

**WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing and Corporate Estate Strategic Policy Committee held on  
22<sup>nd</sup> October 2019 in the Wurzburg Room, County Buildings.**

**In Attendance:**

Cllr. John Snell, Chairperson, Cllr. Paul O'Brien, Cllr. Mags Crean, Cllr. Aoife Flynn Kennedy, Cllr. Grace McManus, Aoibhinn McCloy, Derek Casserly, Joe Lane, Jackie Carroll.

Also in attendance – Triona Irving, Administrative Officer, Bray Municipal and Jackie Whelan, Tenant Liason Officer, Bray Municipal.

**Apologies:**

Apology received from Simon Blanckensee.

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At the outset of the meeting Cllr. John Snell welcomed everybody, particularly the new members of the Council. He noted that all members are aware of the need for housing all over the county and this Committee will formulate housing policy over the next 5 years.

He informed the members that they can contact the staff of the Housing Section with any issues – issues are dealt with confidentially and urged members to build up a mutual trust and respect with the staff.

**ITEM 1            Protocol / Standing Orders / Terms of Reference.**

The Chairman stated that Protocol recommends that SPC's meet 4 times per year. However, given the current climate and the significant work programme, he suggested that the Housing SPC continues to meet a minimum of 6 times per year. This was agreed by the members.

The Terms of Reference were discussed by the members and devising of policies.

Jackie Carroll reminded the members of the obligations under the General Data Protection Regulations ( GDPR) and emphasized the importance of this when representing clients. She also referred to social media and asked members to refrain from permitting negative comments about Housing staff onto their social media pages. She also asked that members who are giving interviews to the media would check their facts first with Housing staff to avoid misinformation going out, as this can cause distress to both clients and staff.

It was agreed by the members that the Housing SPC would meet at 2.00 p.m. on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month – every 2 months.

**ITEM 2            Minutes and Matters arising**

It was proposed by Cllr. J. Snell and seconded by Aoibhinn McCloy that the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> March be adopted.

There were no matters arising.

**ITEM 3**            **Correspondence/ Circulars.**

Jackie Carroll informed the meeting that 32 Circulars have been received to date in 2019. The majority of these have been operational.

She referred to Notice of Motion No. 6 from Council meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> October, which Cllr. Crean had requested be referred to the Housing SPC for discussion. The notice of motion relates to the housing supply programme and this would be dealt with under Item 5 on the Agenda.

**Item 4**            **Homelessness – Housing First – Presentation by Peter McVerry Trust.**

The Chairman welcomed Pat Doyle, CEO of the Peter McVerry Trust and Brian Friel to the meeting. The Peter McVerry Trust has been appointed as the Programme implementer for Housing First.

Pat Doyle addressed the meeting, stating that the Trust is delighted to be associated with Wicklow County Council in the implementation of the Housing First Programme. The Implementation Plan is being rolled out on a regional basis and Wicklow is part of the Mid East Region – Kildare, Meath and Wicklow. The Peter McVerry Trust was founded in 1983. The charity provides a range of homelessness services, primarily to younger people and vulnerable adults with complex needs, and offers pathways out of homelessness based on the principles of the Housing First model.

The Housing First model focuses on the immediate provision of long term/permanent accommodation for the homeless with wraparound supports and services subsequently built around the needs of each individual. The target for Wicklow is 11 clients to avail of Housing First under a 5 year plan.

Housing First is an approach to quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment or service participation requirements. Tenants are provided with appropriate support on a permanent basis or as long as is required.

Jackie Carroll advised that Wicklow County Council has identified the first 4 individuals who will avail of the support of the Housing First Model and 2 units have been identified - a further two are required.

Some issues were raised regarding the community piece and it was noted that this is a key piece of the work that the Trust does. All tenants under the Housing First Model have 24/7 support with a member of the team always available. The team works closely with community representatives, particular with the Community Gardai. They try to emphasise to the public that they are working for them as well as the tenant in question. To date the Trust has been maintaining 89% of tenancies. If the tenancy cannot be saved in some cases the Trust endeavours to save the unit for future occupancy.

It was noted that the location of the property and the management of the tenancy are major factors in the success and sustainment of the tenancy.

The Chairman thanked the Peter McVerry representatives for their presentation, stating that it had been beneficial for all the members to receive an insight into the operation of the Housing First Model and looked forward to seeing positive outcomes in Wicklow.

#### **Item 5**            **Housing Supply/Delivery**

The members received a presentation on Housing.

Jackie Carroll presented on the Social Housing options, outlining the work programme in relation to Social Housing Need and applicants for social housing supports , allocations, differential rent, estate management and Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan scheme.

It was noted also that Housing had a key role to play in providing the accommodation piece for the Refugee Resettlement Programme, where Wicklow is welcoming 38 families.

The members welcomed the fact that the Cold Weather Initiative is due to open in Bray on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

Joe Lane presented on the Housing Supply/Delivery element of the work programme, advising on the supply mechanisms for housing in 2019 – including LA construction, AHB construction, LA Turnkey, AHB Turnkey, LA Part V and AHB Part V.

He also outlined the Housing Grants, Energy Upgrade, Acquisitions Programme, Repair and Leasing Scheme, Vacant House Scheme and the re-letting programme.

#### **Item 5**    **Housing Programme**

Joe Lane indicated that the target for newly constructed housing units for 2019 is 276 units and he was very confident of exceeding this.

In relation to the Affordable Scheme he stated that there is no construction scheme approved at the moment but a scheme of priorities has been drawn up and adopted. In addition the local authority undertook an economic assessment of nine locations for submission to the Department, 5 of which were deemed to be economically feasible.

In relation to a serviced site fund he stated that an application had been made for 20 units in Rathnew and was successful.

Cllr. Mags Crean expressed concern that people are going to be burdened with paying for an existing debt on public land if the scheme as proposed goes ahead on the lands in Kilcoole/Greystones. She felt that the Council should be building on the land themselves rather than selling on to private developer. Cllr. Crean felt that this plan goes against the mission statement of the Council and should be the subject of a vote of the full Council prior to any decision being taken.

Joe Lane stated that as such developments involved a disposal of local property they would be brought before the full council for a resolution under Section 183.

He indicated that each case had been looked at on a number of occasions.

In relation to the lands at Lott Lane, Kilcoole Joe stated that there is a €6m. debt on these lands. There was significant lands at this location. One traditional approach would be to build social housing on some of the lands as a development of lands would result in too much social housing. He pointed out that the Council would not be in a position to build on all the land themselves – cannot build on half and then go back at a later stage to build on the other portion. This as the zoning requires a mixed development.

A mechanism was sought that would deliver social and affordable housing, deliver on the zoning requirement of mixed development whilst also recovering the €8M . Cllr. Aoife Flynn Kennedy, while understanding Cllr. Crean’s concerns, stated that each town and each piece of land has different issues attached. She indicated that her main concern would be if such a broad policy decision was applied for each piece of land.

The Chairman suggested that perhaps Cllr. Crean and any other members with concerns could sit down with Joe Lane and the Head of Finance and discuss their concerns. He pointed out that this had not been an issue when discussed at previous Greystones Municipal meetings and stated that a number of Public Private Partnerships had gone through various municipal districts and had all been different.

It was agreed that the issues of Affordable Housing and Choice Based Letting would be placed on the agenda for the next SPC meeting.

**Item 7 Traveller Accommodation.**

T his issue was dealt with under the Housing presentation earlier in the meeting.

**Item 8 Any Other Business.**

Jackie Carroll advised members that the Draft Corporate Plan is s to be completed by end of December and the members could make submissions on same.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

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