

**Inter-departmental Working Group on Student Accommodation
Minutes of Meeting of 4 May 2016**

Attendees:

Chair: Mary Doyle, Deputy Secretary, Department of Education and Skills
Alan O'Callaghan, Department of Education and Skills
Stewart Roche, HEA
Michael Casey, IUA
Michael Foley, University of Limerick
Gearóid Hodgins, IOTI
Brendan Ellison, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Sighle de Barra, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Seamus Milne, Department of Finance
Denise O'Connell, Department of Finance
Anne Marie McNulty, Department of Finance
Annie Hoey, Union of Students in Ireland
Louise Mulcahy, NDFA
Micheál Lenihan, Department of Education and Skills (Secretary to Group)

Apologies:

Stewart Logan, Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government
Deirdre McDonnell, Department of Education and Skills
John Rigney, Department of Education and Skills
Ian Mathews, Trinity College Dublin
Andrew Brownlee, HEA

1. Minutes of Meeting of 9 December 2015:

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Group which took place on 9 December 2015 were agreed.

2. Outline of Pipeline Projects:

An update was given in relation to known pipeline projects on student accommodation. Again it was emphasised that the current planned totals are quite fluid with a lot of contingent risks e.g. access to finance, granting of planning permission etc. A number of Higher Education Institutions have Student Accommodation projects ongoing, or in the pipeline, with a number of additional on-campus Student Accommodation bed-spaces to come online from September 2016. Maynooth University have 296 new on-campus bed spaces, and UCD have 350 new on-campus bed spaces, which are due to come on stream in autumn 2016. Six other Higher Education Institutions are currently engaged in, or going through the planning phases for student accommodation projects, namely National University of

Ireland Galway, Trinity College Dublin, University of Limerick, Dublin City University, University College Cork and Dublin Institute of Technology.

Bed spaces planned or under construction.

Higher Education Institutions	Number	Target Date
Maynooth University	296	Open, Sept. 2016
NUIG	429	Tender/Objection
TCD	278	Objection at present
UL	450	Planning, completion, 2019
DCU	280	completion late 2018
DCU	570	completion, late 2019
UCD	350	Open, Sept. 2016
UCC	230	Completion, 2018/19
DIT	700	Awaiting CSO approval prior to tender.
Total Higher Education Institutions	3,583	
Total know Private Plans	6,208	
Overall Total	9,791	

3. Financing and difficulties around development of Projects:

HEA outlined that the EIB are interested in financing Packages for HEIs and HEA are to explore with them whether there is potential for stand-alone financing packages solely for student accommodation.

UL outlined that the single biggest issue is the cost of capital and if the costs of capital could be reduced to less than or equal to 2% then the development of Student Accommodation becomes more financially viable for HEIs.

Land Costs, particularly in Dublin were identified as a significant barrier to development as well.

D/Finance indicated that there is no significant evidence of market failure, particularly in the Dublin region, given the level of interest demonstrated by private developers and that we need to be wary of State Aid rules if market interventions are made that crowd out private sector development.

IOTI outlined that the single biggest issue for them is the lack of an agreed Borrowing Framework. Many IOTs have land availability but are not able to develop it.

D/PER outlined that since IOTs are on-balance sheet in General Government terms (unlike the universities), our ability to facilitate borrowing by the IOT sector is constrained by the fiscal space available to the Government.

DES undertook to follow up on the issue of the IOT Borrowing Framework directly with D/PER.

4. University Allocation Policies:

DES agreed to supply the facts and figures in relation to University Student Accommodation Allocation policies to D/PER and D/Finance.

5. Call for Proposals:

Following discussion at the previous meeting detailed proposals have been put forward by the Group for examination by D/Finance and D/Housing in relation to incentivisation measures which could potentially increase the supply of and/or reduce the cost of building student accommodation. D/Finance and D/Housing undertook to give a detailed response in advance of the next meeting.

6. A.O.B.

Planning Permission – “No commercial Activity” Restriction:

Universities sought the removal of the “no commercial activity” restriction given with some planning permissions for Student Accommodation which restricts their ability to rent the accommodation out for the summer months. DES undertook to follow this up directly with D/Housing.

Oireachtas Committee on Housing and Homelessness:

DES undertook to provide a submission on behalf of this Group in respect of the issue of Student Accommodation to the Oireachtas Committee on Housing and Homelessness.