## Minutes of Meeting of the Social Development Strategic Policy Committee held in the Council Chamber on Wednesday, 7th June 2023 at 2.30pm

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Present: Cllr. Gerard Flynn, Chairperson

Cllr. Tony O’Brien

Cllr. Donna McGettigan

Cllr. Tom O’Callaghan

Larry Brennan

Tommy Guilfoyle

Noel Kearney

William Cahir

Anne Haugh, Director of Service

Padraig MacCormaic, A/Senior Executive Officer

Adrian Headd, A/Senior Engineer

Niamh Madden, Senior Executive Engineer

Conor Marrinan, A/Senior Executive Engineer

John Corry, Administrative Officer

Helen Walsh, County Librarian

Rene Franklin, Archivist

Anne Marie Kelleher, Economic Development Directorate.

Fiona Whelan, Economic Development Directorate.

**Apologies:** Cllr. Ann Norton; Cllr. Joe Garrihy;. Cllr. Paul Murphy.

At the outset Cllr. Gerry Flynn conveyed sympathy to Jason Murphy, A/Director of Service on the passing of his mother.

**1. Minutes of Social Development SPC meeting held on 7th March 2023**

Minutes of meeting held on 7th March 2023 proposed by Cllr. Donna McGettigan, seconded by Tommy Guilfoyle and agreed.

**2. Matters Arising**

T. Guilfoyle requested that the following motion be brought to a Council meeting:

*“This SPC calls on the CCC to retain public ownership of the Francis Street Site and that they instruct their Housing Department to manage a construction project to build housing on said site for people with disabilities, people rightsizing and elderly people, starting with the six houses currently on said site and developing new houses similar to these houses allowing ground floor access homes and also protecting the heritage of the Francis Street area in our fabulous capital town.”*

Seconded by Cllr. Donna McGettigan and Noel Kearney.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn agreed to bring motion to the Council.

Cllr. Tony O’Brien opposed the motion as Consultants have been appointed to investigate and maximise the use of the entire Francis Street site; public engagement is part of the process; public have to have their say.

Cllr. Tom O’Callaghan expressed a wish that site would stay in public ownership and whatever is done it will be for the benefit of the area and the people.

Anne Haugh advised that the Housing Department has been engaging positively with Ennis 2040 DAC around the end use of the Francis Street site; a Design Team has been appointed to develop options and preliminary designs of the site as a mixed use site; the Housing Department will work alongside Ennis 2040 to ensure the residential output is maximised; an Affordable Scheme is one of the potential options being explored.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn clarified the Limited Company was set up by CCC; he was one of 4 Councillors who didn’t support the company; its brief was to show progress for Ennis into 2040; they have now strayed into housing; as Cathaoirleach of this SPC Cllr. Flynn wants to put forward a vote of confidence in the Executive and Members of Clare County Council’s Housing Department and Members of this SPC who have worked tirelessly over the years; it’s a new low to set up a Limited Company with one intention and then have them stray into housing; will not support the Limited Company but will support Francis Street site being developed for people with disabilities and appropriate housing.

William Cahir indicated if the Company changed from what it originally intended to do, the make up of the Board of Directors may have to change.

**3. Climate Change & Biodiversity**

**How CCC takes account of Climate Change on Housing Capital Schemes – Presentation by Niamh Madden**

Niamh Madden, Senior Executive Engineer, presented to the SPC on how Clare County Council takes account of Climate Change on Housing Capital Schemes.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn thanked Niamh for the presentation and for highlighting measures that can be taken in new construction; support for retro fitting should be available for people who purchase older properties.

**3. Extension of and changes to the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant - Presentation by Anne Marie Kelleher, Vacant Homes Officer.**

Anne Marie Kelleher presented to the SPC on the extension of and changes to the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant including changes to Scheme announced 26th April 2023:

Effective from May 1st, 2023

Vacant properties built prior to 2007 (previously 1993) are now eligible.

The grants have been increased :

Vacant Property – increased from €30,000 to €50,000

Derelict properties requiring structural works – increased from €50,000 to €70,000

The scheme is now open for rental properties – each owner will be eligible for 1 owner occupier grant and 1 rental property grant.

Revised grant amounts to be applied to all existing approved applications.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn indicated the 2 year vacancy clause should be addressed; also the clawback period of 10 years.

Cllr. Donna McGettigan commended the Team and referred to 3 houses in her area that could be done up under this Scheme as she has had queries from locals; queried position re. CAB houses.

Anne Marie advised full registered title has to be in place before payment made.

Cllr. Tom O’Callaghan indicated the Scheme is a good starting point; to make properties safe requires a Fire Certificate which is expensive; also interest rate charges in Ireland are excessive; German rates at 1.1%; could be rolled out in Ireland also.

Larry Brennan queried issue whereby clients self declare a site derelict then not developing it and may be subject to enforcement issues.

Fiona Whelan advised the Council liaise with the property owner; they are asked to make the property look presentable without incurring huge cost; refurbishment grant covers some of the cost; derelict sites levy not being invoiced currently to give a chance to apply for a grant.

William Cahir expressed concern at pressure on CCC from this Department scheme for the purpose of drafting legal charges and negotiating with the Bank on taking a secondary charge on a property; first time buyers unable to carry cost of refurbishment until grant comes through.

**5. Library, Arts & Culture Update – Helen Walsh, Co. Librarian**

**& Archives Presentation by Rene Franklin, Archivist**

Helen Walsh circulated copies of the Clare Cultural Strategy 2023-2027 launched recently; advised that consultation on the Clare Library Development Plan 2023-2027 has commenced; Cruinniú na nOg takes place in Clare on Saturday 10th June.

Rene Franklin, Archivist, presented to the SPC on Archives.

Larry Brennan referred to the Archives Section being under-resourced; acknowledged Peter Byrne’s and Brian Doyle’s contribution to the Library service; queried the 100 year rule.

Cllr. Tom O’Callaghan commended the Team on the work they do.

**6. Quarterly Briefing on Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027**

The following update was circulated to the Members:

Listed hereunder are some details regarding how the Housing and Disability Steering Group are performing against the objectives & targets set in the Local Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2021-2026 for the period Jan to March 2023 (Q1):

Allocations:

* 12 properties have been allocated to households who had a requirement for housing under medical/disability grounds as follows:-

Physical disability 8 households

Mental Health 2 households

Sensory 2 households

* 5 of these properties were wheelchair friendly which can accommodate a wheelchair user with 3 further properties being adapted to support those with disabled needs.
* 28% of overall housing allocations in Q1 were made to households with a disability
* 1 such allocation offered to a household who had disabled needs was refused owing to the unsuitability of the property as determined by the applicant.

Pipeline Delivery:

* 48 properties were delivered during Q1 2023; 43 by the Local Authority & 5 by Approved Housing Bodies.
* 9 of these properties were adapted to cater for households with disabled needs.
* 7 of these properties were earmarked for allocation to older persons

Support Packages:

* Supports were provided to 5 disabled households during Q1 2023 to allow them to take up offers of Social Housing accommodation.

The National Implementation Plan to support the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027 is expected to be launched in June 2023 & Clare Co Council will continue to co-ordinate the Housing & Disability Steering Group in delivering on objectives to support households with disabled needs.

**7. Central Placement Policy – Clare County Council Assessment and Placement Service for Homeless Individuals**

Copy of proposed Central Placement Policy was circulated to the Members and agreed. To be brought before full Council for adoption

**8. HSE & Clare County Council Homeless Action Team – Joint Working Protocols**

Copy of Joint Working Protocols circulated to the Members and agreed. To be brought before full Council for adoption

**9. Defective Concrete Blocks Scheme Update**

Conor Marrinan updated the meeting in relation to the DCB Scheme.

Cllr. Gerry Flynn thanked the Team for all their work on this Scheme.

**10. Affordable Housing Scheme**

Padraig advised as follows:

* Clare County Council is advertising in coming week for developer led expressions of interest for Affordable Housing Schemes in Ennis & Shannon.
* LA to adopt a Scheme of Priorities for Allocating Affordable Housing to eligible clients. Most of scheme is predefined by regulations. Scheme to be approved by Minister in advance of adoption by Council.
* Scheme is to cover cases where eligible applicants exceeds available dwellings.

Agreed to include 30% local criteria in CCC Scheme for cases where demand exceeds availability.

**11. Tenant Purchase Scheme**

Padraig advised the Members as follows:

* Regulations changed in 2022 to ensure applicants have social housing support for minimum 10 years
* Clare Co. Co. updated this week to ensure houses bought/constructed since 2016 not available for sale. Also 1 bed properties will not be available for sale
* Need to maintain our new stock for longer periods of time

**12. Rightsizing Policy**

Padraig advised the meeting that Clare County Council need to commence discussion on rightsizing options for the county:

* Require consultation in advance for adoption into current Adopted Allocation Scheme

From research of other LAs various items to be considered for inclusion

* Homeowners agree to sell property to council, or privately, and make contribution from sale to LA
* Termed a Financial Contribution Scheme and is under Council Adopted Allocation Scheme
* Generally 25% net sale value in other LAs
* Tenants pay differential rent and waiver any rights to purchase into future
* Generally for downsizing, but can also be re health reasons, financial reasons
* Downsizing for Council / AHB tenants is already covered in our scheme

Cllrs. Donna McGettigan and Tom O’Callaghan agreed it is a fantastic scheme and should be rolled out.

Larry Brennan referred to the Housing Strategy in the County Development Plan and the need for joined up thinking between the Housing and Planning Departments.

William Cahir indicated that there is a need for rightsizing in rural areas.

There will be a presentation on this item to September SPC meeting.

**13. AOB**

No matters arising.

The meeting then concluded.

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Cllr Gerard Flynn Anne Haugh**

**Chairperson Director of Service**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**