Welcome

This bulletin is produced by the Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH), the federation for non-profit housing associations which represents approximately 270 members. The sector manages over 30,000 homes for families on a low income, older people, people with disabilities and homeless households in every local authority area.

The ICSH recognise the important role that local elected representatives play in the provision of housing in their areas. This information bulletin outlines important developments relating to the development and management of social housing options for households, responses to homelessness and partnerships and collaboration to enhance delivery. It also highlights the latest achievements across the country.

Housing associations – also known as Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) – are non-profit organisations that provide and manage good-quality housing at affordable rents for households on local authority housing waiting lists.

Housing associations are keen to further develop their relationships with local authorities and, due to the important role that elected representatives play in deciding the strategic direction of housing provision, are keen to engage with you as important stakeholders in the sector. As a starting point to this engagement, we undertook a survey of elected members and some of the results and findings from this are outlined below.

What you told us – ICSH survey of 200 elected representatives

In the first ICSH bulletin specifically created for elected members, we presented the main highlights from an ICSH survey on social housing provision by housing associations. Over 200 Councillors from all major political parties took part and gave their insights into the role and potential of housing associations in the delivery of social housing.

The common priority for Councillors is increasing the scale of delivery of social housing as housing related issues were cited by most as the key issue for constituents and are keen to work with associations to achieve this.

Quality and Performance

Whilst there were many opinions expressed on the role of housing associations, one in every two Councillors regard the quality of homes provided by housing associations as good or above average.

This finding is supported by the annual sector Housing Association Performance Management report – HAPM. It found that HAPM participants recorded only 74 formal complaints in 2014 which represents only 0.4% of the housing stock, over 91% of routine repairs were completed on time and 99.9% of total rent receivable was collected. The 2015 HAPM report is currently being finalised.

1 HAPM consists of a set of key performance indicators that gather information on size of housing stock, rent levels and service charges, rent collected and arrears control, allocations, voids, response repairs and maintenance and landlord-tenant relations.
New Regulatory Framework

Findings from the survey also indicated that 40% of Councillors were not aware of the new regulatory and governance structure for the sector. A total of 215 housing associations are signed up the Voluntary Regulation Code (VRC) and these associations represent 80% of the total stock in the sector and nearly 24,000 tenant homes. Associations who sign up to the Code commit to following a set of agreed principles and actions in relation to governance, financial management and performance management as well as completing a detailed annual return to the Regulation Office on their activities.

The annual report published by the Regulator in 2015 stated that the results from the first year were ‘encouraging with lots of evidence of good practice’.

Almost 6 in 10 Councilors claim this new structure will boost their confidence in the sector.

Greater engagement

One of the main findings was the clear request from Councillors to have greater engagement with the ICSH and the sector. Along with these regular information bulletins, the ICSH have contributed to a number of sessions hosted by the Association of Local Government in Ireland (AILG) and have presented at one Housing SPC meeting.

We are keen to build on this and welcome any opportunity to provide relevant information to elected representatives and arrange meetings or seminars to coincide with other Council meetings or SPC meetings.

The ICSH feel that greater engagement can enhance local elected member knowledge of and support to existing local housing associations who have been providing good quality social housing serving local need in many communities in Ireland for several decades. It would also enable housing associations to work better with local authorities in their common goal to help provide accommodation for people in housing need.
Achievements across constituencies
Community Housing Award 2015

The ICSH Community Housing Awards 2015 sponsored by Allianz Insurance, were announced at the ICSH biennial Social Housing Conference dinner in the Tullamore Court Hotel, Tullamore in September 2015. The 2015 competition marked the seventh biennial awards, having been in existence since 2003, and as with previous years the standard of projects was exceptionally high, demonstrating the sector’s commitment to delivering the highest quality housing. The ICSH believe the Community Housing Awards truly highlight the ongoing achievements of the social housing sector in consistently developing high quality projects and delivering new and innovative housing initiatives.

Overall 2015 Winner
Clanmil Ireland & South Dublin County Council for their Valhalla scheme in Watery Lane Clondalkin.

The Valhalla scheme provides for 10 apartments (8 x 1 bed apartments, 1 x 2 bed apartment, 1 x 2 bed duplex) and an office. The building is a pilot scheme under the Government’s initiative ‘towards carbon neutral’ homes and was designed following the principles of ‘Universal design’ with 4 of the ground floor units being built to include essential aides and assistive technology for people with physical disabilities.

Housing for Older People Winner
Leighlinbridge Housing Association Orchard Lane, Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow.

The scheme consists of 15 fully accessible 2 bedroom units with a community centre. The scheme sits within the context of existing parish facilities including the parish centre where many services are provided for the elderly including meals on wheels, crèche, shops, medical centre, pharmacy, church and playing fields.
Working in partnership with Local Authorities

Top: Clúid Housing Association, St. Michael’s Road, Longford
Bottom: Peter McVerry Trust, Pim Street, Dublin 8

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