

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

HOUSING & CORPORATE ESTATE STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

28th JANUARY 2021

Attendance:

Councillors: Cllr. John Snell (**JS**), Cllr. Grace McManus (**GMc**), Cllr. Aoife Flynn Kennedy (**AFK**), Cllr. Tommy Annesley (**TA**), Cllr. Paul O'Brien (**POB**), Cllr. Mags Crean (**MC**),

Mary Ann Parsons (**MAP**) PPN, Catherine Kenny (**CK**) (Dublin Simon),

WCC: Joe Lane (**JL**), Declan Marnane (**DM**), David Porter (**DP**) Helena Fallon (**HF**), Jackie Carroll (**JC**)

James McCawley (**JMc**)

Attendance:

Councillors: Cllr. John Snell, Cathaoirleach; Cllr. Grace McManus, Cllr. Aoife Flynn Kennedy
Cllr. Tommy Annesley, Cllr. Paul O'Brien; Cllr. Mags Crean

Mary Ann Parsons, Catherine Kenny, Joe Lane, Declan Marnane, David Porte, Helena Fallon
Jackie Carroll, James McCawley

Apologies: Derek Casserley

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Cathaoirleach welcomed James McCawley, Wicklow County Council, who will be providing administrative support to the SPC meetings.

Item 1: Minutes of Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th December 2020 were proposed by Cllr. Tommy Annesley and seconded by Cllr. Paul O'Brien.

There were no matters arising.

Item 2: Correspondence and Circulars

The members were advised of the Affordable Housing/Cost Rental Bill which was published on 20th January 2021.

The Bill provides for the introduction of three new schemes delivering on the Programme for Government commitment to put affordability at the heart of the housing system and prioritise the increased supply of affordable homes. These schemes will see:

- Local authorities deliver affordable homes for purchase on their lands for the first time in more than a decade.
- A new Affordable Purchase Shared Equity scheme where the State would provide equity support to households seeking to purchase homes in the private market but unable to secure the full mortgage to do so.
- The introduction of a new form of tenure in 'Cost Rental'. This legislation will provide the basis for the first 400 Cost Rental homes in the State which will be delivered in 2021 with many more in the pipeline in the years thereafter.

Item 3: COVID-19 Housing Business Continuity Plan:

It was noted that staff continued to work on mixed rotas of "A/B Format" to minimise any potential disruptions due to illness should it arise. All services are being delivered except inspections.

Social housing developments which complied with the relevant criteria for completion are progressing. Noted that it is likely that restrictions will impact negatively on delivery in 2021.

Item 4: Presentation on Work Programme 2021:

JC gave an overview of social housing advising of:

- Social Housing Support: 4,487 eligible applicants.
- 2016-2020: Significant increase in allocations
- Allocations continue during the pandemic
- Priority: Disability/Medical: 20% of allocations
- Rent Collections have been affected by Covid 19
- Estate Management: Anti Social Behaviour – Tenant Liaison
- Rebuilding Ireland Home loan: Almost 400 applications received approx. 50% approval.

Homelessness: Kildare is the Lead Authority for Mid-Eastern Region. Priority is Prevention and Intervention.

Breakdown of key areas:

Emerging Trends & Priority: NTQ or Failure to Obtain Accommodation main reasons.

Breakdown of Trends throughout the department.

A lot of increases of singled individuals with complex needs presenting during pandemic.

Homelessness Presentations 2020: 635

Complex needs mean people can remain in EA for longer periods of time.

- **Types of Emergency Accommodation:**

-Own Front Door (OFD): Offers some clients who may not be effectively accommodated in B&B accommodation, an option of their OFD in Council stock.

-B&B's offer full access to the facilities, including self-contained units, laundry etc. -

Homeless HAP (HHAP): Assists with providing placements to Homeless clients

- **Housing First:**

Provides long term/permanent accommodation for homeless: Targets for Wicklow over 5 year plan = 11

COVID 19

Isolation Units have been identified for self isolation of vulnerable clients.

(DM): Presentation on Supply Programme:

Breakdown of targets: All targets were reached in 2020, however the 2021 targets are at risk due to COVID-19.

Breakdown of developments in progress was outlined, including:

Kilbride Court in Bray almost complete

Proposed Delivery in 2021 – (Subject to Covid 19 restrictions) Mix of units will be completed, but some will be delayed.

Jameson Heights in Kilmacanogue: Development almost complete

There are also 140 units across the county at various levels of tender/construction.

Post 2022: Delivery of proposed sites may be delayed.

Part V Provision: 25 due in 2021. Supply is variable.

(HF): Presentation on Housing Maintenance

Energy Upgrade Works: Phase 1 and 2 updates. Potential other properties

Solar Panel Carport in County Buildings is in the pipeline.

Repairs and Maintenance: Breakdown of budget and services.

Inspections of Rental Properties have stopped

Traveller Accommodation: Breakdown of Schemes and Statuses

Age Friendly Schemes: Updates on progress and allocations/locations.

JS: Thanked HF, DM & JC for all work completed

Cllr McManus expressed her appreciation for the presentation and the time and effort put into it.

DM: Offered and update on Turnkeys.

JL: Expressed satisfaction with increases in Leases.

AMcC: Thanked for presentations.

HF: Confirmed a 6 Week wait for inspections.

JS: Expressed that Homeless Team available for questions at any time. Confirmation provided that Child Homelessness comes with Parent/Guardian so therefore it is a Family Unit and not counted as an individual/solo child. JS Also expressed that Zero Homelessness is not a possibility in Wicklow.

GMc: Would like to aim for Zero Homelessness and is looking for collective solutions.
JC: Expressed staff view, Child Homelessness doesn't exist as presentations occur as a Family. Zero Homelessness isn't possible due to some families with complex issues.

Item 5: (DP) Presentation on Part V

JL:: Part V's update due to requests from elected members.
JS: Advised of difficulty of the role. Acknowledged the hard work.
Q's: None

Item 6: Mortgage to Rent:

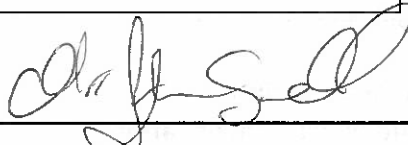
JG: Presentation: by **JG** outlining entire process.
JS: Thanked for presentation and advised that there will be greater uptake.

Item 7: AOB:

Dates confirmed for other meetings – they can be recirculated if needs be.

Schedule of Meetings for remainder of 2021:

25 th March
27 th May
29 th July
30 th September
25 th November

Signed: 

Cllr. John Snell, Cathaoirleach

Dated: _____

Mid East Region Homelessness Action Plan Review

Summary of Progress to date

During the lifetime of the 2018-2020 plan, significant progress was made in each of the 3 local authorities in progressing initiatives to address homelessness.

Key outcomes at regional level

HAP

HAP proved an invaluable resource in moving families from EA, with 6,781 households assisted to the end of 2020.

Homeless HAP Placefinder

The roll out of Homeless HAP and the appointment of the Homeless HAP Placefinder across the region has also proved invaluable in addressing homelessness. At the end of 2020, nearly 1,000 Homeless HAP tenancies have been created across the Mid-East. A significant number of these cases are preventative in nature.

The Homeless HAP Place Finder Service provides a deposit up to the value of one month's HAP payment and payment of up to two months HAP rent payment in advance in order to secure a tenancy.

Housing First

The Housing First services include housing for the most complex and long term cases of homelessness, as well as wraparound services like mental health and addiction support, education, training and employment, with the ultimate objective of helping people live independently in their own home and integrate into their respective communities.

The roll out of the Housing First programme in the region with Peter McVerry Trust as the programme implementer, has proven very successful. The target for the region over the 3 year programme is 64 and in 2020, with a Year One target of 19 tenancies, Peter McVerry Trust created 18 Housing First tenancies, providing pathways out of homelessness for some of society's most vulnerable people.

Mid East Region Prisoner Protocol

Prisoners presenting as homeless on release was noted by all 3 local authorities as increasingly problematic. It was agreed that the Mid East would work on devising a protocol that reduce the likelihood of released prisoners presenting as homeless and facilitate continued enhanced interagency working pertaining to this particular cohort who are at risk of homelessness.

The purpose of the protocol is to ensure that multiagency arrangements are in place in the region so as to ensure that accommodation, welfare and health supports for prisoners, including sex offenders, returning to the region are in place prior to their release, and remain in place to prevent homelessness.

The participating agencies are Kildare/Meath/Wicklow County Councils, the Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the Health Service Executive

Significant engagement was made with the Irish Prison Service to advance the protocol and it was agreed that the service will take all reasonable steps to ensure, as far as is practicable, and where discretion with regard to the release date rests with the Irish Prison Service, that prisoners at risk of homelessness, should only be released from prison on Monday to Thursday.

National Quality Standards Framework (NQS)

The commencement of the roll out of the NQS commenced during the lifetime of the last plan. All organisations in receipt of Section 10 funding are required to implement the NQS.

The objectives of the Standards are to

- Promote safe and effective service provision to persons experiencing homelessness
- Support the objectives of National Homelessness Policy i.e. enabling people to move into and sustain housing with appropriate levels of support
- Establish consistency in how persons experiencing homelessness are responded to across different regions and models of service delivery.

All 3 local authorities collated quarterly KPI reports from 1st July 2019, however inspections to review processes and the development of Quality Improvement Plans are on hold due to Covid 19.

Covid 19 response - Covid 19 Self Isolation units

This plan was obviously reviewed during the Covid-19 public health emergency which placed even greater pressures on the sector.

The Department issued guidelines around vulnerable people, which included Homeless, Roma and Prisoner releases.

In anticipation of requiring alternative accommodation for those in homelessness to self-isolate if required, all of the local authorities were required to provide self-isolation units. This was a hugely onerous task, as it required identification of vacant stock (relets), arranging for purchasing furnishings, flooring and kitting out of same and devising protocols around use and reuse of the units. Issues around management of the units with certain cohort of clients had to be addressed also.

Currently in the region there are 22 units available.

Family Homeless Hubs

Throughout the region family hubs were developed in Athy, Prosperous, Navan and Wicklow. This type of emergency accommodation provides a secure and stable placement for families on an on-going basis. The key support work undertaken by the service provider ensures transitioning of the families into longer term accommodation either social housing or private rental sector.

Tenancy Sustainment

Each of the local authorities has implemented Tenancy Sustainment Support services where the Tenancy Sustainment Officer works with families and individuals at risk of homelessness to ensure the continuity and security of their tenancies. Risks to a tenancy might include rent arrears, social welfare issues, health or addiction concerns, or tenants receiving a Notice of Termination. Staff also work with families and individuals leaving homeless accommodation by supporting them to settle into their new home and sustain their tenancy.

Supported Temporary Accommodation

Supported temporary accommodation continued to be provided across the region, ranging from 25 bed facilities to social housing stock with supports in place.

Total supported bed capacity in the region stands at 164.

Cold Weather Initiatives

Each of the 3 authorities ensured that there was in place a severe weather response for rough sleepers. Capacity across the region was 37. Kildare had provision for 24 clients, Meath 6 and Wicklow 7.