
Strategic Policy Committee – Housing, Regeneration & Planning

**Minutes of Meeting
held on 14th June 2022
at Laois County Council**

In the Chair: Ms. Thomasina Connell, M.C.C.(TC)

Present: Ms Catherine Fitzgerald, M.C.C., (CF)
Ms Caroline Dwane Stanley, M.C.C (CDS)
Mr Paschal McEvoy M.C.C., (PMCE)
Mr. Barry Walsh M.C.C. (BW)
Ms Sheelagh Coyle (SC)
Mr. Michael Kelly (MK) (via TEAMS)

Mr. Paddy Buggy (PPN)

In attendance: Ms Angela McEvoy (AMCE), Director of Services, Housing and Planning; Mr. Trevor Hennessy (TH), A/Senior Engineer Housing; Louise McEvoy, (LMCE) A.O. Housing and Evelyn Brownrigg A.O. Planning,

Apologies: Michael Cobbe

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1. The Minutes of the Meeting of the 2nd ^{MDR} Jun 2022 were agreed and proposed by Cllr. Catherine Fitzgerald and seconded by Cllr. Pascal McEvoy.

2. Matters Arising

SC sought an update in relation to the 2 houses on Emmet Street in Mountmellick. TH advised that these had not yet been finalised. The Council proposed to renovate and re-use them, however these required a lot of work.

3. Update on Ukrainian Emergency Accommodation

AME provided an update and advised that we were moving from a period of short term let and dealing with pledges to delivering medium to more long term solutions to houses for the Ukraine response. Further to Government guidance and funding , a new directorate was in the process of being put in place to be lead by a Director of Service for a period of up to a year. A further update will be available at the September meeting.

SC queried how many people had come into the county and it was advised that this was in the region of 260-270.

The Council is now looking at vacant properties such as Banks and other vacant properties.

CDS requested an update on how much emergency accommodation for those in need and how much was available. AMCE advised that she would provide an update on the availability of emergency accommodation.

PMCE queried if the Council had any control on the amount of people entering the county, to which it was advised that if the Council had no accommodation to facilitate them, then IPAS are advised of this.

BW queried if there were any restrictions e.g. commercial to residential. It was advised that these queries should be raised with the Planning Office – exemptions may exist.

TOC requested that Review of HAP should be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting.

4. PPN Presentation on Housing

Mr. Paddy Buggy on behalf on the PPN provided a presentation on modern methods of construction of housing – with a focus on timber construction.

MK welcomed the use of timber housing but felt there was a lot of restrictions which had to be adhered to such as fire regulations and min size e.g. gardens. Timber is a cheaper option, but the site and development costs would not change.

PME felt that the Council were opposed to log cabins. AMCE advised that the Council was not opposed to new forms of construction and would have to be open to move to more sustainable ways of living. Reference was made to a submission in the County Development Plan. AMCE advised that the policy is not against timber homes, it is a matter of appropriate setting and siting.

MK also referred to the length of time which the planning process takes and the cost of the supply of timber and referred to issues with felling licences.

The members thanked Paddy Buggy for his presentation and Mr. Buggy requested the Committee to put forward the proposal to the Dept.

5. Updates on Circulars/New Legislation/New Schemes

- (a) Planning: AMCE advised of the waiver of the cost of the Section 254 licence again in 2022. Applicants would still need to apply to renew.
- (b) Housing: mainly statistical returns. A workshop to be arranged with Councillors on the Affordable Housing Scheme. The dates and details will issue to members but would not be arranged until after the summer break.

6. Quarterly report on Housing Disability Strategy

LMCE presented Quarterly Report on Housing Disability Strategy to the Committee.

Total number of allocations to persons with a disability March 1st to June 9th 2022 .

Total number of allocations – 96.

- Laois County Council – 32
- AHB's - 7
- HAP – 57

TOTAL NUMBER OF ALLOCATIONS TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY – 23.

- Laois County Council – 11 (5 physical, 2 intellectual and 4 mental health).
- AHB's – 4 (1 sensory, 1 physical and 2 mental health).
- HAP - 8 (4 physical, 3 intellectual and 1 mental health).

TOTAL ALLOCATIONS BY CATEGORY – Physical 10 , Mental Health 7
, Intellectual 5 , Sensory 1 .

% of TOTAL ALLOCATIONS – 23.95%

The committee welcomed the report.

7. Proposed Work Programme 2022

AMCE presented the 2022 Proposed Work programme for 2022.

Housing Work Programme 2022

Tenant Handbook – anticipated to be brought to SPC meeting in September

Review of the Vacant Homes:-

57 properties identified in Mountmellick and 70 properties identified in Mountrath which required further examination. It is intended that the CPO process would be used on some of the properties shortly.

CDS requested the Council to examine vacant sites in housing estates. There were a number of sites where works commenced but did not finish. AMCE advised that the Council could examine these sites.

BW felt that local Community Groups would be helpful in identifying sites. A query was raised on protected structures and it was felt that the public did not know how to deal with them. AMCE advised that grants were available and the Council would examine providing workshops to assist with queries.

Planning Works Programme 2022

AMCE updated Committee on Planning Works for 2022.

Local Area Plans

A presentation was provided on the Local Area Plans for Portlaoise and Portarlington in relation to the issues and the pre draft stage which would start during the summer months. It was noted that work had commenced on the Local Area Plans.

With regard to the Graiguecullen Joint Urban Area Plan, it was expected that the issues paper would issue in late Summer. AMCE advised that the elected members of Graiguecullen area were briefed in June 2022 and an issues / pre draft would be circulated over the summer months.

Rathdowney Town Centre Plan – Advised that Consultants were in the process of being commissioned and it is expected they will brief members further in September.

Renewable Energy Strategy – Advised that Consultants were in the process of being commissioned and it is expected that they will consult with members of SPC in Sept to identify issues, etc.

Development Contribution Scheme – hope to have a draft Scheme before the SPC before year end.

8. AOB

CDS requested that the RAS Scheme be examined. Some people are over 10 years on the Scheme and as they were deemed as being housed. CDS is seeking information on how many people were on the RAS Scheme and how long they were on the Scheme, they still want to be housed. AMCE advised that the Council will get an update from the Department to see if it will be reviewed. LMEV advised that there was over 200 on the Scheme. If a tenant on the RAS Scheme receives a Notice to Quit, the Council is obliged to look after them.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The date and time of the next SPC Meeting to be advised

Signed:


Chairperson


Director of Services
Housing, Regeneration and Planning

Date:

4.10.22