

Minutes of Meeting of the Social Development Strategic Policy Committee held in the Council Chamber on Wednesday 8th December 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
Cllr. Donna McGettigan
Larry Brennan
Noel Kearney
Mary Leahy
Tommy Guilfoyle
William Cahir
Anne Haugh, Director of Service
Siobhan McNulty, Senior Executive Officer
Helen Walsh, County Librarian
John Rattigan, County Museum
Tony Neville, Senior Executive Engineer
Cyril Feeney, Senior Engineer
Kathy Lordan, Assistant Staff Officer

At the outset, the Chair welcomed all to the final SPC meeting of 2021.

1. Minutes of Social Development SPC meeting held on 8th September 2021

The Minutes of meeting held on 8th September 2021 were proposed by Cllr. Tony O'Brien, seconded by Cllr. Donna McGettigan and agreed.

2. Matters Arising

Cllr. G. Flynn referred to;

- the positive announcement re. additional housing staff approved and funded under Housing For All – 4 technical and 3 administrative;
- the retention of funding for the Tenancy Enforcement Officers in the Budget;
- additional funding for Housing grants;
- Music Generation awarded additional funding of €7,000 under LCDC.

L. Brennan queried if the Minutes were being sanitised as an item he raised in relation to a development at Newmarket on Fergus was not recorded. G. Flynn advised the Minutes record agreed actions.

Cllr. T. O'Brien wished to compliment the Housing staff re. CBL and the Members being notified when appropriate.

In view of recent announcements re. pyrite, Cllr. T. O'Brien requested that the Committee write to the Minister insisting that Clare be included in the redress scheme. Cllr. D. McGettigan seconded this.

Cllr. G. Flynn advised the officials in Clare County Council did put in a request to the Government and any decision to include Clare rests with the Government; he expressed confidence in the Director of Services to get redress for the people of Clare and that she will follow up on it.

Cllr. P. Murphy supported comments and agreed a letter from this Committee would be appropriate.

3. Climate Change and Biodiversity

Cyril Feeney, Senior Engineer, presented to the SPC on Air Quality including:

- Legislation
- Role of EPA
- Air Quality Monitoring
- Solutions -Action Plan

Cllr. D. McGettigan queried if there will be a monitor installed in Shannon. C. Feeney advised the EPA are the monitoring Authority and that they have plans to install more monitors throughout the Country the locations are as yet not defined.

Cllr. J. Garrihy advised that the cleanest air in Europe is along the Atlantic and suggested that Clare County Council could play a stronger role on the ground to support communities in establishing sustainable energy community groups to seek funding to develop energy masterplans. C. Feeney said he sits on the CARO group and they are looking at that area. Also advised there are many different funding streams and the Group is looking at decarbonising zones.

4. Housing For All – Housing Delivery Plan 2022-2026

A. Haugh, Director of Service, presented to the Committee on Housing For All including the Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026 advising:

- Housing For All is a multiannual Programme with Funding for the period 2022-2030
- Provides for over 300,000 new homes incl. 90,000 Social and 54,000 Affordable
- Will incur in excess of €4bn spend per annum
- Core Objective: Putting Home Ownership in reach of ordinary working people
- An ambitious commitment to end Homelessness by 2030

An outline of the various routes to access Affordable Housing in accordance with the new legislation was provided. It was advised that under the criteria for accessing the Affordable Housing Fund for the purpose of delivery under the Local

Authority led affordable purchase scheme, Clare County Council would not be eligible until 2026 and beyond when at such time Ennis and possibly Shannon could be considered.

The presentation also included details of the Draft Housing Delivery Action Plan for the period 2022-2026 which was being prepared for submission to the DHLGH by Friday 17th December.

A breakdown by settlement of the housing need was provided as well as details of approved delivery, outstanding delivery required and the total proposals on hand currently. A summary outlined that of the 833 new social units required to be delivered by 2026 approximately 40% of this was currently in train. It is envisaged that the AHB sector contribution over the period will be approximately 40% of the total delivery target.

The Chair thanked Anne for her presentation and advised he had initially been more optimistic about the Housing For All Plan and went on to outline that a social housing applicant in Clare is €5,000 worse off than in neighbouring counties.

Cllr. T. O'Brien referred to all the red tape and criteria as being very restrictive and discriminatory and queried if people in East, North and West Clare are being excluded from affordable housing; queried if the 20% Part V had to be in housing stock or could it be given in other mechanisms; infrastructural deficiencies are preventing the local authority and people themselves building houses and in that regard Irish Water have responsibilities; sees no benefit for the people in County Clare.

T. Guilfoyle thanked the Director for her presentation but stated the constraints the housing department are under in delivering under this Plan won't even cover housing the people on the housing list; this SPC should consider the position and write to the Minister.

Cllr. D. McGettigan queried if there were proposals for traveller accommodation.

L. Brennan indicated the construction industry welcomed it; very concerned re. private housing and that there won't be 10% or 20% Part V if there isn't private housing; noted there is more social housing being delivered but that it shouldn't be at the downfall of private housing; indicated that he had previously signalled problems re. HAP; Planning in Clare has improved hugely and he appealed to the Housing section to engage with the construction industry.

T. Guilfoyle proposed that this SPC advise it is not happy with the Plan in relation to:

- Affordable housing has to be for all;
- Income threshold has to be revised;

Cllr. D. McGettigan seconded this proposal.

Cllr. G. Flynn suggested each member submit views to Kathy Lordan.

Cllr. J. Garrihy indicated there is a lot of good in the Plan; it is great to see a target; from a North Clare MD point of view it is disappointing with access to

affordable housing being taken away completely; the assessment criteria for housing need doesn't take any cognisance of changes from Covid; queried if any timeframe for Croi Conaithe; there needs to be an acceptance of private led waste water treatment plants; hard to see services being maintained in rural Clare with this type of assessment.

Following further discussion it was agreed that the Chair would reflect the views of the meeting to the full Council at the forthcoming briefing on Monday 13th December.

5. Energy Retrofitting and Maintenance

Tony Neville, SEE, presented on the Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme which was announced on the 18th February 2021 by Minister Darragh O'Brien.

This programme is a revision of the previous scheme which was in place since 2013. This current 10 year programme is a combination of the previous phases and the eligible works include:

- Attic Insulation
- Flat roof extension insulation
- Dry lining or Cavity Wall or External Insulation
- Window and Door upgrades (strict conditions apply)
- Provision of a Heat Pump
- LED Lighting
- BER certificate

The members thanked Tony for the presentation.

6. Social Housing Needs Assessment

S. McNulty advised over 700 letters were issued to applicants who had applied for social housing. John Corry's team went to extensive lengths to contact all; however 220 of the 710 were closed; they can reapply; return is due to the Department this week – 1,107 is the net need – this compares to:

- 1,209 in 2020
- 1,070 in 2019
- 1,007 in 2018

Cllr. T. O'Brien expressed appreciation to the staff for their efforts; pleaded on behalf of the 111 who were uncontactable that if they come back the amount of time they were on the list previously wouldn't be wiped out.

Cllr. D. McGettigan expressed agreement with this.

S. McNulty indicated any previous period based on valid circumstances can be added back on a case by case basis.

7. Library, Arts & Culture

The following documents were noted at SPC for ratification for the purpose of progressing the MSPI (Heritage Council) maintenance of accreditation award – the first two plans are monitored through the PMDS process and the latter two are updated versions of ones already adopted by Council.

A Strategic Management Plan 2021-2023

An SMP which covers a relative short period, which allows us to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. It seeks to build on the work carried out previously, particularly in terms of education, but also sees the museum moving towards a blended service with greater emphasis to online access to collections and museum activities.

Workplan 2021-2022

The museum is obliged under the Museum Standards Programme to produce and an annual workplan based on the objectives of the strategic plan to the council for adoption each year. This one covers the third quarter of 2021 and all of 2022.

Disaster Plan

This disaster plan comprises bespoke plans for both the museum building and the museum store at Beechpark. The protection of the collection is of great importance and having a plan for dealing with different scenarios (fire, flooding, theft, etc) helps to minimize or prevent items being lost in the event of a disaster. These plans indicate the roles that staff members play in each scenario, and the mitigating actions to be taken. The disaster plan replaces the 2017-2020 plan and includes updated contact lists and telephone numbers.

Care of Collections Strategy

The Care of Collections Strategy sets out how the museum will take care of objects in the collection that have been left to the council for the public benefit. It includes a strategy for looking after the building, monitoring the environmental conditions, how different items should be handled, exhibited, stored and documented. It includes the strategic aims, and outlines who and how the Care of Collections Strategy will be carried out by staff. The implementation of a Care of Collections Strategy helps to reduce the risk of a 'Disaster' befalling the collection. This Care of Collections Strategy rolls over the 2017-2020 version, and includes an update on the numbers of items that still require documentation.

L. Brennan queried new library status; Helen advised letters to successful and unsuccessful tenderers have just issued and there will be a 14 day standstill period.

T. Guilfoyle commended everything done by the team and indicated it is an unsung resource.

8. Sports & Recreation

Tim Smythe dressing rooms opened. First facility in Clare that has a changing places facility;
Assessing facilities following Storm Barra;
Covid numbers necessitate a more measured approach at Ennis Leisure Centre;
Awaiting announcement on Sports Capital funding.

Cllr. A. Norton acknowledged the fantastic achievement for Clare County Council to have its first changing places facility and is looking forward to working towards one in the new Library; was delighted as Mayor of Ennis to be part of the opening of the facility at Tim Smythe Park and indicated we should be proud we are inclusive.

M. Leahy wished to compliment everybody involved in this great facility.

Cllr. J. Garrihy also complimented all and the work that is being done with Clare Sports Partnership; referred to the appointment of Clare McGrath as new Chair to Water Safety Ireland.

9. Meeting Dates for 2022

The following meeting dates for 2022 were proposed by Cllr. T. O'Brien and seconded by Cllr. D. McGettigan:

- 2nd March
- 8th June
- 7th September
- 6th December

10. AOB

T. Guilfoyle & G. Flynn wished all the members a Happy Christmas.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____

Cllr Gerard Flynn
Chairperson

Signed: _____

Anne Haugh
Director of Service

Date: _____