

**Minutes of Meeting of the Social Development Strategic Policy Committee
held via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday 10th March 2021 at 2.30pm**

Present: Cllr. Gerard Flynn, Chairperson
Cllr. Tony O'Brien
Cllr. Mark Nestor
Cllr. Ann Norton
Cllr. Paul Murphy
Cllr. Joe Garrihy
Larry Brennan
Noel Kearney
Tommy Guilfoyle
William Cahir
Mary Leahy
Anne Haugh, Director of Service
Siobhan McNulty, Senior Executive Officer
Helen Walsh, County Librarian
Siobhan Mulcahy, Arts Officer
Tim Forde, Sports & Recreation
Tony Neville, Senior Executive Engineer
Cyril Feeney, Senior Engineer
Sarah Dillon, WRAP 11
Noel, WRAP 11
Kathy Lordan, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies: Cllr. Donna McGettigan.

At the outset, a vote of sympathy was extended to Cllr. Donna McGettigan on her recent bereavement.

1. Minutes of Social Development SPC meeting held on 9th December 2020

The Minutes of meeting held on 9th December 2020 were proposed by Cllr. A. Norton, seconded by Cllr. P. Murphy, and agreed.

2. Matters Arising

No matters arising.

3. Climate Change and Biodiversity

Tony Neville, SEE, presented on the Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme which was announced on the 18th February 2021 by Minister Darragh O'Brien and advised that this current 10 year programme is a combination of the previous phases and the eligible works include:

- Attic Insulation
- Flat roof extension insulation

- Drylining or Cavity Wall or External Insulation
- Window and Door upgrades (strict conditions apply)
- Provision of a Heat Pump
- LED Lighting
- BER certificate

Noted that the maximum grant available when each item is included is €45,400 with the stipulation a BER rating of B2 must be achieved.

For 2021, Clare County Council has received an allocation of €643,785 with a requirement to include a minimum of 24 No. properties.

The members thanked T. Neville for the presentation. A number of items were discussed including:

- J. Garrihy – a lot of initiatives in the private community currently, can SEAI Community grants partner with the LA?
T. Neville replied that they cannot be included as Local Authorities have a specific allocation and there is a separate funding stream for community projects.
- M. Leahy queried if this scheme was part of the Repair and Leasing Scheme. S. McNulty advised it was independent of the Repair and Leasing Scheme of which there was poor take up.
- T. Guilfoyle – are PV panels included and if not, why.
T. Neville advised they are not on original list but there may be scope to include them, if necessary.

4. Water Service Infrastructure in Clare

C. Feeney, Senior Engineer, gave a presentation outlining the following:

- Current Situation with Irish Water.
- Irish Water Decision Making/Investment Programme.
- Clare Water and Wastewater Infrastructure.
- Impact of Water Services on future development opportunities in Small towns and Villages.

G. Flynn thanked C. Feeney for a very informative presentation

The following items were raised:

L. Brennan complimented the helpful staff in Water Services but expressed frustration at how difficult it is to make contact with Irish Water; queried if a schedule of contact personnel in Irish Water could be provided; also referred to the fact that Irish Water have increased their costs by 100%; referred to treatment plant difficulties in areas where projects put forward for building, e.g. Miltown Malbay and Killaloe.

J. Garrihy queried if there was any way to help the situation for rural Clare and pointed out that communication lines within Irish Water need to be improved.

T. O'Brien advised that there are problems with the wastewater treatment in Ballina, however developments have taken place in Tipperary on an unequal basis with projects going ahead on the Tipperary side and being refused in Killaloe; there are concerns that Irish Water have abandoned villages and towns and given up on stranded assets; Irish Water was set up by the Government to serve the people but it has failed and has no empathy with the Irish people.

T. Guilfoyle stated that Irish Water was imposed on the people of Ireland; indicated that Water Services staff should remain with the Council and not transfer to Irish Water. C. Feeney advised that Water Services work with Irish Water to the best advantage possible for County Clare. As regards staff transfers, the Department have issued a White Paper and there is much discussion in trade union circles; the Chief Executive has given assurances that staff will be informed immediately of any developments; noted that current Service Level Agreement is in place until 2025.

C. Feeney referred to the Service Level Agreement in place whereby customers are directed to various portals in Irish Water. In relation to Killaloe he advised that many issues have been resolved and there is a Plan B to bring water from Newport; expected that planning application will be submitted re. Ballina wastewater; not anticipating construction commencing until late 2022.

J. Garrihy queried if further action could be taken – path worn to Irish Water; Chief Executive lobbying through CCMA, re. National Planning Framework, same issues arising in other Local Authorities. C. Feeney acknowledged that Irish Water have a communications issue which needs to be dealt with.

5. Update on Housing Capital Delivery Programme

Update circulated to the members.

S. McNulty advised that all has been impacted by Covid; Doonbeg and Shannon PPP have essential designation; 94 planned for delivery in 2021 are now falling in to 2022 because of Covid.

A. Haugh advised that current Government Policy, Rebuilding Ireland, will be replaced by Housing for All – currently being drafted and agreed. New targets will be set for the next five years; it will require an additional 10,000 units of delivery – separate to leasing targets and affordable housing; advised that stall in construction will have implications for building delivery for 2021 and waiting to see if acquisitions programme will be opened up.

A. Haugh referred to Affordable Housing Bill which is currently being discussed. The Bill provides for the introduction of three new schemes:

- Local authorities deliver affordable homes for purchase on their lands for the first time in more than a decade.

- A new Affordable Purchase Shared Equity scheme where the State would provide equity support to households seeking to purchase homes in the private market but unable to secure the full mortgage to do so.
- The introduction of a new form of tenure in 'Cost Rental'. This legislation will provide the basis for the first 400 Cost Rental homes in the State which will be delivered in 2021 with many more in the pipeline in the years thereafter

M. Leahy queried when low threshold accommodation, Housing First, will come on stream. S. McNulty advised that Clare has been tasked with introducing the Housing First programme – it is single occupancy accommodation and the availability of one bed units is difficult.

J. Garrihy welcomed all the work going on in the provision of housing and queried if play and sport amenities could be provided in Ennistymon. S. McNulty advised lands have been left available for the development of a sports area in Ennistymon.

In relation to the levels of vacancy in towns and villages A. Haugh stated that this is receiving consideration at a national level and there will be a stronger focus in the new programme on brownfield development as a means of delivery. Also more use needs to be made of the Buy and Renew – currently each MD is requested to identify opportunities for same.

T. Guilfoyle expressed that schemes such as shared equity schemes only get 33% more in the pockets of the developers. A. Haugh stated that the criticism around the Shared Ownership Scheme was about the charge and the equity outstanding; it is anticipated this will be addressed in the new scheme.

L. Brennan advised that they are building affordable housing around County Clare and suggested designating an SPC meeting just for Housing.

In relation to the request for a presentation on the Shannon PPP project, A. Haugh indicated that there was a lot of consultation by the group when the project was being initiated and there may be potential to have a further update when it is completed.

G. Flynn requested the members to submit views for agenda for Special Meeting. Agreed to formulate proposal to the Minister following Special Meeting.

6. Library, Arts & Culture

S. Mulcahy introduced Sarah Dillon, Development Manager, WRAP Fund, who gave a presentation on the Western Regional Audiovisual Producers Fund/WRAP Fund.

The members thanked Sarah for a very comprehensive presentation.

W. Cahir queried the availability of production space as he is involved in the potential development of a studio.

S. Dillon advised that Clare is in an advantageous position between Limerick and Galway and is also attractive because of the Airport. Lack of infrastructure is a national problem – not a regional one.

H. Walsh informed the meeting that the New Library retendering process has commenced and it is envisaged that contract will be awarded by 14th July 2021.

M. Nestor queried if there is an Arts Council Scheme fund for organisations to apply for funding and if the Council would engage with groups re. same.

S. Mulcahy advised that clarity has been sought from the Arts Council in relation to this scheme where 14 areas country wide can be awarded funding. She indicated any queries received can be directed to her.

7. Sports & Recreation

S. McNulty advised that facilities remain closed under Level 5 restrictions; project in Tim Smythe Park complete; working on tiling upgrade at Active Ennis.

Three applications under Sports Capital Grant returned:

- MUGA in Active Kilrush
- Upgrade running track in Lees Road
- Playground in Shannon

The members commended the work being done in this critical area.

8. AOB

J. Garrihy expressed concern re. rural and population targets. In relation to population allocation has any work been done and can solution be found. A. Haugh replied that it is the remit of the Planning Department and that this can be discussed at Special Meeting at which there will likely be a presentation on the Draft Development Plan.

M. Nestor voiced concern of residents close to a homeless service facility regarding anti social behaviour. S. McNulty acknowledged incidents which would have occurred irrespective of location and advised that staff are working with the community through Mid West Simon

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____ **Signed:** _____
Cllr Gerard Flynn **Anne Haugh**
Chairperson **Director of Service**

Date: _____