

Re: New residential facility for Homeless persons at 15/17 Lower Drumcondra Road

I refer to previous representations and correspondence in relation to the above property. I also refer to request for report on this issue from Councillors at this week's Central Area Committee.

The Dublin Region Homeless Executive/DCC commenced using a private property at 15/17 Drumcondra Road on the provision of emergency accommodation for single homeless adults on 1st May 2020. Since then there have been many objections and complaints made to various City Council Sections, to DRHE and to public representatives in relation to this use of the property.

On the 31st March 2020 there were 2,798 single adults in emergency accommodation in the Dublin Region along with 1103 families and 2491 children. It is a daily challenge for DRHE/DCC to ensure that appropriate accommodation is put in place to accommodate homeless persons. In addition to the normal challenges we have faced over recent years, we are currently responding to Covid-19 and the life threatening risk that it presents, especially for the homeless population who have been identified as a vulnerable group by the National Public Health Team (NPHT) thereby requiring a specific and urgent response to protect them.

We have and are responding to this challenge as we outlined in previous and recent correspondence from this office to City Councillors.

We had been engaging with the owner of the above property since early March 2020 with a view to delivering additional capacity for homeless single persons as part of the Covid-19 response.

We have negotiated a contract of services for a period of 5 years under a commercial arrangement between the DRHE and the property owners- *Brimwood Limited*. It is being managed directly by the owners of the property under a commercial arrangement whereby the property is made available to accommodate 40 single adults requiring accommodation who are experiencing homelessness until alternative longer term housing solutions via social housing or HAP are available for them.

The average length of time an individual will reside there, is envisaged to be between 3 and 6 months. The property is not a hostel and there is no NGO involved in the management of it.

We are outlining below responses to the various questions raised:

Covid 19 and accommodation

The use of this residential accommodation allows the DRHE to continue responding to the need for the provision of accommodation that enables social distancing, and isolation thereby reducing the public health risk to homeless adults at this time. The HSE guidelines along with Environmental Health advice on the use of private rented properties were carefully followed, in settling on the maximum number (40) that could be accommodated in this property and it is not our intention to increase the number post Covid-19.

The Gardai attended the site on a number of occasions following concerns raised in relation to social distancing while the renewal and repair works were underway and it was found to be adhering to social distancing guidelines at all times. It is important also to note that while general construction/building work was on lockdown at that time, work to facilitate accommodation for homeless people was deemed essential work under Government guidelines. We oversaw the installation of 40 beds in the property ensuring that public health guidelines were adhered to.

Single adults are allocated rooms on a sharing basis, which is deemed to be compliant with social distancing and private rented standards. There is scope for two metres of a social/physical distance. (See attached for copy of the HSE guidelines)

We have provided and managed essential services for homeless people in the Dublin Region during the Covid-19 crisis and all our resources are being fully applied to that task. We have ensured that all public health guidance issued by the HSE is communicated immediately to all our services in relation to e.g. the precautions necessary throughout Covid-19 and we have been advising and assisting service providers in the management of facilities throughout the Dublin area.

Curfew

In relation to questions as to a curfew at the property, Homeless individuals will reside at this property on a full time basis and we issue a general guideline of 11.30pm to all operators and residents in private emergency accommodation with exceptions where individuals are possibly working late or visiting family and friends.

Contract

The property is owned by *Brimwood Limited* and will continue to be operated by them on behalf of DCC/ DRHE in the provision of suitable residential accommodation for single homeless adults. Staff are on site 24/7. CCTV is in place at the front and rear of the property as an additional assist in the management of the facility ensuring a response immediately if required. **There is a negotiated contract in place between the DRHE/DCC and the property owner but we are not in a position to make details of the contract publically available for commercial sensitivity reasons.**

However, we can assure you that like all the contracts negotiated by the DRHE/DCC for the provision of accommodation and services, value for money is key to reaching agreement within the context of a heated residential market.

Fire Safety

The District Fire Officer was on site on two occasions to date and the maintenance works to the fire and life safety systems meet the current fire safety standards. **There is no specific historical fire certificate on this property however the owner's Fire Consultants risk assessed the property and have overseen a schedule of works to the property consistent with the standards set out in Government guidelines for emergency accommodation.**

This exceeds the requirements for a residential property such as this and ensures that the highest standards are met to protect the residents in relation to fire and life safety. The owner's Fire Consultant has sought a regularisation certificate from the Fire Authority (DFB) in relation to the works and this Certificate will be made available to you as soon as we have it.

Health and Safety Authority (HSA)

There was no requirement on the DRHE to report work on this property to the HSA or to ask them to inspect the property. The HSA have responsibility for occupational health and safety in the work place. We are not aware of any complaint to the HSA in relation to this workplace.

Engagement with local residents

DRHE management met with the owner of the neighbouring house today- 14th May and a further meeting with a wider group of residents is being arranged. It is not practical or prudent to initiate local consultation on projects like this one, prior to us acquiring/leasing such properties because without doubt it would quickly become a very controversial and divisive issue and put such projects in jeopardy, that would then result in many more Homeless persons sleeping on the streets of Dublin. We are of course very willing to consult and engage regularly with local communities on how these projects are managed and how problems and complaints can be resolved quickly.

The DRHE in association with the City Council and the other Dublin Local Authorities have taken on a significant number of private properties (usually by lease) over recent years for the purpose of providing much needed emergency accommodation for Homeless Households, in particular single persons. All these facilities regardless of their location have led to major objections and complaints from local communities and business. However we do put strong emphasis on how such facilities are managed both inside and outside.

As a result of this emphasis, the level of complaints and problems after these facilities open and settle in, have been very low and when problems do arise they are addressed and resolved very quickly. Therefore, we believe that we have developed a good track record in relation to these type of necessary facilities.

Contact details

Contact with the management of this property can be made via email to

15/17 drumcondrard@gmail.com or by telephone to 01 865 9827

Contact with DRHE – Tommy Collins – 086 815 0179

All Private Emergency Accommodations in contract with DRHE are subject to regular inspections by the DRHE's standards team, and this team also ensures a quick response to complaints received or problems arising. All service providers are issued with guidelines in relation to the management of facilities, and we attach a copy of those guidelines for your information.

Eileen Gleeson
Director,
Dublin Region Homeless Executive,
15th May 2020

Brendan Kenny
Deputy Chief Executive,
Dublin City Council