Housing & Community SPC
(Housing only)
Minutes of Meeting 26th May 2021

In the Chair: Cllr Joe Sullivan

Present via Microsoft Teams: Cllr Frank Staples, Cllr Fionntán O'Suilleabháin, Cllr David Hynes, Cllr Jim Codd, Cllr John O'Rourke, Mr Michael Wall, Ms Breda O'Sullivan, Ms Carolyne Godkin A/Director of Service, Ms Martina Donoghue AO Housing, Ms Michele Bridges-Carley AO Housing, Ms Sinéad Breathnach Homeless Lead – South East Region and Ms Caroline Creane SSO Housing

Minutes

The minutes of the SPC meeting dated 7th April 2021 were approved on the proposal of Cllr John O'Rourke and seconded by Ms Breda O'Sullivan with an amendment to the sentence:-

> *The Acting Director informed the meeting that some people won't take accommodation due to issues and they stay sleeping rough, they won't accept the housing solution that was offered to them.*

Amended to:-

> *The Acting Director informed the meeting that there are occasions where offers of temporary emergency accommodation are refused by those sleeping rough - the refusal can be for several different reasons, however where that happens, the person will then remain in a rough sleeping scenario.*

Social Housing Eligibility

The Housing AO outlined the eligibility and need for social housing supports. She informed the meeting that social housing supports can be provided in a number of ways including local authority houses, properties sourced in the private rental section through schemes such as Rental Accommodation Scheme, Leasing and Housing Assistance Payment, houses provided by Approved Housing Bodies, specific accommodation for homeless people, older people and Travellers, adaptions to existing homes and the provision of grants to improve accessibility in the home for people with disabilities and special needs.

There are 4 criteria to determine eligibility namely applicant must have a right to reside in the state long term, the applicant income must be within the relevant income threshold, the applicant must not have a significant history of rent arrears and they must not own/have an interest in a house or land where they could live.

The meeting was informed that the social housing supports list is a rolling one, where a household circumstances are constantly changing and being updated. WCC undertakes an annual summary of socially housing assessments (SSHA), whereby households are contacted to confirm that they remain interested in social housing supports and wish to remain on the housing list. They are requested to submit details of the household income, medical / disability needs etc, an assessment of eligibility and basis of need is carried out on each application and the household notified of the outcome.

Homelessness

Ms Sinéad Breathnach Homeless Lead – South East Region gave a presentation to the meeting. She outlined the homeless structures within the South East and the main priorities. It was noted that a joint management of homelessness by the HSE and LA's is a priority. To achieve the national targets, reduce the use of B&B's/Hotels for family emergencies and consistent implementation of homeless prevention and support across each LA are among other priorities. She informed the meeting that there were 2,735 homeless presentations in the South East Region in 2020, of that 661 in Wexford which represented 24.2%.

It was noted that 373 of the Wexford presentations sought and received advice and information in relation to housing and homeless prevention. A short discussion took place on the Place Finder Service, the Homeless Action Team and the Tenancy Sustainment and Supports Service. The meeting was informed that Ozanam House provides 25 single units of accommodation plus 3 x 2-bed bungalows and the Housing First Programme facilitated by Focus Ireland has a target of 12 tenancies by the end of 2021.

The meeting was informed of the future priorities, increased resources with the commencement of 2 Social Care Workers, reducing B&B's, fulfil Housing First targets and extend to 2022, Ozanam house (Depaul) to provide out of hours service by the end of the year and the Adverse weather initiative to be active much quicker.

Questions

A number of questions were raised by members. The travellers at Park were briefly discussed, it was noted that staff are actively engaging with the families to find a housing solution. A brief discussion took place about people who didn't qualify for a service, Ms Breathnach informed the meeting that you must be either living in the County or from the County to qualify for services and if not, they will be facilitated to get back to the County where they do qualify for homeless services.

It was noted that the Homeless Action Team (HAT) identifies the number of rough sleepers throughout the County. In addition to WCC staff, HAT consists of staff from the HSE, Tusla, Dept of Social Protection, Ozanam House, Women's Refuge, Cornmarket and Focus Ireland.

Next Meeting

The next SPC meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 1st September 2021.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Chairman

Dated: _____