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Strategic Policy Committee – Housing , Regeneration & Planning

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Minutes of Meeting  
held on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2020  
in Áras An Chontae, Portlaoise

- In the Chair:** Ms. Thomasina Connell, M.C.C.(TC)
- Present:** Ms. Mary Sweeney, M.C.C (MS)  
Ms Catherine Fitzgerald, M.C.C., (CF)  
Mr Paschal McEvoy , M.C.C., (PMCE)  
Ms Caroline Dwane Stanley, M.C.C (CDS)  
Mr Michael Kelly , (MK)  
Mr Michael Cobbe, (MC)  
Ms Sheelagh Coyle (SC)
- In attendance:** Mr Joe Delaney (JD), Director of Services, Housing and Planning, Mr. Trevor Hennessy (TH), SEE Housing, Ms. Fionnula Daly (FD) Senior Social Worker, Housing, Ms. Angela McEvoy (AMCE) Senior Planner, Liam Rabbitte Executive Scientist Environment , Ms. Marie Murray (MM) A/SSO Planning
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**1. WELCOME**

*Cllr Thomasina Connell welcomed all members to the SPC and reviewed the minutes from the meeting held on Wednesday 1st July 2020, which was proposed by Shelia Coyle and Cllr. Catherine Fitzgerald.*

**2. PLANNING UPDATE**

**CE Report on the Draft Local Digital Strategy**

AMCE gave a presentation on the Chief Executive's Report on the Public Consultation on the Draft Local Digital Strategy 2020 – 2024, a copy of which was issued to all Councillors.

AMCE informed the members that the consultation period was open for a four week period from 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020 to the 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020. Seven submissions were received within the timeframe which are outlined in the Appendix B of the report. AMCE outlined the details of the submissions and the proposal to amend the Draft Strategy to ensure that 3 objectives namely objective 4,5 and 10 are updated and amended.

PMCE asked that the Councillors be given additional time to read the CE Report

SC asked to open submissions to the wider social networks

CDS asked that the Council support and utilise the different digital platforms

TC stated that as Laois County Council do not have a publications/communications department, that the Council need to ensure that the public can make submissions, engage in the process and therefore documents need to be published and promoted digitally.

MS added that not all members of the public are digitally savvy and cannot be further isolated by just allowing digital publication and that documents would be published and advertised in the normal fashion also.

AMCE undertook to email the SPC members the CE report and to invite them to make further submissions before the October meeting of the Council.

JD outlined to the SPC members that he was arranging for speakers to attend the next SPC meeting to give presentations on affordable and private housing schemes and to open up discussions around Housing.

#### **Taking in charge Policy Review**

AMCE informed the SPC members that a draft issues paper regarding the Taking in Charge Policy (which requires to be updated to take into account the role of Irish Water), will be brought before the next SPC Meeting to be discussed.

#### **Urban Regeneration Strategy for Portarlinton**

The SPC members were presented with a briefing on the Urban Regeneration Strategy for Portarlinton, the process and procedures involved were outlined by AMCE the members were informed that Market House was in the ownership of Laois County Council and discussions are to take place on how to capitalise on this asset and how to appropriately regenerate the town. A boundary study will be undertaken and the strategy outlines a vision for a public realm and main street including the Derrynounce Lakes Trails to lead to the town. The study will outline the enhancement of enterprise and economic development in the town including the development of the river Barrow. This will be undertaken through Urban Regeneration funding and also Heritage funding streams.

Public consultation will be factored in during the course of the strategy, and the next step was to engage consultants in the coming weeks.

The December SPC meeting will allow for consultations with the SPC members and a draft Strategy is likely to be published by Quarter 1 2021.

TC stated it would be welcome in the Portarlinton area.

### **3. Housing & Environment Presentation on Waste Management**

Fionnula Daly, Senior Social Worker Housing Department outlined to the SPC members the work of the Estate Management Section within the Housing Department. There are currently 2,290 active tenancies and 72 Residents Associations. FD outlined the cost of the clean ups in the Council Housing Estates in 2018 and that both the Housing and Environment Department work together carrying out joint inspections of Council Estates.

40% of complaints to Estate Management are in relation to waste management, and letters have been issued to tenants in the past, requesting proof of their waste disposal. Staff of the Estate Management Section seek co-operation with the tenants and assist in the setting up of waste disposal services where issues such as mental health, disability, elderly etc. may be a barrier. The section also outlines to the tenant if there is a breach of tenancy, FD undertook to schedule more inspections and that a warrant of possession would be a final resort for tenants who refused to abide by waste management regulations.

#### **Liam Rabbitte Executive Scientist Environment Section**

LR gave a presentation to the SPC members regarding Waste Management and Anti Dumping initiatives undertaken. LR outlined the problems associated with areas that are prone to dumping whereby CCTV has been destroyed. He stated over 300 letters and 69 house calls were undertaken and a number of fixed penalty notices have been issued over the past year.

Housing & Environment will liaise on a weekly basis focusing on joint inspections in Quarter 4 2020. The Environment Department will target unauthorised collections depending on the resources available.

CDS recognized the work undertaken in the Housing estates and acknowledged that it is a minority of tenants in estates that are causing problems. CDS enquired if a bin could be provided and added to the tenant's weekly rent.

FCME enquired if an option could be provided to tenants to have the bill for waste management included in their rent and if there was a possibility of a pilot programme been run.

FD stated that it is not necessarily household waste which is causing the problems and more the larger household items, that from experience there is no guarantee that people will use bins even when provided.

MK advised that in his experience it was the same people re-offending, suggested that bin storage to the front of houses could be a proposal to be considered as this alerts other tenants in estates who do not have waste disposal facilities.

JD informed the members that he had contacted other Local Authorities regarding waste management in housing estates and including it as part of a rent subsidy. The Housing and Environment legislation are different and cannot be entwined in a tenancy agreement. Bin collections are only provided for in communal buildings such as apartment blocks. Whole scale collection is not an option.

JD committed to developing a draft document regarding a possible pilot scheme approach.

CDS stated that the development of O'Moore Place would improve problems in the estate and enquired if an amnesty for sofas/mattress can be undertaken next year.

JD informed the members that bulk collection would be up to the Environmental Department.

SC outlined that Laois County Council have taken over Kyletelsha with improvements been made, however there are no receipts provided to show waste disposal. LR to enquire with the landfill office.

#### 4. HOUSING UPDATE

TH gave an overview of the current Housing Programme, stating that maintenance requests have increased, with over 600 requests received from July to August. There is a prioritisation of the work with emergency and urgent jobs been undertaken initially. TH outlined that there was 62 properties re-let since January 2020 and currently there is 26 properties in the process to be re-let. TH briefly outlined the amount of private and social grants approved to date and gave an update on the capital and Approved Housing Bodies schemes being developed.

CDS enquired regarding the amount of social housing grant applications that are currently on hand. TH advised that there are 57 including housing extensions, and outlined the amount of funding available for these grant applications. TH stated that the tender for an Occupational Therapist has closed and members will be informed when an appointment is made.

TC enquired if there was a possibility of transferring monies from private to social grants,

JD outlined the amount of funding received in respect of social housing and that there is a priority list in place for Quarter 1 2021. However that funding will be used in that quarter and the Housing Department will be applying for additional funding.  
CDS enquired as to increasing the budget at the end of the year for the Housing department

TC advised that the Minister for Housing be requested to meet regarding financing of social housing grants.

PME requested that any project that the OT states needs to be completed should be prioritised.

5. **AOB**

FD outlined that the Homeless Section currently have 10 in emergency accommodation. Clonmore Hotel is now ceased as a B&B and all emergency accommodation tenants have been relocated and accommodated with Housing associations

PMCE enquire if the Housing Department have purchased houses in Clonaslée  
JD advised that housing has been purchased all over the county including Clonaslée.

CDS stated that a Housing update report was provided to all members in the past and could this be implemented again. TH agreed that a bi annual report can be provided and that all information is available in the Management monthly report.

TC enquired regarding Anti Social Behaviour Problems in some housing estates. FD advised that a warrant can be granted but it depends on the court, policing by An Garda Síochána is the key as the Local Authorities do not have the power to police.



JD stated that the Housing Department are governed by legislation for anti social behaviour and not criminal behaviour.

TC to raise the issue at the Joint Policing Committee

6. **ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT - SPC MEETING**

Provisional Date for the next SPC to be issued to the members

This concluded the Business of the meeting

Signed:    
Chairperson Senior Planner  
Housing, Regeneration and Planning

Date: 2nd December 2020