

**Minutes of Meeting of the Social Development Strategic Policy Committee  
held in Áras Contae an Chláir on Wednesday 11th Dec 2019 at 2.30pm**

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**Present:** Cllr. Gerard Flynn, Chairperson  
Cllr. Tony O'Brien  
Cllr. Ann Norton  
Cllr. Paul Murphy  
Cllr. Joe Garrihy  
Cllr. Mark Nestor  
Trudy Leyden  
William Cahir  
Tommy Guilfoyle  
Larry Brennan  
Noel Kearney  
Anne Haugh, Director of Service  
Siobhan McNulty, Senior Executive Officer  
Adrian Headd, Senior Executive Engineer  
Helen Walsh, County Librarian  
Siobhan Mulcahy, County Arts Officer  
Etain McCooey, Administrative Officer  
John Dolan, Social Worker, NOVAS  
Padraig MacCormaic, Staff Officer  
John Rattigan, Curator Clare Co. Museum Project  
Abi Healy, Clerical Officer

The meeting was adjourned for 15 minutes as a mark of respect for Cllr Mike McKee, RIP.

Cllr. G. Flynn opened the meeting by welcoming all to the new committee. He explained the diversity of this particular SPC as it not only covers Housing, but also Sports & Recreation and Culture. Going forward, this SPC will establish itself as a hard working committee, presenting opportunities to put policies on the main Council agenda.

### **1. Social Development Directorate Overview**

Following this PowerPoint presentation given by S.McNulty, the following observations/discussions took place:

Target for Rebuilding Ireland is overstated. Needs are increasing year on year. CCC is the first Local Authority to complete stock survey. This is a funding model, working with the Dept.

Backlog of grant applications have been cleared.

A Haugh stated that 2019 figures are still to be finalised, once reconciled with the Dept and will therefore be accurately reported at the next SPC meeting.

Targets for 2020 have yet to be received from the Dept.

L. Brennan queried the current outturn of new units. S. McNulty confirmed the target of 100 is a combined effort between AHB and CCC.

T. Guilfoyle addressed the Chair, asking why are targets below the actual 'need'. He feels the Rebuilding Ireland Scheme has been a disaster as housing lists are only increasing.

G. Flynn responded by saying we are tied into the policies of Government. There could be a new Rebuilding Ireland Scheme policy by Spring.

T. Guilfoyle asked could this SPC put forward a change of policy for Rebuilding Ireland to the Council Chamber, to which G. Flynn responded that this could be an option.

A Haugh said that the build figures set were inconsistent, which meant we ended up with higher build figures than other comparable LA's.

T. Leyden wanted to know reasons why people are on the Housing List.

G. Flynn said that there are GDPR implications in showing this information.

T. Leyden responded by saying she doesn't want to see names or other personal information, only reasons.

This information is to therefore be made available.

A Haugh clarified at this point that CCC is actively seeking lands. Whilst this is proving challenging, once lands have been identified, process moves quickly to acquire these.

## **2. SPC Member Training Dates**

Information on this training, carried out by the IPA, will be circulated to all members.

## **3. Update on Capital Projects**

Housing Capital Programme Overview Sheet was distributed to all members.

Following this presentation given by A. Headd the following observations/discussions took place:

CCC is continuing to seek potential turn-key developments. They are 6 of these currently being assessed. CCC are continuing to acquire lands, recently 3 sites.

L. Brennan queried as to why acquisition of land in Shannon fell through. G. Flynn responded that it was related to flood risk assessments.

T. Guilfoyle asked if everything on the list was Council built, and also how disabled persons needs are accounted for in new builds.

S. McNulty said that 10% of new builds are universally designed, but this can be extended when looking at individuals needs on the housing list.

L.Brennan asked if any more development plans due for Ennis.

S. McNulty explained the challenge with Ennis is whilst it is a primary area for focus and need, it also proves the most difficult area to acquire lands.

She also explained that expressions of interests are opening again for a third time, seeking any land/property.

L. Brennan questioned as to why the Council cannot purchase unzoned land.

T. O'Brien said that whilst he understood L. Brennan's frustration, there was a whole pile of stuff to be taken into consideration when looking at unzoned land.

At this point, T. Guilfoyle asked to respond to T.O'Brien's comments, as his name had been mentioned.

G. Flynn said that meeting is to proceed, and T. Guilfoyle could bring up any further points he wants to make on this matter in A.O.B.

#### **4. Homeless Action Team Presentation**

Following this PowerPoint presentation given by E. McCooey & J. Dolan, the following observations/discussions took place:

W. Cahir asked how many persons were deemed homeless at the commencement of the HAT Unit in Feb 2019. Also at what the average stay in temporary accommodation is.

E. McCooey responded that the figures at the start were around 63 adults and 35 – 40 children. Regarding the average stay query, she does not have exact figures. However, shortest stay is around a few weeks. She went on to explain that it can take time to source permanent accommodation as may have to wait for AHB/Council housing stock to become available.

M.Nestor asked for clarification regarding a rumour that Council staff had removed bedding from rough sleepers.

T. Leyden asked what the procedure is with vouchers being distributed to the homeless.

T. Guilfoyle queried as to whether there is a HAT 24 hr emergency phone number. He said he had tried unsuccessfully to contact Cusack Lodge on behalf of somebody.

E. McCooey said that all persons accessing the Homeless services must be on the housing list. The Department of Social Protection used to distribute vouchers to the homeless, but this is not a practice that is continued by the HAT team.

S. McNulty said that whilst they are not turning people away, CCC does have limitation on beds. They are working with private sectors to source more beds. She said there is no 24 hour phone number. People are generally aware of their situation during the week when they can access the HAT service.

The reason there is no direct phone number accessible to public for either Cusack Lodge or Westbrook House is because persons are placed there, only through the HAT process.

T. Guilfoyle said that he rang the CCC 24 hour telephone number but was told Homelessness was not a service they can help with. He suggested maybe they could give a number to people, for example Clare Haven.

## **5. Choice Based Lettings**

Following this PowerPoint presentation given by P. McCormaic, the following observations/discussions took place:

G. Flynn said this is innovate in what its doing and will certainly change the concept of house allocations.

L. Brennan asked as to what a 'bid' is, how CCC will allocate properties using this scheme and would there be a helpdesk for applicants.

P. McCormaic said a 'bid' is an expression of interest, and properties would be allocated through the assessment of needs process. Whilst a specific help desk will not be in existence, all staff have been fully trained on how the program works so would be able to assist people with any queries they have.

T. Guilfoyle asked as to whether there will be a link with HAT for potential applicants.

## **6. Update on Museum Policies**

J. Rattigan explained that every 5 years, policy review was required. E therefore respectfully requested the adoption of the 5 policies presented to all members.

T. Leyden if many submissions made from the public?

J. Rattigan replied that not, but he had met with LCETB & CLDC to see if any opportunities to work together.

W. Cahir asked if the museum utilised social media outlets.

J. Rattigan replied that there is a Clare Museum Facebook Page and they were looking to set up an Instagram account.

## **7. Climate Change & Biodiversity**

Whilst it is the Physical Directorate SPC leading this policy, extracts dealing with actions attributed to Housing SPC have been distributed to all members. This is for perusal at the moment.

A. Haugh said that it is the intention of bringing more detail to the actions for our own SPC for the next meeting.

Climate change will be a standing agenda item going forward.

## **8. SPC Meeting Dates 2020**

Wed 11<sup>th</sup> March, Wed 10<sup>th</sup> June, Wed 9<sup>th</sup> September, Wed 9<sup>th</sup> December

## **9. AOB**

T. Guilfoyle commended the work of HAT.

T. Guilfoyle referred to Strategic Policy Committee standing orders. He said Section 13 states the 'equal right to speak'. He said a Section 13 (a) should be including specifying the right to reply by a person, should their name be mentioned in a comment. He asked that this standing order amendment be made through the Chair.

G. Flynn said he regretted the earlier interaction between himself and T. Guilfoyle. He said he was doing his best just to keep the meeting flowing.

T. O'Brien apologised to T. Guilfoyle for any offence he may have caused with his earlier comment, and commended Tommy on the work he does.

L. Brennan stated that his business was prepared to engage with the Housing Authority under Part 5 procedures.

The zoning issue came up with a point being made that when there was a question of Cusack Park being moved, councillors were vocal in their push for this. The same urgency should be heard when it comes to the issue of zoning lands for housing.

N. Kearney & T. Leyden brought up the Clare Arts Plan 2019-2024. They stated that Clare PPN had sent in submissions but no feedback had been given to them.

S. Mulcahy confirmed that that actual Arts Plan was adopted in July 2019 and there is an official launch planned for Jan 2020. In September, she worked closely with individuals and the Plan also went before the Arts Council of Ireland. S. Mulcahy said she is happy to discuss the specifics in a presentation at the next SPC meeting.

The meeting then concluded, with the Chair thanking everyone for their attendance and wishing all a happy and peaceful Christmas.

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

**Cllr Gerard Flynn  
Chairperson**

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

**Anne Haugh  
Director of Service**

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