

Minutes of Special Housing and Planning Meeting of Bray Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bray on Tuesday 5th September 2006.

Present: Councillor Anne Egan, Cathaoirleach
Councillor Joe Behan
Councillor John Brady
Councillor John Byrne
Councillor Caroline Burrell
Councillor Bríd Collins
Councillor Déirdre de Búrca
Councillor David Grant
Councillor John McManus
Councillor Ciaran O'Brien
Councillor Pat Vance

Also present: Mr. Sean O' Neill, Acting Manager
Ms. Christine Flood, Town Clerk
Mr. Liam Bourke, Acting Town Engineer
Ms. Triona Irving, Administrative Officer
Ms. Caroline Fox, Administrative Officer

Apologies: Councillor Anne Ferris

The Cathaoirleach welcomed all the members back from the summer break and also introduced the new Senior Executive Engineer, Mr. Liam Bourke to the members. She also welcomed Ms. Caroline Fox from Wicklow County Council who is here to inform the members and answer any questions they may have about the agreement with Wicklow County Council pursuant to Section 85 of the Local Government Act, 2001 for the acceptance of services from the Wicklow County Council in relation to the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

1. Confirmation of Minutes of the Special Housing and Planning Meeting dated 4th July, 2006.

It was proposed by Councillor John Byrne, seconded by Councillor Brid Collins and unanimously agreed to confirm and adopt the minutes of the Special Housing and Planning Meeting dated 4th July 2006.

2. To consider an agreement with Wicklow County Council pursuant to Section 85 of the Local Government Act, 2001 for the acceptance of services from the Wicklow County Council in relation to the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

The documentation relating to the Rental Accommodation Scheme had been circulated previously Caroline Fox summarised the details .The scheme would apply to tenants who were in receipt of a rent supplement from the Health Service Executive for more than 18 months. She stated that there are 60,000 people country-wide on rent supplement. This figure includes 1,600 in County Wicklow. Bray has more than 274 people on Rent Supplement for more than eighteen months. She added that these figures relate to 2005.

The benefits to the tenants of the scheme include better standards of accommodation and security. Tenants would be encouraged to stay in accommodation. One significant benefit to tenants would be the entitlement to earn an income. The current cap on earnings of €60 per week was a deterrent to people wishing to improve their situation.

The benefits to landlords include security, fixed term lettings, no need for an agent. Income is guaranteed as it is paid by the local authority. The terms of the Residential Tenancy Act 2004 would apply; under the Act, the landlord can break the contract in certain circumstances e.g if they decide to sell the property. Under the terms of the Act the landlord must be tax compliant. However if a tenant engaged in anti-social behaviour, it would be up to the landlord to take action, up to an including eviction.

If the members consented to the adoption of the Section 85 agreement, Wicklow County Council would operate the scheme on behalf of Bray Town Council.

The members raised the following questions -

- Implications for Bray Town Council staff?
- Is this handing a power over to Wicklow County Council?
- Who does the Administrative Officer dealing with the scheme in the four authorities report to?
- Standard of housing – will staff be inspecting houses before tenants are housed?
- Who deals with anti-social behaviour?
- This scheme is welcome, as it provides a new housing option.
- Will it affect the tenants position on the Housing List?
- Are there limits on payment to be made to the landlord?
- Do tenants still have to apply if they are already on the Rental Accommodation Scheme?
- When will advertising begin – papers, radio etc?
- Can we keep this on the agenda as an item for regular updates?
- Will we be given a permanent officer in Bray?
- Is Bray Town Council obliged to repair accommodation if it is damaged by tenants in any way?
- Has the Rental Accommodation Scheme IT System been installed?
- What are the budgetary implications for Bray Town Council ?
- Will this be coming from the County Demand?
- Will the outputs specified be achieved?
- If someone is already a tenant and seeking a transfer are they eligible for private rented accommodation?

Ms. Caroline Fox informed the members of the following –

- At present there are no extra resources or staff required from Bray Town Council.
- Wicklow County Council is running this because they were given a permanent Administrative Officer and Clerical Officer.
- The Administrative Officer reports to the Senior Executive Officer Housing in Wicklow County Council .
- Inspections of properties will be carried out.

- Anti-social behaviour will be dealt with by the landlord, however all clients will be vetted in advance.
- Wicklow County Council will be running this scheme, subject to the agreement of Bray Town Council members.
- Social housing list – people are to remain on this list.
- Rent limits – these are similar to Dublin and we cannot go above these limits.
- A comprehensive publicity campaign will be launched in the next couple of months.
- Periodical reviews – we will see how the scheme is running.
- Social mix – we are trying to achieve this and may limit the number of properties rented in any one estate .
- We have started late with this. It is meant to be a four-year programme. Our key outputs are low this year.
- To be eligible a tenant must be on rent supplement for eighteen months or more.

Councillor John Byrne proposed and Councillor Caroline Burrell seconded the proposal to enter into an agreement with Wicklow County Council pursuant to Section 85 of the Local Government Act, 2001 for the acceptance of services from the Wicklow County Council in relation to the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

High Tides and Flooding

Members had been circulated with a notice from the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources warning of exceptionally high astronomical tides during September, October and November. Mr. Liam Bourke informed the members that Bray Town Council was monitoring the flood levels. He stated that sandbags are being filled and crews have been put on standby. He also added that a valve is being installed at Seapoint Court to reduce the risk of flooding. Mr. Bourke then stated that the major risk to residents is only if adverse weather conditions coincide with the high tides and at present the long term forecast is good.

The members raised the following points –

- More action is needed and a little more reassurance should be given to residents.
- Can people be told where sandbags can be picked up?
- Bray Town Council should prepare some sort of information leaflet rather than circulating the booklet published by the OPW .
- We should be careful not to scaremonger .
- Should compliment the Cathaoirleach on this as she has been working tirelessly with the officials on this issue.
- We need a flood protection scheme for the people of Little Bray and the North Ward.
- In the areas that get flooded, residents should take as many precautions themselves as possible.
- It is very important that we are prepared in case of any flooding.
- It is very important to make people aware. I would ask that the media strongly advertise this.
- Will the gap in the wall on the Seafront be fixed as this could be a major problem if there is flooding?
- Radio might be a more effective means of publicising the issue

The Town Engineer stated that the only places the high tide will affect are Seapoint Court and Dwyer Park if there is flooding. He added that he is not expecting any water to get into Seapoint Court but in case of adverse weather conditions, which could contribute towards flooding, sandbags will be placed at the Sewage Treatment Plant for residents.

3. Reports and Recommendations

1.78 Acres

The Cathaoirleach stated that she is not going to take the 1.78 Acres item on tonight's agenda as the Manager is absent. The members agreed to this.

The Town Clerk stated that there are no outstanding reports or recommendations.

The members raised the following issues –

- The E.S.B intend pulling out of their Bray depot.
- This Council should be made fully aware of their plans, as there are very serious implications for Bray. It was agreed to request that a representative of the ESB be invited to the next meeting, to address the issue.

4. To consider the Housing Progress Report

The members raised the following points –

- 20% on the Apartments at La Vallée – how is this going to done? Can we have an update?
- Can we have an update from the Law Agent on the advice sought from a Senior Counsel on the Differential Rent Scheme?
- There are 4 private sites in Glenthorn – the green area is never maintained.
- What sort of heating will be used in these apartments?
- A smoke alarm scheme was launched recently, these should be installed in all local authority accommodation.
- Ballywaltrim Heights – we did ask for some estates like this to be brought into the jurisdiction of Bray Town Council. Is there any update?
- Silverbridge – have the remedial works been carried out yet?
- Fire Hydrant Report – delighted to see that this is nearly completed.
- Cedar Court – we should have an official opening. The Cathaoirleach should open this estate officially.
- The Minister should be asked to perform the opening, or perhaps a joint opening could be considered.
- Kilbride House – what is the story with Bray Town Council acquiring this land?
- Excellent idea to introduce a pilot scheme for solar panels on houses to conserve energy. We should check the feasibility of this.
- Richmond Hill – when will works be completed?
- Ashlawn Court – very important we have consultation with the Estate Management Committee up here.

- Affordable Housing Scheme – can we get a list of planning applications since 2004 for the Part 5's?
- Self employed persons – majority are sole traders who do not get their accounts audited. Can we get some information on this?
- 2 Dargle Villas – how long is it taking to refurbish this house?
- Heatherwood – there is a sculpture here that might have looked nice a few years ago but is now a congregating area for anti social behaviour. Can we look at removing this?
- Planned Maintenance – how many more gas boilers have been serviced?
- Fassaroe Resource Centre – this is in a disgraceful condition. Do we have a programme of maintenance for these buildings?
- Silverbridge – dangerous situation exiting this site. The white lines on the road have been redirected. Can I ask that the contractors be contacted to erect a barrier or walkway?
- Rent Scheme – welcome change in rent although it is perverse that someone earning less than €179 had their rent increased.
- Affordable Housing – we are driving young people out of the town with no affordable housing.
- Richmond Hill – this estate is coming along fine but there is very little room between houses, would the council grant permission for these type of galvanised roofs elsewhere?
- James Everett Park refurbishment is a great success.
- Out of respect for the members, a discussion on the Rental Accommodation Scheme should have taken place before the letter went out.
- Members considered that the minimum rent should not have increased by €3.

The Administrative Officer, Ms. Triona Irving informed the members of the following –

- Mains operated smoke alarms are provided in new local authority houses.
- La Vallee – negotiations are still ongoing in relation to the social and affordable housing..
- Ashlawn Court – letters have been issued to residents giving them a timeframe for the planned refurbishment.
- Servicing of gas boilers – need to be serviced every two years but if that changes we will take it on board.
- Self employed persons – no one that comes into the housing department to see us is turned away.
- Silverbridge Halting Site – we will be meeting with the residents about this.
- Artistic Feature at Ard Na Greine – we have checked this with Wicklow County Council and we cannot move this as it was sited in consultation with the residents and if we were to move it the artist would be entitled to sue.
- Bray has been selected as a pilot town for the removal of graffiti. The RAPID areas will be targeted first.
- Any change in managing estates would mean a town boundary change.

The Town Engineer informed the members of the following –

- There is room for improvement for the maintenance of buildings such as the Fassaroe Resource Centre.

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- Cedar Court – snagging can go on for at least 12 months.

Councillor John Byrne proposed and Councillor John McManus seconded that no more increases occur in rents should occur.

The members were advised that this is an executive function. The rent scheme was forwarded to the members for information purposes. The letters were due to have issued that day.

The Town Clerk informed the members of the following –

- The Law Agent had sent a number of reminders to the Senior Counsel selected by the members to give an opinion on the Differential Rent Scheme to date no response had been received.
- Smoke Alarms – we have not received official notification regarding this scheme, but will check it out.

5. To consider Planning Matters

06/179 – This file was requested by Councillor John Brady

06/179 - Councillor John Brady stated that the last time this application was submitted it was rejected and rightly so. He asked if the officials could look at this and throw it out as it is not in keeping with the plan.

Councillor Joe Behan supported Councillor Brady. He added that he cannot see why the officials would approve it this time.

Councillor Behan also enquired if Bray Town Council can begin the process of declaring the AO Smith site a derelict site?

06/198 – Councillor Caroline Burrell stated that the planners need to keep an eye on this application.

06/210 – This is the second application in for this. I hope that this is denied.

06/179 – Councillor Deirdre De Burca stated that this is very sad but a very worthwhile development.

06/179 – Councillor Johyn Byrne stated that he is opposed to this application.

06/186 – He asked if the Council could try to accommodate this application.

Councillor Byrne also asked if the tennis courts in Elgin Heights are in the jurisdiction of Bray or Wicklow?

The Cathaoirleach proposed an extension to the meeting at this point. The members agreed.

06/179 – Councillor David Grant agreed with the other members regarding this application.

06/183 – Regarding this application he stated that in the past residents have rejected any entrance so he will be opposing this.

Councillor Pat Vance stated that he did not agree that we should review the Development Plan. He added that this would bring in legal complications.

Councillor Vance also stated that the building opposite the Powercity building is a disgrace. He added that we can go after people with the Litter Acts.

There is a huge amount of invalid applications. Why is this?

06/203 – Councillor Brid Collins stated that she would like to support this application.

She also asked for a report on the 23 acres site.

The Administrative Officer, Ms. Triona Irving, informed the members of the following –

AO Smiths – I referred this to the Town Engineer and he has referred to the Executive Engineer and that it will be checked out. Ms. Irving stated that regarding invalid applications, we do give people a list of what is needed so it is up to them to provide correct documents. She added that she has taken note of all other member’s comments.

9. Correspondence

The Town Clerk informed the members that Ms. Liz Kearney had sent a thank you note for the flowers she received at previous meeting and also that we had received a letter from Mr. Charles Haugheys family thanking Bray Town Council for the letter of sympathy after his death.

Gum Litter Task Force

The Town Clerk read out a letter received from the Chairman of the Gum Litter Taskforce informing on the progress of the pilot campaign aimed to raise awareness towards gum littering.

10. Any Other Business

The members raised the following issues –

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- Wicklow County Council are changing policies regarding waste collection. For next weeks meeting can we have a detailed report for what is proposed. This is totally unacceptable.
 - Can we get a report from the Engineer on Wolfe Tone scheme for next week or next months meeting?
 - Resurfacing on bridge at the Maltings – no markings have been put down. Can the right arrow be put back?

This concluded the meeting.

Signed:

Cathaoirleach

Signed:

Town Clerk

Dated:
