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**Strategic Policy Committee – Housing, Regeneration & Planning**

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**Minutes of Meeting  
held on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021  
at Portlaoise Parish Centre**

- 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 Michael Cobbe, (MC)  
Ms Sheelagh Coyle (SC)
- In attendance:** Ms Angela McEvoy (AMCE), A/Director of Services, Housing and Planning, Ms. Georgina Ireland (GI) Senior Executive Officer Housing, Ms Nicola Lawler (NL), Administrative Officer Housing, Mr. Trevor Hennessy (TH), A/Senior Engineer Housing, Ms. Fionnuala Daly (FD), Senior Social Worker Housing, Mr David O’Hara (DOH), A/Senior Planner, Mr Brian Ward (BW) Staff Officer Housing.
- Apologies:** Ms Mary Sweeney, M.C.C. (MS)  
Mr Paschal McEvoy M.C.C. (PMCE)  
Mr Michael Kelly (MK)
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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 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021, which was proposed by Cllr Caroline Dwane Stanley and Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald.*

**2. DRAFT HERITAGE AND BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY 2021-2026**

AMCE gave a presentation on the Laois Heritage & Biodiversity Strategy 2021-2026. The new Strategy will continue the previous plan’s holistic approach and emphasise the integrated approach of LCC’s heritage service. The Strategy includes updated objectives due to changing environmental policy and investment. Annual Action Plans will be devised and published each year based on the aims and objectives of the Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy.

AMCE detailed the timetable of preparing the Strategy. It went to Public Consultation in 2020 which received almost 200 responses.

In May 2021, LCC appointed People.Place Consulting to assist with writing of the Strategy and consultation on the plan. In June and July 2021, workshops were held with Laois Heritage Forum. Following its presentation to the SPC, it will go on public consultation in October/November 2021. A report on submissions will be presented to the SPC at the next meeting and will go with the SPC's recommendation, before the full Council in December for adoption.

MC asked what could be done about National Monuments surrounded by private land where the owners are denying access. AMCE stated that LCC would try to work in partnership with the landowners but not much could be done unless the land was purchased, and access was provided and funding would have to be sourced to do this.

The Strategy was proposed for Public Consultation by Cllr Dwane Stanley and seconded by Cllr Fitzgerald.

### **3. LAOIS COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE:**

AMCE gave update on the Laois County Development Plan Review process . The Chief Executive's Report on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage of Public Consultation was prepared and circulated to Members of Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021 which detailed the 154 submissions received. The report and submissions were considered by the elected Members on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021. A number of amendments were made and published on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2021. The proposed Material Amendments were published on [www.consult.laois.ie](http://www.consult.laois.ie) until the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021. Only submissions on the amendments to the Plan can be made. Following this, the Chief Executive's Report on the final stage of consultation will be prepared and circulated to the Elected Members in November. The process will be concluded at a Council meeting in December 2021 and will come into effect in January 2022.

### **4. STRADBALLY ROAD (TYRELLS) MASTERPLAN – PRESENTATION – LUC CONSULTANTS**

AMCE introduced Emily Beedham (EB), Principal Landscape Architect, of Land Use Consultants Ltd, who gave a presentation on the Stradbally Road Masterplan.

EB outlined the Project Work stages which is currently at the 'Further Stakeholder and Community Consultation' Stage. EB described the main findings of the initial public consultation and detailed the Residential Proposals, Open Space Proposals and Active Community Zone Proposals within the Strategic Landbank.

TC stated that the Masterplan is open for submissions on [www.consult.laois.ie](http://www.consult.laois.ie) and on display in the library and at the Council Offices. TC queried what the difference was between submissions that were made initially and the submissions that can be made presently. AMCE stated that that submissions being made now will be responding to what is on display in the Masterplan and initial submissions were related to what people would like to see included in it.

AMCE advised that the closing date for submissions is the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2021. After this date, the project working group will go through the submissions received and a Chief Executive's Report will be prepared in response to the submissions and any changes to the Masterplan will be proposed. The CE report and amended Masterplan will be considered further by the elected members of the Portlaoise MD. This is a non-statutory plan and requires no formal adoption but would require endorsement by the elected members.

## **5. NAMING OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS AND COMMEMORATIONS POLICY**

AMCE advised that a review of the Placenames Policy was required to deal with the naming of infrastructure.

LCC has a Placenames Committee which deals with the naming of new housing estates in Laois only and it was decided by Management that only one committee should be tasked with the naming of infrastructure, housing estates, etc as the need arises.

In terms of the functions of the committee, it is proposed that:

- The naming of estates and residential developments will be a function of the Placenames Committee;
- The naming of roads will go through the committee and then on to the Municipal District and;
- The naming of critical infrastructure will go through the Committee and then on to full Council.

It will be managed and administered through the Planning Section.

The Committee is proposed to be made up of 2 Elected Members per MD, a member from the PPN and a member from the Laois Heritage Society, the Senior Planner and the Senior Engineer of the section that is bringing the proposal forward. There are application forms that can be completed and submitted to the Committee. The Policy will be going before the Roads SPC and onto the October Council Meeting.

TC asked that if a monument is being commissioned, is not already named. AMCE advised that this policy relates to roads and infrastructure only.

MC asked who ensures that names of estates are displayed. AMCE stated that this should be dealt with it at the Taking in Charge stage and that she will discuss with MC in relation to particular instances where the names are not on display in Portarlington.

## 6. HOUSING UPDATE

TH gave update on Maintenance: Over 2,600 work orders have been raised since the start of the year and approximately 2,300 have been closed.

In relation to relets, 79 sets of keys have been handed back to LCC since the start of the year, 71 of which were LCC's own tenants and 8 were acquisitions. 62 have been completed and 59 properties are vacant (47 surrenders and 12 acquisitions). A NOAC report detailed that LCC's average relet time is 18 weeks, which places them at 4<sup>th</sup> best in the country.

The contracts for the first phase of the Retrofitting Programme have been awarded for 62 units at Quigley Park and Mountain View. Contractors should be appointed within weeks for Phase 2 and Phase 3 and should be on the ground before Christmas.

Tenders are currently out for the retrofitting at the 31 units at O'Moore Place and are due back in 3 weeks.

Private rented inspections and HAP inspections are taking place again.

In relation to Capital schemes, there are currently 5 LCC schemes (49 units) onsite, 2 of which are due to be completed at the end of the year and 2 turnkey schemes on site (9 units). There are 10 schemes consisting of 170 units that are at various Department approval stages. There are also 3 turnkey schemes consisting of 54 units awaiting Department approval.

NL gave update on the AHBs: 70 units have completed in 7 different developments this year to date. There are 7 developments that are on site that will yield 185 units. There are a further 3 schemes that have been submitted to the Department for approval that will lead to 151 units. 406 units will be delivered up until the end of 2023.

CF raised the issue of First Time Buyers being priced out of the market due to AHB's buying housing stock and that policy should be looked at so not to support AHB's buying up every development that comes available. NL advised that LCC looks at the location and density of social housing in the area before providing support to AHB's. Also, a Sustainable Communities Report is prepared for any development in excess of 30 units. LCC does not support all AHB proposals. AMCE advised that this matter will be covered at an upcoming Housing for All in-committee meeting with the elected members in October.

CDS stated that LCC should be building to provide Social Housing and that there should be a mix of Affordable Housing, Cost Rental Housing and Social Housing. CDS also stated that the projected expected numbers were not realistic. She also asked for a quarterly report be prepared showing what units are due to be delivered. GI advised that LCC is building in other areas of the county.

CDS raised the issue concerning the bad condition of a house provided by an AHB that was tenanted three weeks ago. She believed that the AHB is not prepared to put the money into bringing the property up to standard. CDS said that there should be contact in each AHB for Councillors to contact

in relation to these issues. GI asked for the details so that the complaint can be addressed to the AHB. FD also advised that AHB properties are subject to Private Rent Inspections and that the issue can also be raised on the AHB Forum.

FD gave update on homeless presentations. There are 17 households in B&B and hostel accommodation – 15 are single and 2 are families. She advised that 40 Notices to Quit would likely be received in November.

LCC has exceeded its targets of 37 in two years in the Traveller Accommodation Programme in delivering houses.

FD advised that a Draft of the Housing Disability Strategy has been prepared and is currently with the Housing Agency and will be brought before the next SPC meeting and the December Council Meeting. There are currently 250 applicants with disabilities on the Housing List.

CF asked that LCC could get properties with downstairs bedrooms under Part V agreements with developers. CDS asked if the 4-bedroom need could be looked at as there are currently 50 on the Housing List with a 4-bedroom need.

#### 7. DATE OF NEXT SPC MEETING

The next SPC Meeting will take place on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

#### 8. AOB

None

This concluded the Business of the meeting.

Signed: *Sharon O'Connell*  
Chairperson

*Roopina Ireland*  
Senior Executive Officer  
Housing, Regeneration and Planning

Date: *30<sup>th</sup> November 2021*