

Minutes of The Housing Strategic Policy Committee of Wicklow County Council held in the Members room 2 & 3, County Buildings, Wicklow Town, A67 FW96 on Wednesday 25th March 2026 at 4:00pm.

In Attendance: Cathaoirleach Graham Richmond, Cllr. Paul O'Brien, Cllr. Caroline Winstanley (via zoom), Cllr. Peter Stapleton (via zoom), Cllr. Mark Barry (via zoom), Ms. Emma McMillen (via zoom), Mr. John Douglas, Ms. Kathleen Kelleher, Mr. T. J. Foley, Mr. Sean O'Callaghan, Mr. Michael Nicholson, Ms. Jackie Carroll, Ms. Helena Fallon, Ms. Caroline Fox, Ms. Linda Healy, Mr. David Reel, Mr. David Porter, Ms Róisín Carroll

Apologies: Ms. Cici Zheny and Paddy Mordaunt.

Cathaoirleach Richmond opened the meeting at 4:05pm and welcomed all present.

1. To confirm and sign minutes of The Housing Strategic Policy Committee of Wicklow County Council dated 21st January 2026.

It was proposed by T.J Foley and seconded by Kathleen Kelleher and unanimously agreed to confirm and sign the minutes of The Housing Strategic Policy Committee of Wicklow County Council dated 21st January 2026.

2. Matters Arising - None

3. Multi Annual Work Programme 2026- 2029

The draft Multi Annual Work Programme 2026 - 2029, which had been circulated in advance, was taken as read.

Members Observations:

- The Committee discussed age friendly housing and downsizing. Examples of age friendly housing in the UK were noted, and it was agreed to explore similar models and review approaches taken by Meath County Council.
- The potential for downsizing to free up larger homes was discussed. Members acknowledged this is a sensitive issue, as tenants are often strongly attached to their homes and communities. It was agreed that any approach should be supportive, while encouraging moves to more suitable and energy efficient homes. Downsizing will be considered further at a future SPC meeting.
- Seán O'Callaghan referred to the revised Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EU) 2024/1275. He noted its focus on improving energy performance of buildings to achieve a decarbonised building stock by 2050, including measures such as minimum energy standards, rooftop solar, EV infrastructure, and protections for vulnerable tenants.
- David Reel advised that €3.2 million has been allocated for retrofitting in 2026, with approximately 85 units proposed for upgrade. Works will include wall and attic insulation and transition to heat pumps, with the aim of achieving a minimum BER of B2. It was noted that delivery is constrained by available funding from the Department.

- TJ Foley raised concerns regarding the alignment of national housing policy with local delivery in Wicklow, particularly in relation to land availability and density requirements. He also noted that increasing density alone will not resolve housing demand and that a balanced approach is required. Helena Fallon highlighted challenges in areas such as Bray and Greystones, where density requirements and developer constraints arise, and she also advised that submissions have been made seeking the rezoning of certain Council owned lands to support future housing development.
- It was noted that a submission from John Douglas (6th March 2026) was received and discussed.
- A query was raised as to whether the Council is actively identifying and acquiring land for development. Michael Nicholson confirmed that this is the case but noted that the Council is frequently outbid.
- In response to a query on current land holdings, Helena Fallon advised that there is limited land available, which is expected to support delivery for the next two to three years. She expressed optimism that additional land can be secured going forward.

4. Housing – Capital Delivery

An update was provided:

- 150 units currently under construction
- 243 units to go to tender over the next two years
- 147 units expected to progress within the next 9 to 12 months
- Approximately 400 additional units planned

5. Housing - Services –

- 398 allocations were made last year, including transfers, 55 age friendly allocations and 15 Traveller families accommodated.
- Cllr. Paul O'Brien welcomed the figures and asked about the time it takes to allocate social housing and Approved Housing Body properties, and how many units are currently available.
- Caroline Fox advised that reletting times for Council stock have reduced from 48 weeks to 44 weeks since last year, from when keys are returned, properties assessed and works completed to allocation.
- In relation to allocating houses, Michael Nicholson advised there is no set timeframe, as it depends on the property and includes nomination of applicants, Garda checks, a significant amount of processing and potential refusals. He also noted that Choice Based Letting has also been introduced.
- Members noted concerns around refusals. It was confirmed that under the current scheme, two refusals within a year result in applicants not being considered for 12 months. It was noted that a stronger approach may be required and can be considered as part of the review of the Scheme of Letting Priorities.
- It was also noted that additional resources have been added to the allocations team, including a new Staff Officer.
- A query was raised regarding income thresholds for the social housing waiting list. Caroline Fox advised thresholds are €43,000 for a couple and €40,000 for a single person, set by the Department. It was confirmed that applicants exceeding the threshold are removed from the

housing list following income checks prior to allocation. It was also noted that HAP/RAS tenants are not reassessed on allocation, but rent will increase in line with income.

6. Housing – Integration

Jackie Carroll provided an update on Integration services in Co. Wicklow.

- Regarding the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, a query was raised regarding the protocol around housing allocations for programme refugees. It was clarified that these allocations are deemed to be a humanitarian response, and not subject to the standard social housing allocation process.

7. Correspondence:

None received.

8. Any other business:

The Cathaoirleach, Graham Richmond, extended his best wishes to Helena Fallon and Linda Healy on their upcoming retirements.

Kathleen Kelleher requested a realistic update on the 5 acres of land in Greystones.

Helena Fallon advised that the site is being progressed as a PPP scheme. She noted that a significant amount of investigative work has been completed, the site has been cleared, and a decision is expected shortly as to whether it will revert to the Council. Preliminary designs are already being considered.

The next meeting will take place on 3rd June 2026.

The meeting concluded at 17:19.

Signed: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH, Cllr. Graham Richmond

Dated: _____