

***Minutes of the Social Development Strategic Policy Committee held in
Áras Contae an Chláir on Wednesday, 6th September 2017 at 2.30pm***

Present:

Cllr Gerard Flynn, Chairperson
Cllr Pat Burke
Cllr Tom McNamara
Cllr Paul Murphy
Cllr Tony O'Brien
Dermot Hayes
Thomas Guilfoyle
Liam Conneally, Director of Service
Siobhán McNulty, A/Senior Executive Officer
Helen Walsh, County Librarian
Siobhán Mulcahy, Arts Officer
Liam O'Connor, Administrative Officer
Liam O'Connell, Clare MABS
Carmel Dolan, Clare MABS
Valerie Fleming, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies:

Cllr Ann Norton
Cllr PJ Kelly
Geraldine Hetherington.

1. *Minutes of meeting held on 7th June 2017.*

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th June 2017 were proposed by Cllr Tom McNamara, seconded by Dermot Hayes and agreed.

2. *Matters Arising.*

Dermot Hayes queried if housing officials had organised to meet with all Approved Housing Bodies (AHB's) operating in Clare.

Liam Conneally responded that he meets the executive of a number of AHB's on a continuous basis and will be attending the Irish Council for Social Housing event in Limerick on 27th & 28th September where all AHB's will be in represented.

Liam agreed to forward details of this event to Dermot for his information.

3. Presentation by Clare MABS (Money Advice and Budgeting Service).

Liam O'Connor introduced Liam O'Connell and Carmel Dolan of Clare MABS.

Using a PowerPoint presentation Carmel Dolan outlined the role of the *Money Advice and Budgeting Service* (MABS) which is the State's money advice service, guiding people through dealing with problem debt. Carmel detailed the various supports available to people in mortgage arrears.

Tommy Guilfoyle recommended the SPC forum should be used to put forward recommendations from Clare County Council to Government to change legislation in relation to mortgage arrears.

It was proposed by Tommy Guilfoyle, seconded by Dermot Hayes and agreed that Liam and Carmel from Clare MABS will email a Draft of their proposed legislative changes to the SPC for consideration.

It was agreed to circulate the Clare MABS PowerPoint presentation to all SPC members.

The issue of the local needs condition of planning permission on houses in the countryside was raised and members felt that this condition of planning permission should be relaxed when homeowners are in financial distress and have to sell their homes.

4. Referral of agenda Item No 25 from July Council Meeting.

"In order to support those waiting for housing accommodation I propose that:

1) Clare County Council establish a company (special purpose vehicle) to fast-track the provision of new housing stock.

2) Clare County Council include a regularly updated accommodation portal on their website so that those seeking suitable rental accommodation can easily get in touch with landlords and leasing agents"

A discussion took place regarding the above Notice of Motion and response.

It was proposed by Cllr Tony O'Brien, seconded by Dermot Hayes and agreed to accept the response of the Director of Service advising against the setting up of a Special Purpose Vehicle.

Liam agreed to bring the following items to the attention of the Chief Executive in advance of the Housing Summit with the Minister:

- Housing Assistance Payment threshold too low
- Possibility of presenting a business case to the Department to borrow money to build houses
- Develop *over the shop* accommodation as a possible housing solution
- Request the approval process for new builds be speeded up

5. Museum policy/operational documentation for adoption.

This policy item was adopted at the previous SPC meeting and therefore no further discussion took place.

6. New County Library Update.

Helen Walsh advised that Stage 2 approval has been sought from the Department which will allow the project to proceed to planning stage. She said the final design has not yet been agreed but the aim is to secure planning at the later part of 2017 and be on site by early 2018.

7. Fleadh Legacy.

Siobhán Mulcahy advised that there were in the region of 450,000 visitors to Ennis over the period of the 2017 Fleadh. She commended Comhaltas, Clare County Council and all the volunteers for the phenomenal effort that was put into making the Fleadh a truly memorable and successful event.

Cllr Tom McNamara commended the Arts Office on the launching of the CD involving 9 different schools in the county.

Additional Items.

Dermot Hayes referred to a previous SPC meeting where the establishment of a homelessness office was discussed.

Liam Conneally clarified that the Council bid on a property for the Homeless Action Team (HAT) office early in the year but was unsuccessful. A second option was then considered however the refurbishment cost was significantly higher than anticipated. The Council have now increased their bid on the first property option and are awaiting a response. He stated that the need for a Clare HAT office is a Council priority and will streamline the provision of homeless services in the county.

The meeting then concluded.