

**Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Housing SPC to
Consider the Mid-East Region Homelessness Action Plan**

30th March 2021

Present: Cllr Brendan Weld, Cllr. Noel Connolly, Cllr. Tim Durkan, Cllr. Chris Pender, Cllr Daragh Fitzpatrick, Mr. Tom O'Malley, Mr. Pat Doyle, Mr. Billy Wall.

Apologies: Cllr. Mark Leigh.

In attendance: Annette Aspell, Director of Services, Evelyn Wright, Snr. Exec. Officer, Ollie Brady, Administrative Office, Siobhán Scully, Administrative Officer

1. The minutes of the meeting of 04/02/2021 were proposed by Cllr. Durkan and seconded by Cllr. Connolly.
2. The Chair invited members to declare any conflict of interest, none were declared.
3. The Chair advised the Committee that the business of the meeting was to consider the Draft Mid East Region Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2023.
4. A Aspell provided the committee with the background to plan. The Mid East Region Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2023 is prepared by the local authorities of Kildare, Meath and Wicklow and the Health Services Executive (HSE), having regard to the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 as it relates to Homelessness, and sets out the priorities for the region for the next three years. The plan is drafted against the backdrop of persistent high levels of homelessness across the region. She outlined the key objectives of the plan as follows: Prevention, Tenancy Sustainment, Provision of Emergency Accommodation, Provision of Health and Welfare Supports, Inter-Agency Approach. Ms. Aspell advised the committee that the plan required ratification by the three local authorities and if the plan is approved by the Committee it will be presented to CPG and the Council for approval.
5. E Wright advised the Committee that the outcomes of the previous plan have been reviewed and this review outlined the road map for the new plan, the key outcomes of the last plan are:
 - Reduction in the number of families/children in emergency accommodation.
 - Significant progress to date in homeless prevention and in assisting families and individuals to move from emergency accommodation to HAP.
 - Homeless HAP Placefinders established in Kildare, Meath and Wicklow and have played a key role during Covid-19.
 - The Housing First tender was completed and awarded in Quarter 4, 2019 to the Peter McVerry Trust for a 3-year period, since then significant progress has been made in rolling out the Housing First programme with the 3-year Regional target of 64 and 14 placements achieved to date.

- Homeless Action Teams (HAT) successfully operating in each County.
 - 22 Isolation Units available in the Region in response to COVID-19 requirements.
 - Mid-East Prisoner Protocol agreed and advanced.
 - Implementation of National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) commenced.
6. O Brady provided the Committee with an overview of the cost and funding model advising that the cost of homeless provision across the three local authorities increased from €4.9 million in 2018 to €9.7 million in 2020. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government provides funding for 90% of the cost of homeless provision costs and 7% of salary and administrative costs. Funding is subject to annual review. He outlined the 5 key objectives of the new plan and the associated actions, the responsible bodies, and associated timeframes:
- Prevention of Homelessness.
 - Provision of Emergency Accommodation with a focus on the model and quality of provision, and the implementation of exit strategies for those entering emergency accommodation.
 - Provision of Health and Welfare Supports.
 - Covid-19 Actions.
 - Continuing the Multi-agency approach to provision of homeless services.

The Chair thanked the staff for their presentation and due to a prior commitment left the meeting, with the agreement of the Committee Cllr. Durkan took over the position of Chair. He invited members of the Committee to present any questions.

7. Members of the Committee raised the following points and queries:
- Provision of refuge accommodation for victims of domestic violence.
 - Adequacy of budget provision, is the 7% contribution to staff and administrative costs a barrier to recruitment.
 - Provision of accommodation for people exiting direct provision and with leave to remain in the country.
 - Is the prisoner release protocol documented.
 - What is the geographic spread of emergency accommodation.
 - Youth and LGBTI homelessness.
 - Mental health hospital discharges.
 - How does the council deal with family separations in the context of the time on the housing list or families with an allocation of a social housing property?

The following responses were provided:

The provision of services for victims of domestic abuse is the responsibility of TUSLA. The council recently contributed to a review of refuge accommodation in the county.

Information and advice on service provision will be provided to people presenting with a housing need.

The funding provision is adequate however it is kept under review and considered in the context of any new service provision, the capital budget is also considered.

A plan is in place to deal with people exiting direct provision. Specific targets are in place for each county, Approved Housing Bodies have been appointed to manage this area.

The prisoner release protocol is documented.

There is a geographic spread of emergency accommodation available to the council. The Tenancy Sustainment Service, Outreach Work Team and Social Work Team are equipped to deal with issues relating to youth and LGBTI homelessness. Hospital discharges can be problematic, however there is engagement with the HSE and the Homeless Action Team to deal with specific cases. Cases of family separations are dealt with on case by case basis, A Aspell advised that this issue could be considered in the next review of the Scheme of Letting Priorities.

The Chair requested that the Members of the Committee confirm if agreed that the plan be recommended to the CPG. This action was proposed and seconded by Cllr. Fitzpatrick and Cllr. Pender. The other Committee Members agreed.

The Chair thanked the Members for attending and the staff for preparing the plan.

The meeting concluded.