

***Minutes of the Social Development Strategic Policy Committee held in
Áras Contae an Chláir on Wednesday, 7th June 2017 at 2.30pm***

Present:

Cllr Gerard Flynn, Chairperson
Cllr Pat Burke
Cllr P.J. Kelly
Cllr Tom McNamara
Cllr Paul Murphy
Cllr Ann Norton
Cllr Tony O'Brien
Dermot Hayes
Geraldine Hetheron
Liam Conneally, Director of Service
Seán Lenihan, A/Senior Executive Officer
Helen Walsh, County Librarian
Liam O'Connor, Administrative Officer
Niall O'Keeffe, Administrative Officer
Tim Forde, General Manager, Active Ennis & associated facilities
John Rattigan, Curator Clare County Museum
Valerie Fleming, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies:

Pat Keogh.

On commencement of the meeting Cllr Flynn proposed an adjournment for a period of 10 minutes as a mark of respect to the late Betty Devanney, Administrative Officer, and offered condolences to Betty's family on her recent unexpected passing.

Liam Conneally added that Betty's legacy is evident throughout the whole organisation and said an adjournment was fitting for such a valued colleague.

Cllrs Tony O'Brien and Pat Burke wished to be associated with these sentiments.

The meeting then adjourned for 10 minutes.

1.(a) Minutes of meeting held on 7th March 2017.

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2017 were proposed by Cllr Pat Burke, seconded by Dermot Hayes and agreed.

1.(b) Minutes of Workshop held on 26th April 2017.

The minutes of the workshop held on 26th April 2017 were proposed by Dermot Hayes, seconded by Cllr Pat Burke and agreed.

2. Matters Arising.

There were no matters arising.

3. General Housing Matters.

Liam O'Connor gave a brief outline of items 3. (a) and (b):

(a) Tenancy Management.

All tenants are bound by tenancy agreements with a warning letter procedure in place to deal with unauthorised occupants. Court proceedings are a possibility for continued unauthorised occupancy.

Regarding the inclusion of refuse charges in rent collection Liam said he was not aware of the practice of this procedure in any other local authority and had concerns about effectively collecting a charge for a private company. He will look into this possibility in more detail.

Liam confirmed that local authority properties are checked within 6 months of tenancy and a selection of properties are checked yearly. He said that given current staffing resources it is not possible to access every property every year.

(b) Housing Assessments.

Social housing applications are not processed when there is a lack of accurate information provided by the applicant.

Dermot Hayes queried if there had been many cases of unauthorised tenancy and requested further information regarding the collection of refuse charges with rent collection.

Liam O'Connor responded that unauthorised occupancy occurs from time to time as peoples circumstances change. All occupants should be declared to the Council so appropriate background checks can be completed. He confirmed the refuse charge collection will need to be investigated further.

Niall O'Keeffe outlined item 3. (c).

(c). Social Housing Properties.

Short term leases are properties leased by the Council for up to 10 years but are maintained by the landlord. Yearly inspections are carried out on these properties at the request of the Residential Tenancy Board (RTB).

Long term leases are for greater than 10 years and the council maintain the properties and manage the tenancy.

Dermot Hayes asked how long it takes to inspect HAP properties and Niall O’Keeffe responded that legislation dictates properties must be inspected within 9 months of tenancy but in reality inspections are carried out within a matter of months. Niall outlined that the contract for HAP tenancies is between the tenant and the landlord and the Council’s role is to assist with financing the tenancy.

Geraldine Hetherton recommended converting former commercial premises to residential buildings, availing of Public Private Partnership if necessary.

Liam Conneally responded that vacant commercial premises is an issue in every rural town and village and parts of some cities and the Council are working with the Rural Development section to identify vacant properties with a view to purchase for housing purposes. Also, through the *Repair and Lease* and *Buy and Renew Schemes* vacant run down properties can be purchased by the Council and renovated; however, there is a slow take up of this scheme by property owners despite ongoing promotion of these schemes by the Council.

4. Social Housing Allocations Scheme.

Liam O’Connor outlined the proposed changes to the Social Housing Allocations Scheme and advised that the Minister must be notified of any changes ratified by the SPC members.

The Social Housing Allocations Scheme was proposed by Cllr Ann Norton, seconded by Cllr Tony O’Brien and agreed that the draft scheme be presented at full Council.

5. Creative Ireland.

Helen Walsh advised she is the project manager for this programme which is scheduled to run from 2017 to 2022 with a budget of €64k for 2017. A grant scheme was advertised locally for which there were 80 applicants with a total of €50k allocated.

Liam Conneally expects the budget for this initiative to increase significantly in the coming years otherwise the administrative cost to run the scheme will have to be pared back.

6. Approved Housing Bodies.

Using a PowerPoint presentation Niall O’Keeffe outlined the role of Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs). He said that Government have given AHBs a central role in the provision of social housing with the Council having nominating rights to properties funded with 100% exchequer funding. Currently AHBs provide 400 units in Clare.

Dermot Hayes enquired if all AHBs active in Clare could meet with the Council to share ideas etc.

7.(a) Clare Museum Disaster Plan.

Using a PowerPoint presentation John Rattigan outlined the Clare Museum Disaster Plan which provides procedures and guidelines to be followed in the event of an emergency, enabling staff to act swiftly to minimise damage to the buildings and holdings.

The Clare Museum Disaster Plan was proposed by Cllr Ann Norton, seconded by Cllr Tony O'Brien and agreed.

7. (b) Clare Museum Care of Collections Strategy.

John Rattigan outlined the aims of Clare Museum Care of Collections Strategy as follows:

- Train staff in collection care
- Address documentation backlog
- Ensure safe transportation of collections between museum and Beechpark storeroom
- Close monitoring and conditioning of the Wetlands Showcase

The Clare Museum Care of Collections Strategy was proposed by Cllr Tom McNamara, seconded by Dermot Hayes and agreed.

8. Sports & Recreation Update.

Using a PowerPoint presentation Tim Forde introduced all sports and recreation facilities managed by Clare County Council.

Cllr Ann Norton referred to a document specifying changing facilities for people with disabilities and requested Tim review the document to ensure all future buildings/developments comply with disabled access and use specification.

Liam Conneally requested a draft multi-annual plan for sports and recreation facilities be brought before the SPC to facilitate input into future plans.

Dermot Hayes asked what the budget for Sports/Recreation is and Tim replied that it is €1.3m, which remains unchanged from previous years.

The meeting then concluded.