The breakdown of the 63 households by accommodation
type and location as at 31st December 2013 is outlined in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Households in County Leitrim by Accommodation Type & Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation Type</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of Families</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard Local Authority Accommodation</td>
<td>Carrick-on-Shannon</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mohill</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private (Purchased under Tenant Purchase Scheme)</td>
<td>Carrick-on-Shannon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority Traveller Group Schemes</td>
<td>Carrick-on-Shannon</td>
<td>9*</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mohill</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority Permanent Halting Site</td>
<td>Carrick-on-Shannon</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mohill (Site pending decommissioning)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term Leasing Scheme</td>
<td>Carrick-on-Shannon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental Accommodation Scheme</td>
<td>Carrick-on-Shannon</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Rented Accommodation (with Rent Supplement)</td>
<td>Carrick-on-Shannon</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dromod</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kinlough</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manorhamilton</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tullaghan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing Involuntarily</td>
<td>Carrick-on-Shannon</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mohill</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside County</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Traveller Households</td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One unit is occupied under a joint tenancy by two single person households. One further unit at Rosebank, Carrick-on-Shannon vandalized and abandoned by former tenants.
4.2 Projected need
The Council is obliged to make an assessment of the number of Traveller households who will require accommodation within the lifetime of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014–2018. The figures from the Annual Traveller Count show that Leitrim’s Traveller population has increased significantly over the past 14 years, from 22 households in 2000 to a high of 73 households in 2009, with the current figure standing at 63 households. The average number of households in the County over the period of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013, per the Annual Count figures (Nov. 2008 – Sept. 2013) is 61.

The increase in the local Traveller population since the early 2000’s is largely attributable to a significant number of emigrants returning to Carrick-on-Shannon over that period. There has also been a considerable level of new household formation with many of these new households, who would traditionally have emigrated or moved away, now opting to remain in Leitrim, and predominantly in Carrick-on-Shannon. While a number of non-indigenous Traveller families have moved into the County in recent years, this number remains quite low.

As outlined above sixty three (63) Traveller family units are currently resident in County Leitrim (one of these families is temporarily sharing involuntarily with extended family members in County Sligo). The majority of Leitrim Travellers reside in the South of the County, predominantly in Carrick-on-Shannon (51), Dromod (1) and Mohill (6), with only four (4) families currently residing in North Leitrim – a breakdown of the 63 Traveller households by location is outlined in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Traveller Households Residing in County Leitrim by Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carrick on Shannon</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dromod</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinlough</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manorhamilton</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohill</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tullaghan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside County</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While thirty eight (38) of the sixty three (63) Households have had their housing need provided for by the local authority, twelve (12) of these households are being included in the Projected Needs figures for this Programme for the following reasons:
• Downsizing requirement – 2
• Specially adapted accommodation requirement – 1
• Long Term Leasing/RAS renewal - 9

The remaining twenty five (25) households have had their housing need assessed by Leitrim County Council and are all deemed to have demonstrated a housing need in accordance with the provisions of Section 20 of the Social Housing Assessment Regulations. Of these 25 households:
  • Nineteen (19) are currently in private rented accommodation with Rent Supplement
  • The balance of six (6) households are sharing involuntarily with extended family

The majority of the households currently residing in private rented accommodation are satisfied with their current accommodation and have indicated that they will consider either standard local authority accommodation or the Rental Accommodation Scheme to meet their long-term accommodation needs. One of these households has a requirement for specially adapted accommodation.

Of the six (6) households currently involuntarily sharing:
  • One no. (1) is interested in succession of tenancy to an existing Service Block
  • Two no. (2) are interested in standard local authority accommodation.
  • The remaining three no. (3) are interested in private rented accommodation

Based on the profile of the families currently resident in County Leitrim it is anticipated that there could be approximately eighteen no. (18) new family formations over the lifetime of this Accommodation Programme. It is difficult to predict how many of these new households will remain in the County but for the purposes of this Programme it is estimated that 50% of the new household formations, nine no. (9) will remain in County Leitrim.

Based on the above the total projected need over the period of this Accommodation Programme is forty six no. (46) households, broken down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Households already accommodated with a specific requirement</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households assessed as having a housing need</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Household Formations</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The level of need and the range of accommodation required will be kept under review on an ongoing basis.
4.3 Current Accommodation and Requirements

As outlined in Table 3 above Travellers in County Leitrim are currently accommodated in standard local authority accommodation, local authority Traveller Group Schemes, local authority permanent Halting Site and in the private rented sector under Long Term leasing or RAS contracts or with support under the Rent Supplement Scheme. There are no families living in County Leitrim in unauthorised sites or roadside encampments.

The expressed accommodation preference of the majority of Traveller housing applicants is for standard local authority housing or private rented accommodation. With the exception of a small number of households who wish to be accommodated on the existing Rosebank Group Housing Scheme in Carrick-on-Shannon no demand or requirement for additional Traveller-specific accommodation has been expressed or identified.

It is anticipated that the housing need will be met over the period of this Accommodation Programme predominantly through the provision of standard Local Authority Housing and through the Rental Accommodation Scheme and the proposed new Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)\(^1\).

The ability of the Council to provide local authority standard housing continues to be negatively impacted however by a number of factors including:

- Suspension of the Housing Construction programme nationally
- Curtailment of Voluntary Housing Programme and cancellation of proposed voluntary housing development in Carrick on Shannon
- Limited family type accommodation vacancies arising
- Limited availability of larger family type dwellings which would be required for some of the family profiles involved
- Estate Management issues

Accordingly it is anticipated that the need arising will predominantly be met through the Rental Accommodation Scheme and proposed new Housing Assistance Payment.

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\(^1\) Housing Assistance Payment: Responsibility for recipients of rent supplement with a long term housing need is to be transferred from the Department of Social Protection to Housing Authorities under a new Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) – the HAP payment is to be tested in a number of selected local authorities in 2014, following the enactment of the necessary legislation.
5. Policy

Leitrim County Council recognises Travellers’ identity as a minority ethnic group, some of whom are nomadic. It is the policy of the Council to have meaningful consultation based on Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government Guidelines with Travellers about their accommodation needs and to provide, where appropriate, Traveller specific accommodation.

A key objective of Leitrim County Council is to develop the County in a manner which contributes to the positive well being and quality of life for all citizens. Leitrim County Council endeavours to meet the needs of Travellers using the range of accommodation options available to the Council – including group and standard housing, long term leasing and rental accommodation schemes and permanent residential halting sites. This provision takes place in consultation with the Travelling community, the settled community and with the various other statutory and voluntary agencies delivering services to Travellers as required.

5.1 Travellers’ Distinct Needs

Recognising Travellers’ distinct culture and needs, Leitrim County Council has provided Traveller specific accommodation in Carrick on Shannon and Mohill, in consultation with local Travellers and Traveller Support Groups. Facilities for visitors to tenants of permanent Traveller specific accommodation units have also been provided. While the Assessment of Needs has not identified any requirement for additional Traveller specific accommodation in the County, the design of any future such schemes will continue to reflect the needs of Travellers and will also take account of technical, fire and public safety requirements. All accommodation provided will comply with the directions and guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government.

5.2 Long-Term Accommodation

The Council will have regard to the full range of housing options available in the provision of long-term accommodation for Travellers including Standard lettings in Local Authority Estates, Group Housing, Residential Halting Sites, Voluntary Housing, Long Term Leasing and Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)/Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). Applications for accommodation will be assessed and reports requested from other Local Authorities and statutory agencies.
The Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011 set out the manner in which a housing authority will determine a household’s qualification for social housing support and the description and classification of its’ housing need. All applicants for social housing support must be assessed in accordance with these regulations.

Existing tenants of Leitrim County Council accommodated in standard local authority accommodation, Group Scheme Dwellings, Permanent Halting Site accommodation or households accommodated in dwellings under the Rental Accommodation Scheme or the Long-Term Leasing Scheme can apply for a transfer to alternative local authority accommodation. Each transfer application will be assessed on its own merits having regard to the particular household circumstances, and in accordance with the Council’s Transfer Policy.

Where tenants surrender their existing local authority accommodation, other than in an approved transfer situation, their tenancy will be terminated and they will no longer be eligible for reassessment for inclusion on the Housing Waiting List and/or to access the Rent Supplement Scheme for alternative private rented accommodation, on the basis that their housing need has previously been addressed by the local authority. In any such circumstances tenants will be informed of the serious implications of surrendering their tenancy before a surrender of tenancy form will be accepted by Leitrim County Council. Where former tenants proceed to surrender their accommodation they will be deemed responsible for meeting their accommodation needs from their own personal resources. Ordinarily former local authority tenants will not qualify for rent supplement from the Department of Social Protection.

In the event that properties are abandoned by a tenant and the property is not occupied by the household as their normal palace of residence for extended periods of time, proceedings will be initiated to recover possession of such properties and the properties will then be re-allocated to qualified applicants on the Housing Waiting List in accordance with the Council’s Allocations Scheme.

5.4 Transient Sites
The incidence of roadside or unauthorised encampments is relatively infrequent in Leitrim with no discernible pattern arising. Facilities for visitors to tenants of permanent Traveller specific accommodation have been provided by Leitrim County Council. It is considered that transient accommodation suitable to meet the needs of nomadic families would best be provided on a regional basis with appropriate caretaking, maintenance and management
services delivered. The Council will work in conjunction with adjoining Local Authorities in relation to such provision should that need arise. Consideration will also be given to reassigning existing service block facilities to provide transient facilities should service blocks become vacant during the course of this Programme and not be required to meet identified Traveller accommodation needs.

5.5 Unauthorised Encampments
Unauthorised encampments present difficulties in relation to health and safety and can be hazardous to road users. Leitrim County Council will consult with relevant parties to address issues arising. The Council will however utilise powers available under the legislation to remove caravans/temporary dwellings when deemed appropriate and necessary.

5.6 Emergency Accommodation
Existing procedures for meeting emergency housing needs will continue to be used for emergency Traveller housing needs. This may include sourcing temporary emergency accommodation where a bona fide housing need has been established or the provision, in exceptional circumstances, of a caravan or mobile home subject to the availability of a suitable site.

5.7 Caravan Loan Scheme
Leitrim County Council proposes to continue to administer the Caravan Loan Scheme. Current policy allows for the granting of loans for caravans up to €6,350 with grants of up to 10% available for the purchase of a new/second-hand caravan. Loans are repayable over a period of 3-5 years.

Each application is considered on its own merits. The amount of loan sanctioned in any instance will be dependent on the applicant’s ability to pay and regard will be had to tenancy compliance and any previous repayment history.

5.8 Housing Allocation Policy
Traveller applicants will be considered in conjunction with all other eligible applicants for suitable accommodation vacancies arising in accordance with the Council’s Allocation Scheme.
5.8 Transfer and Succession of Tenancy Policy

Existing tenants, including tenants of dwellings provided under the Social Housing Leasing Initiative, Rental Accommodation Scheme, or by Approved Housing Bodies, may apply for consideration for a transfer to alternative accommodation in the following circumstances:

- down-sizing requirement,
- exceptional medical/disability or compassionate grounds, or
- where there is over-crowding.

Leitrim County Council will not consider transferring a tenant because of unsatisfactory relations with a neighbouring tenant or because of dissatisfaction in general with the estate or the neighbourhood.

Tenants seeking a transfer must also comply with all the general provisions of their tenancy agreement, including the requirement to have a clear rent account.

On the death of a tenant, the tenancy may be transferred to the tenant’s partner/spouse or to a member of the tenant’s immediate family normally resident in the dwelling at the date of the tenant’s death. In determining whether or not the tenant’s immediate family was normally resident in the dwelling on the date of the tenant’s death, details included on the previous Rent Assessments will be taken into account. The entitlement to make an application for a succession of tenancy will not apply where Leitrim County Council is satisfied that the applicant for succession deliberately took up occupancy in the dwelling for the sole purpose of obtaining tenancy in these circumstances.

5.9 Back Up Services and Support

Two of the Council’s Housing Maintenance Staff are assigned part-time to deal with maintenance issues in relation to Traveller specific accommodation units (resource requirement reduced due to the closure of the Tawlaughtmore, Mohill Site). In addition, the staff of the Housing Department are available to deal with issues arising. New housing applicants are assessed by the Housing Assessment Officer and information and advice is available to applicants as required on the range of housing options available.

The Rosebank Traveller Development Group also plays an important support role in the provision of services to Travellers. Leitrim Integrated Development Company’s Traveller Development Work is significant and their assistance in the delivery of Traveller Accommodation services is acknowledged.
Funding was also secured under the PEACE III Programme, as outlined previously, for a Traveller Integration Project which has been ongoing throughout 2013. This project, which is being delivered by John Mulligan of Breakthrough Consultancy, has three main objectives - working with the Mohill Travellers, the establishment of a County Leitrim Traveller Support Group (CLTSG) and the provision of support for Communities within identified local authority, private housing estates and group housing schemes to promote dialogue between the Traveller and Settled Communities as well as Agencies, and to encourage integration through this means. This project, which was completed at the end of 2013, has contributed significantly to general development and capacity building within the local Travelling community.

The Council is committed to a heightened focus on tenant liaison in relation to the Housing Function generally.

**5.10 Inter-Agency Approach**

It is the policy of Leitrim County Council to adopt an inter-agency approach in the provision of services and accommodation to Travellers. This approach is critical, particularly in relation to addressing any special needs accommodation and support requirements. The HSE Public Health and Occupational Therapy services are central to this process.

The inter-agency approach adopted in relation to addressing the accommodation needs of the Mohill Traveller families, and facilitating their successful transition from Halting Site accommodation to standard local authority housing, has been very significant and this approach will be ongoing in relation to ensuring that these new tenancies are sustained. This approach will be replicated as necessary over the course of the 2014-2018 Programme.

The Inter-Agency Traveller Services Group, established in Leitrim in 2006, works in consultation with Travellers to enhance the provision of services and supports and to secure better outcomes for Travellers across the County. Regular progress reports are provided to the Inter-Agency Group from the Accommodation Working Group.
6. Strategy Statement

6.1 Implementing Authority
Leitrim County Council is the authority responsible for implementing the Traveller Accommodation Programme. The Council co-operates and co-ordinates with other agencies and adjoining authorities to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers. In particular, a number of groups have an important role to play in securing the implementation of the programme including:

- The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- The Housing and Corporate Services Strategic Policy Committee
- Leitrim Development Company
- Local Traveller Development/Support Groups
- Leitrim Inter Agency Travellers Services Group
- Health Services Executive West
- An Garda Síochana
- Department of Social Protection
- Department of Education and Science
- Voluntary Housing Groups

It will be the responsibility of Leitrim County Council to seek the co-operation of the above groups to ensure the implementation of the Programme. Progress in relation to the Plan will be monitored by the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.

6.2 County Development Plan
Provisions contained in the Leitrim County Development Plan 2009-2015 – and the Carrick on Shannon Local area Plan - are sufficient to realise the Traveller accommodation objectives set out in the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 - 2018. Appropriate provisions will also be incorporated into the Leitrim County Development Plan 2015–2021 which is at Draft stage.

6.3 Development of Proposals /Implementation of Programme
Where new accommodation is being provided directly by Leitrim County Council the accommodation proposal will be subjected to a local consultation process with Travellers and the Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, consultation and approval by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and adherence to requirements of the Part VIII Planning Procedure.

The Council will avail of the full range of housing options available having regard to expressed accommodation preferences and working within the existing budgetary constraints on capital
funding. In relation to standard housing the need will be met, having regard to the cessation of the housing construction programme, through casual vacancies arising in existing local authority housing stock and possibly, subject to resources, a limited number of acquisitions. The Long Term Leasing Scheme, Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) once operational, will also be utilised as a means of addressing long term housing needs.

It is acknowledged that there are issues arising in relation to the availability of private rented accommodation. Assistance will be given to Approved Housing Bodies in the provision of Traveller Accommodation through the available voluntary housing funding channels. It is considered that there is potential for this approach to result in increased supply of suitable accommodation. Leitrim County Council will also actively participate in any Working Group established under the Inter Agency Traveller Services Group (IATSG) to consider issues arising in relation to the availability of private rented accommodation to the Traveller Community.

6.4 Financial Resources
The successful implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 – 2018 will be dependent on the provision of funding (capital and revenue) from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

6.5 Management and Maintenance of Accommodation
The effective management and maintenance of accommodation is crucial. Traveller accommodation will be managed on the same basis as all other housing stock. Leitrim County Council will endeavour to ensure maximum tenant participation to manage and maintain accommodation schemes to a high standard.

Serious problems have arisen in the past in Shannonside View and in Tawlaughtmore in relation to illegal dumping of waste and the Council were required to carry out major ‘clean ups’ to address health and safety issues arising. The re-development of Shannonside View, Rosebank, Carrick-on-Shannon provided for the installation of CCTV Cameras. The experience to date in relation to the operation of the cameras has been positive and the evidence would suggest that the presence of the cameras is a deterrent against illegal dumping, although the problem has not been eradicated. The provision of a funded refuse-collection service on this development will also have to be reviewed however in the context of the costs involved.
7. Measures for Implementation

Leitrim County Council will report regularly on developments and progress on the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme and the following will have a monitoring role:-

- The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- Housing Strategic Policy Committee
- The Rosebank Traveller Development Group
- County Leitrim Traveller Support Group (subject to its establishment)
- Leitrim Interagency Travellers Services Group
- The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government

7.1 Targets for delivery 2014-2018

As outlined above the Projected Need over the period of this Accommodation Programme is 46 Households broken down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Households already accommodated with a specific requirement</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households assessed as having a housing need</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Household formations</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Leitrim County Council targets for meeting this projected need, over the period 2014 to 2018, are as set out in Table 5 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation Type</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Housing Scheme - Existing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Block - Existing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority Standard Housing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental Accommodation Scheme (incl. renewals)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term Leasing (incl. renewals)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Assistance Payment (incl new family formations)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above proposals address the net need as assessed together with the projected need as estimated and also address the expressed preferences of existing approved applicants for
Standard Local Authority/RAS/Long Term Leased/Private Rented accommodation rather than Traveller-specific accommodation.

The delivery of outputs under the Rental Accommodation Scheme, the Long Term Leasing Scheme and the proposed new Housing Assistance Payment is dependent on units being available in the private housing market and the willingness of the landlord/agent to engage in these Schemes. Given the extent of the Carrick-on-Shannon based Traveller population, and the level of general demand in the County town, households may have to consider a broader range of locations, within a reasonable distance of Carrick-on-Shannon, in terms of meeting their accommodation needs.
8. Conclusion

Leitrim County Council acknowledges the commitment, co-operation and support of local Travellers, Traveller Representatives, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, the Rosebank Traveller Development Group and members of the Leitrim Inter Agency Traveller Services Group in assisting the Council in the delivery of its successive Traveller Accommodation Programmes.

The targets set out in this Programme have been developed having regard to the existing and projected need for Traveller accommodation. The delivery of this Programme requires a commitment from all stakeholders to work together and is also dependent on the availability of necessary funding.

The Council recognises that the provision of appropriate associated supports is also a critical factor in ensuring that the accommodation solutions delivered for individual families are successful. We will continue to work closely with Travellers, their representatives, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, Traveller Support Groups, Leitrim Inter Agency Traveller Services Group and other relevant agencies in this regard. We will also continue to actively seek, in conjunction with other agencies as appropriate, to identify and access potential funding opportunities to progress initiatives in relation to Traveller development, support and integration.
Appendix 1

Membership of the Leitrim Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

The current Membership of the Leitrim Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee – (as at October 2013) - is as follows:

- Councillor Francis Gilmartin (Chairperson)
- Councillor John Ward (Vice-Chairperson)
- Councillor Sinead Guckian
- Councillor Thomas Mulligan
- Councillor Enda Stenson
- Councillor Gerard Reynolds
- Mrs. Mary McDonagh – Traveller Representative Mohill
- Mr. Bernard McDonagh – Traveller Representative Mohill
- Mr. Edward Stokes – Traveller Representative Carrick
- Vacant - Traveller Representative Carrick
- Ms. Mary Quinn – Director of Services, Housing & Corporate Services
- Ms. Sinead Flynn – Administrative Officer, Housing