MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING (HYBRID) OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER 2026, COMMENCING 10.00 A.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT:

COUNCILLORS C. WINSTANLEY CATHAOIRLEACH, D, ALVEY, M. BARRY, J. BEHAN, S. BOURKE, M. CORRIGAN, A. CRONIN, M. DUDDY, G. DUNNE, L. FENELON GASKIN, O. FINN, P. FITZGERALD, P. GLENNON, P. KENNEDY, S. LANGRELL, P. LEONARD, P. MAHON, J. MULHALL, M. MURPHY, I. NEARY, P. O'BRIEN, G. O'NEILL, W. O'TOOLE, G. RICHMOND, L. SCOTT, J. SNELL, P. STAPLETON, S. STOKES, J. WARD AND N. WHELAN (30)

APOLOGIES

CLLRS. E. DOYLE AND T. FORTUNE (2)

IN ATTENDANCE:

MS. E. O'GORMAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
MS. J. CARROLL, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MS. H. DENNEHY, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. M. FLYNN, A/DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. B. GLEESON, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. M. NICHOLSON, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MS. H. PURCELL, A/DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MS. D. KENNEDY, LAW AGENT
MS. C. FOX, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MS. R. GILLESPIE, A/SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER/MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR
MR. S. BOLGER, IS TECHNICAL SUPPORT OFFICER
MS. T. BYRNE, ASSISTANT STAFF OFFICER

DEPUTY J. BRADY TD

At the commencement of the meeting a roll call was taken. The Meetings Administrator advised all present they are bound by the Code of Conduct for Councillors and Employees. Also, of meetings etiquette for online meetings and that the press and some members of the public were also present.

Votes of Sympathy

Elected Members passed a vote of sympathy to the families of the late Mr. Stephen Kavanagh and Mr. Des Kenndy. A minute's silence was observed for the deceased.

Request for Suspension of Standing Orders: - The Meetings Administrator advised that a request for suspension of standing orders had been submitted in advance of the meeting. In accordance with the protocol adopted the requests were read to the meeting as proposed and seconded: -

Suspension No. 1

Cllr. W. O'Toole, seconded by Cllr. J. Ward requested a suspension of standing orders to discuss the following motion:

'Given that this is a special meeting with a single item on the agenda, and in light of the significance of the matter being considered, we believe it is appropriate to allow Members sufficient time to fully express their views, the concerns of their constituents and to highlight the direct impact these changes are having on the communities that we represent.

A three-minute speaking slot will not be sufficient.

Allowing additional time would ensure that all Members have a meaningful opportunity to speak on behalf of their constituents and that the seriousness of the issues being raised can be properly considered by the Council.'

Cllr. W. O'Toole, seconded by Cllr. P. O'Brien proposed that the three-minute speaking slot be amended to 5 minutes. This was agreed by all present.

ITEM NO. 1

To discuss the new Differential Rent Scheme, the rent increases arising from its implementation and the impact these changes are having on Council tenants and their households.

Ms. C. Fox, Senior Executive Officer gave a presentation outlining the following:

- Differential Rent Scheme.
- Differential Rent Scheme explained.
- Changes to the previous schemes.
- Assessment of the Differential Rent Scheme.
- Why a rent review and why amalgamate two rent schemes into one?
- Rent Review 2025.
- Tenancy Agreements – Rectified.
- Rent Review Process.
- Statistical data on rent accounts.
- Income based rent scheme.
- Examples of household rents.
- Summary of the rent review.

The Chief Executive advised the Elected Members of the following:

- The effective date of the new rents 3rd of October will be deferred until Saturday 7th November.
- Taking into account the amount of representations that have been received from tenants, from our Members the effective date of 3rd October will be deferred until Saturday 7th November.
- This is to ensure that any tenants who feel their rent is not in line with their income or their circumstances have changed, has the opportunity to come and have that reassessed with the Council.
- Clinics will be organised for tenants in Wicklow County Council offices to facilitate walk in queries.

The Elected Members discussed the matter at length. The following concerns were raised by the Elected Members:

- Financial hardship.
- Cost of living crisis.
- Scale of increases.
- Section 140 motion maybe brought to stop the implementation of the scheme.
- Acknowledgement of the huge body of work carried out by the Council staff.
- Scheme was presented to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee in February 2025.
- Rent reviews should be carried more regularly.
- 606 tenants did not reply - €50 rent.
- Administration of sensitive information - DPC.
- Outdated scheme.
- Staff to carry out workshops.
- Defer scheme till the new year.
- Walk-in clinics – good idea.
- Amalgamation of the two schemes.
- Security at entrance to County Buildings – not appropriate.
- Rent arrears – not collected.
- Proper maintenance of housing stock.
- Stop pause review – should those who's rent was decreased be paused?
- Include a walk in clinic in West Wicklow.
- Proposal to extend scheme by 6 months – no retrospective increases in that 6 months.
- Mental health.
- What within the scheme is causing the difficulties?
- Social welfare payments.
- Time it takes to do a rent review.
- People living in older stock paying the same as those in A-rated houses.
- Retrofitting.
- HAP tenants – landlords also collecting rents.
- Is Section 140 legally acceptable?

- What are the plans for extra revenue raised?
- Rents should be affordable.
- Too short a timeframe.
- Support pause until Springtime.
- Breach of local democracy.
- Multiplier and base rate queried.
- Online calculator.

Mr. M. Nicholson, Director of Services responded to the queries and concerns raised by the Elected Members as follows:

- Should be no need for any Local Authority to carry out a rent review.
- A rent review is carried out to ensure tenants are paying correct rent.
- Almost 600 tenants had a reduction in rent because their income had changed adversely.
- Rents are assessed entirely on household income
- The Council have been working on this for two years.
- The Members have been kept informed throughout the process.
- It has taken Wicklow County Council over a year - 7,500 rent calculations to do.
- A number of households have two or three incomes in the household.
- Wicklow County Council take the main earner, based on the person whose tenancy is legal, and then a contribution from each other earner.
- 606 tenants have not sent back the rent form and are subject to €50 per week penalty.
- Income raised by the Council is spent back on the Housing Programme.
- There will be walk-in clinics. One in each Municipal District.
- Rents arrears are targeted rigorously and two possessions for houses were received last month.
- Additional income will be ring fenced.

A Section 140 motion in the name of Cllr. W. O'Toole, Cllr. J. Ward and Cllr. J. Behan was submitted to be considered at the next plenary meeting on Monday 5th October. The Section 140 motions states:

'That Wicklow County Council, pursuant to Section 140 of the Local Government Act 2001, hereby directs the Chief Executive to immediately stop the implementation of the new Differential Rent Scheme due to take effect on 3rd October 2026, and continue to operate the two differential rent schemes in existence before that date.'

It was agreed by all present to discuss the motion at the next plenary meeting of Wicklow County Council.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING

CLLR. DR. CAROLINE WINSTANLEY
CATHAOIRLEACH
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

MS. RACHEL GILLESPIE
A/SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER/
MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR

Confirmed at meeting of Wicklow County Council held on Monday the 2nd November 2026.