

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL
HOUSING & CORPORATE ESTATE STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
10th October 2023

Attendance: Cllr. John Snell, Cllr. Tommy Annesley, Cllr. Aoife Flynn Kennedy, Joe Lane (WCC), Theresa O'Brien (WCC), Helena Fallon (WCC), Aoibheann McCloy, Cllr. Paul O'Brien, Mary Ann Parsons, Debbie Quinn, Michael Ryan, John Dunphy, David Porter, Lynn Dennehy

Apologies: Paddy Mourdaunt

Item 1: To approve the minutes of Meetings held on 23rd March 2023

Proposed by Michael Ryan
Seconded by Aoibheann McCloy

Item 2: Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising that would not be dealt with throughout the meeting

Item 3: To receive a presentation on Homelessness

Presentation given by Theresa O'Brien

Joe Lane DOS advised that youth homelessness will be listed as an item going forward in the CE report, he also complemented his staff on good work done in regard to the recent upsurge in NTQs and that at present Arklow is the only area that there is a limited supply of properties coming on stream

Cllr John Snell also commented on good work carried out by staff and stated that gaps if any need to be identified in the system especially with people exiting the prison system and coming out of foster Care System and also the need to continue working with some agencies particularly those giving support to persons suffering with mental health issues.

Cllr Tommy Annesley raised an issue regarding rough sleepers in Arklow and also complemented the housing homeless officer for sharing his contact details and being available to the members when needed.

Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy enquired about people with Intellectual disabilities sharing with family and elderly parents and options for that cohort of people

Theresa O'Brien, SEO advised that

- There is a Prison Release Protocol in place, however it is usually at the last minute that notice is given of people looking to be housed
- Issues with Hospital releases also, people being discharged from hospitals and presenting to the homeless team as they have nowhere to go
- Persons exiting care are sent to their county of origin for housing supports and at present WCC are trying to set up shared housing that would be available to care leavers
- Disabilities
 - The Housing Disability Steering Group meet on a ¼ basis with a view to implementing the new Disability Strategy for housing people with a disability
 - It is a big issue at present, especially with aging parents unable to care for their children with disabilities

Cllr John Snell ended this item by commending the housing section for the amount of work they get done under difficult circumstances

Item 4: To receive a presentation on the newly formed Tenancy Sustainment Team

Theresa O'Brien gave the presentation and the following comments were made

- It's a strong team looking after this area and complements were given to the team on the good work being done
- vulnerable people are being helped with issues, which is so very important
- enquiries regarding the referral procedure and if the team look after the whole county or is it broken down by MD.

Theresa O'Brien replied that each person on the team covers an MD area and referrals are by phone call or in writing

- There was very positive feedback given on the creation of this new team within the Housing Directorate

Item 5: To receive an updates on:

Affordable Housing Scheme

Cllr John Snell introduced Debbie Quinn who now looks after the Affordable housing schemes to meeting

Joe Lane DOS outlined the schemes that are ongoing and in the pipeline as follows

- Greenhills Road Scheme, - fully completed however an issue with Homebond has caused a delay with some of the sales closing and it is hoped that this issue will be sorted soon
- Scheme in Baltinglass - 22 units – portal for registering interest closed in early October
- Rathnew – 44 units - will be Q1 next year
- Lott Lane - 72 affordable houses,80 Social houses

Mary Ann Parsons enquired regarding the subsidy and it was outlined as below

- <35 hectare 50K per unit
- 35 – 50 hectare 75 K per unit
- >75 hectare 100K per unit

Cllr Tommy Annsley queried the possibility of affordable houses being provided in Arklow and there was no update on this

Tenant in Situ

An update on the scheme was given 16 purchased fully completed and a further 14 in the system

A discussion on the place and the following subject took areas were covered

- Positive scheme
- Properties in the Greystones area are very expensive
- Southern Cross – 208 homes delivered

- Some areas we need to buy in, there is a big need in Arklow
- Were properties unfit when inspected
- Economic value needed to be taken into account less any repairs to bring house up to standard
- Target for 2024 no target but funding available

Michael Ryan enquired about the 5 bed boarded up houses in Bray and the committee were advised that a solution for this property was being worked on and would be brought before the committee when finalised

Mary Ann Parsons asked if a refurbishment fund be combined with upgrade scheme (retrofit)

John Dunphy Answer

- They are 2 different schemes
- House needs to be brought up to minimum standard to allow it to be allocated
- Funding can't be combined

Capital Programme (to include a discussion regarding timelines for informing members on new projects coming on stream)

Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy advised the committee ahead of the discussion that she works for an AHB

- Commented that there could be 3000 to 3.500 houses under discussion, but it is most likely that 1000 of these will be progressed.
- Agreed that it is not a good idea to announce any schemes until sure of what is going to happen
- There is a long process for board approval in AHB

Cllr Paul O'Brien Comment

- There was an issue with Ushers Glen – the public knew first, before announcement

Cllr John Snell felt that

- It has been working well, no need to change process
- Talk to the MD at a later stage
- Don't move too fast, wait to be sure what's happening
- AHB is a valued cog in the process

Joe Lane, DOS advised that there is no way to know what will get through the process any more as the system has changed in the last few years, there is more uncertainty now

Cllr Tommy Annsley felt that the members need to know what is happening ahead of the public

Cllr Paul O'Brien felt it is important not to jeopardise the provision of houses

Traveller Accommodation

Helena Fallon SE

- Progressing with Balintekin 3 houses and should be finished in November
- Avondale, 3 houses will start soon
- Barndarrig masterplan is done & discussions with families in progress
- Inspection for fire will be in October/November, will be done by end of month
- Ballinaclash – clearing started, 2 houses will be refurbished

Cllr Tommy Annsley asked that members be kept involved in the plans for Barndarrig group housing scheme and also enquired regarding the old Health Centre in Barndarrig which was the original site for the houses

Joe Lane DOS– advised that the community are hoping to purchase it to use as a community centre but in the meantime it may be refurbished for use by Ukrainian families

Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy enquired about the long term plan for the Silverbridge site

Theresa O'Brien advised that it depended a lot on what happens with the road and that at the minute there are 3 families there

A discussion followed regarding Silverbridge and the following points were raised

- Is it sustainable, the place is damp and unsafe and the N11 work will go on for years

 1. Is there an alternative housing site
 2. New roadway into the site from Ballywaltrim Lane

Cllr John Snell – advised the SPC that the LTACC that deals with housing for Travellers meet quarterly and that committee along with the sub group of the LTACC are doing lots of work and are ahead of targets as set out in the Traveller Accommodation Plan

Ukrainian response

Theresa O'Brien updated the committee on the above and advised that social housing supports at this point in time is not available to Ukrainians (they are housed using extra supply)

Aoibheann McCloy commented – it is important people know Ukrainians don't get Social Housing supports

Mary Ann Parsons Mentioned 'Bray for Love' a group that makes big effort against negativity and helped stop protests against Ukrainians and felt that there is a need to actively act against negative press

Disabled Persons Grants

There was one query from Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy regarding payments for private grants

John Dunphy replied that payments made after job completed so some applicants borrow money to pay but some contractors are flexible around payment

Cllr Tommy Annsley stated that older people want to stay at home in their own homes for as long as possible

Item 6: To review previously agreed policy on the sale of Local Authority properties in need on significant refurbishment.

Helena Fallon outlined the following

- Original decision was passed in 2018
- 4 derelict properties advertised for sale recently
- 3 of the properties were sold but the sale price was low
- This is a difficult process to manage
- it was felt that more money could have been secured on the open market and the increased funds could have been put to good use within the relevant district

A long discussion took place and the following points were raised by the members

- New grants for derelict houses not available in 2018 when original policy was agreed
- Agreed that more money could be raised and put to better use Ring fence for windows for example
- We didn't have social house stock in 2018 that we have today
- Houses in Bray (for example), very expensive to refurbish

- Target housing list people doesn't work
- Look at people who are on affordable housing list etc, first time buyers maybe
- People under income levels
- Put house up for sale in current condition
- Income levels should be at cost rental scheme levels
- It's very complicated process, hard to get mortgage approval
- Up to 70K grant available to refurbish derelict properties
- Derelict house grants only for owners
- There needs to be something that limits profit if house is done up and sold

It was decided that a plan would be brought to the next meeting

Item 7: Correspondence

There was no correspondence

Item 8: To set date and time of next meeting (Tuesday 12th December at 11am)

Next meeting suggested 12th December 11am

Cllr John Snell

Date