

County Wicklow Public Participation Network

Representative Reporting Template

Name of Committee: Housing Strategic Policy Committee

Name of Representative(s): Eamonn McCann

Date of Meeting Attended: November 2017

Most important actions or issues to emerge from a County Wicklow PPN perspective:

There are over 3000 on Wicklow County Council's housing list.

The housing options are as follows:

Local Authority Housing – There are 4 to 6 projects with about 125 units in the pipeline. Some are under way and others are expected to start by the end of this year or early 2018.

Part 5 – This is where a developer has to give 10% of the housing to the Local Authority. In 2016, there will be 9 units under this scheme and in 2018 they expect to get 40-50 units.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP); This is where the Local Authority leases the house from a landlord on behalf of a tenant. There are 346 under the HAP scheme in County Wicklow. The house has to meet certain standards and is inspected within 9 months of the start of the tenancy. Some landlords will not agree to sign up to this scheme because they don't wish to accept payments in this way or they don't wish and can't invest in the property to bring it up to the required standard. If an unemployed person gets work, they still can retain the HAP house.

Rental Allowance Scheme; there are 600 to 700 in this scheme in County Wicklow at the moment. The Local Authority enters into a contract with the landlord which is usually up to 4-5 years. The landlord receives 92% of the market value of the rent. There are problems with this scheme as the landlords can terminate the contract if s/he wishes to re-furbish the house, sell the house, live in it himself or give the house to a relative.

Vacant House Scheme: There is a vacant house scheme where people can report vacant houses to the Local Authority and they will follow up to see if they can be brought into the housing stock. Some houses have been reported but there are very few that have become available so far.

There is also a **repair and lease scheme**. A person with a house that is in need of refurbishment can get up to €40000 from the Local Authority which is repaid over 20 years. The landlord has to lease the property to the Local Authority for the 20 years with rent at 80% of the market rent. There has been very little uptake on this scheme to date i.e. no house has been added to the housing stock as a result of it.

Purchase and Repair Scheme: There is also a purchase and repair scheme. This is where the local authority will purchase a house and refurbish it. It will only be funded by the Department of the Environment if the purchase price and refurbishment costs are equal to the market value of the house when the repairs are completed. I don't know if they have got any houses under this scheme yet.

The Mid-East Region Homelessness Action Plan. 2018 to 2020 was circulated. There were 522 households presented as homeless in 2016. Fifteen households were placed in emergency accommodation the same year. The council are trying to prevent homelessness. They deal with landlords and try to convince them to extend the leases however one strategy is to convince people to remain in or return to the family home.

There are about 4500 social houses in the county. There are about 10 that are being repaired or refurbished at present, the rest have tenants.

There are 700 to 800 of these that are due for, what is called phase 1 of energy efficiency work i.e. pumping cavity walls with insulation. The local authority cannot apply for funding for phase 2 to increase energy efficiency with its housing stock until all houses have completed the phase 1 process.

There are 500 without central heating i.e. no radiators in their houses. Some people do not want radiators as they will have to get rid of their back boilers. This year Wicklow County Council received €75,000 toward upgrading these 500 houses. The funding covered work on 15 houses.

Funding for housing maintenance is very limited and any repairs are prioritised on a health and safety basis only.