

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN  
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY BUILDINGS, WICKLOW ON MONDAY 28<sup>TH</sup>  
MARCH, 2017, COMMENCING 11.00 A.M.**

**PRESENT:**

**COUNCILLOR P. FITZGERALD, CATHAOIRLEACH, COUNCILLORS T. ANNESLEY, J. BEHAN, V. BLAKE, S. BOURKE, S. CULLEN, P. DORAN, G. DUNNE, T. FORTUNE, C. FOX, M. KAVANAGH, S. MATTHEWS, D. NOLAN, J. RUTTLE, J. SNELL, B. THORNHILL, G. WALSH, J. WHITMORE AND I. WINTERS.**

**APOLOGIES:**

**COUNCILLORS T. CULLEN, P. KENNEDY, N. LAWLESS, M. MCDONALD, G. MCLOUGHLIN, D. MITCHELL, M. MURPHY, O' O'BRIEN, M. O'CONNOR, G. O'NEILL, J. RYAN, E. TIMMINS AND P. VANCE.**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

**MR. B. DOYLE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
MR. T. MURPHY, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES  
MR. J. LANE, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES  
MS. L. GALLAGHER, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER/MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR  
MS. B. KILKENNY, SENIOR ENGINEER  
MS. J. CARROLL, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
MR. D. MARNANE, A/SENIOR ENGINEER  
MS. K. BOYLE, TECHNICAL SUPPORT OFFICER**

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**ITEM 1**

**To receive Minister Damien English, TD, Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal and to discuss the Action Plan for Housing (Rebuilding Ireland) and any other issues the elected members may wish to discuss relevant to the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government**

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Minister Damien English to the Meeting. He advised that the Minister had met with Wicklow County Council's management team and senior housing officials, earlier that morning to discuss the Action Plan for Housing (Rebuilding) Ireland and to hear firsthand the issues relating to County Wicklow.

Cllr. T. Fortune referred to the email he had sent earlier that morning to the Cathaoirleach and that he wished to make a statement at the beginning of the meeting. In response the Cathaoirleach advised that the meeting was a one item agenda special meeting, to discuss only the matter listed and that he would not be taking any other matters. Cllr. T. Fortune asked that his email be circulated to the elected members and made available to the Minister also.

The Minister gave a background to the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, Rebuilding Ireland and referred to the challenges facing agencies in delivering the programme. He advised that the Plan sets out a clear roadmap to achieve the targets contained therein and to expedite the delivering of social housing units.

He referred to the five key pillars contained within the Plan viz:-

1. Addressing Homelessness
2. Acceleration of Social Housing

3. Building more homes
4. Improving the rental sector
5. Utilising existing housing

At the conclusion of the Minister's presentation he said that he was anxious to hear the views of the elected members. He referred to Wicklow County Council's housing programme and targets and acknowledged the work being done. He advised that increased resources will be made available and encouraged the Council to bring forward a projected plan.

He encouraged the inclusion of joint venture and partnership approaches to bring forward additional social housing units. He referred again to the targets contained within the Plan and encouraged the Council to bring land on stream, not to hoard it and that the Department will respond positively to the Council. The Minister highlighted the *Repair and Lease Scheme* designed to utilize vacant properties and encouraged the take up of same. In conclusion the Minister pledged the support of the Department in working with all local authorities by actively working together to accelerate the supply of housing units in every community in Ireland. He asked for Wicklow County Council's help to do this over the next five years.

Following the presentation by the Minister elected members raised the following issues:-

- Housing staff of Wicklow County Council commended for the excellent work that has been carried out in tackling the supply of housing
- The Minister's visit welcomed and the efforts of central government acknowledged. Reference made to vacant houses in all areas of County Wicklow and the repair to lease scheme initiative welcomed
- Reference made to the lack of sewerage in Blessington, which was determining the housing supply as well as lack of water in Dunlavin. There was a call for joined up thinking by all agencies in this regard.
- Request for update on the Planning Bill in relation to vacant sites and vacant sites levies. View expressed that this is a great opportunity to reach out to people with vacant sites.
- Suggestion put forward that a funding plan should be put in place to encourage graduates who are interested in carrying out audits of vacant properties.
- Request for update on policy to construct zero energy builds.
- View expressed that there is a heavy reliance on the rental sector to provide social housing and this cannot be sustained.
- There are a number of towns and villages in County Wicklow with an infrastructural deficit. View expressed that these areas are hostage to Irish Water and that it is difficult for the Council to deal with plans and objectives where there are no development areas within certain towns and villages. Query as to whether the Department has engaged with Irish Water for solutions to capacity challenges
- Reference made to the number of stages the Council has to proceed through before actually getting a housing scheme off the ground. Call for officials in the Department not to hold back on approvals and that the Department's approval process be speedier that it is currently to allow local authorities build homes faster.
- With regard to energy efficiency, has the Department plans to proceed to phase 2 of the housing efficiency scheme.
- Reference made to past fire tragedies within the Oldcourt Estate in Bray and that residents had finally got approval to address the faults found. Call on the Department to make this available to private householders also who are living with the dangers and that the Department provide assistance to private householder.

- Rent Cap Scheme welcomed, however view expressed that it was a mistake not to include Greystones within the Rent Cap Area and that all of County Wicklow should be included.
- Reference made to the finance provided to the private sector for the provision of social housing and that no longterm benefit is derived from this funding.
- Reference made to the roll out of the HAP and that resources must be made available to the local authorities.
- View expressed that the funding available for traveller accommodation is quite low and that more finance should be made available for the provision of accommodation for the travelling community.
- Reference made to the Part V legislation and that the 10% for social housing while welcome is quite low and should have been fixed at around 15%
- View expressed that the timeframe for RAS eligibility should be reduced from 18 months to 12 months.

At the conclusion of the discussion Minister English responded to the issues raised and thanked the elected members for their comments and suggestions which he said he would take on board. The Chief Executive thanked the elected members for their engagement, helpful contributions and assistance and thanked the housing staff for the dedication and hard work. He thanked the Minister for engaging with the elected members and also the management team earlier. The Cathaoirleach and elected members collectively thanked the Minister for making the visit to Wicklow County Council and for listening to the concerns and contributions made.

#### **THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING**

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**CLLR. PAT FITZGERALD  
CATHAOIRLEACH  
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

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**MS. LORRAINE GALLAGHER  
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER/  
MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR**