

Housing, Community & Environment SPC
Minutes of Meeting Held on Thursday 11th December 2014 at 11:00 am,
Wexford County Council

In Attendance

Chairman: Cllr Fergie Kehoe

Elected Representatives: Cllr. David Hynes; Cllr. Anthony Kelly; Cllr. Joe Sullivan;
Cllr. John Fleming; Cllr. Mary Farrell; Cllr. John
O'Rourke; Cllr. Fionntan O'Suilleabhain;
Cllr. Oliver Walsh

Sectoral:

Representative(s): Farming Group – Mr Alan Poole

Wexford County Council:

John Carley, Director of Services; Liz Hore, Senior Housing
Officer; Fionnuala Hanrahan, County Librarian; Ger Mackey,
Administrative Officer, Martina Donohue, Administrative Officer;
Michelle Bridges-Carley, Senior Staff Officer.

Chairman, Cllr. Fergie Kehoe welcomed the members of the Strategic Policy Committee and wished everyone a Happy Christmas. It was explained that the other sectoral members had yet to be nominated from their groups. It was expected that the full complement should be represented by the next SPC meeting in 2015.

1. Agree Programme 2015

The Director outlined the priorities of the SPC for the work programme for 2015:

- Housing Strategy 2015 details of which Senior Housing Officer would discuss further in her presentation.
- Waste Plan – Southern Region; a presentation will be given to the members including the future of Holmestown. Gerry Forde of Environment is currently preparing a paper for 2015 in relation to this policy area. It was agreed on the proposal of the Chairman to host the next SPC meeting at Holmestown to include a site visit of the facility.
- Sanitary Bye-laws – need to examine range of policy.
- Arts Policy – A review is underway and consultants had been appointed recently. If members were aware of individuals or groups that may benefit with this engagement they can contact Fionnuala Hanrahan, County Librarian.
- Director further discussed literacy and numeracy issues and the need to address third level participation. The Library Service will prepare a plan, working with the various stakeholders and will be bringing this plan to the next SPC.

2. Housing Strategy 2020 – Pathways to Housing

Liz Hore – Senior Housing Officer (SHO) gave a presentation on the new Social Housing Strategy 2020. The key points were:

There is to be a major investment programme in social housing, 3.8 billion over 6 years, with an estimated new build of 35,000 units. The Strategy comprised of 3 key Pillars, Supply, Support and Reform.

The SHO stated the Housing Department welcomed the strategy and that Wexford County Council would maximise any funding opportunity to provide homes for families.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is to replace rent supplement in the long term. It will be introduced on a phased basis. WCC will act as a co-ordinating agency and will promote a customer focus. HAP should assist in the removal of a poverty trap as it will remain in place if people avail of employment opportunities. Housing will organise a briefing for members on the scheme before it becomes operational in the County.

There is a forthcoming new National Differential Rent Scheme due to commence in July 2015. It will eliminate major differences between counties. In addition there will be a new Tenant Purchase Scheme, based on the incremental purchase model.

The next step is for WCC to develop a County Housing Strategy, taking into account the national strategy and tailoring a response to the housing need in County Wexford. The SPC will review and approve the Strategy in 2015. A number of queries were raised by the members and responded to by the Director and SHO.

3. Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan(LECP) Presentation

Ger Mackey, Administrative Officer gave an overview and background to the Plan. He outlined the context of the plan, underpinned by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, providing Local Authorities with a stronger and clearer role in Economic and Community Development. The Plan is integrated and is over a six year period and it will be adopted by WCC as reserved function.

The Plan has three high level goals; Community & Development, Social Exclusion, Marginalised Communities. The Goals set must be achievable. The Goals should be specific measurable objectives which will be supported by practical time bound actions.

WCC is at the first stage of preparation. Local Authorities should be informed by good quality information and to this end WCC has engaged NUI Maynooth in collating baseline data for County Wexford. WCC will set up an Advisory Steering Group to assist.

4. Planned Maintenance Programme

A report of the Planned Maintenance Programme 2015 was circulated to members of the SPC. This programme will be discussed at all the Municipal District meetings. The programme is a result of a survey of priority of needs which was carried out on all local authority estates. Chairman: Enquired if the programme the old Town Council areas

5. Grants 2015

Report on Housing Grants 2015 was circulated to members of the Group.

The Housing Grants Scheme is seen as a key social measure targeting the more vulnerable members of society. The Grants Scheme promotes independent living, allowing individuals to remain in their own homes. Following national budget reduction to local authorities, WCC approved the prioritisation of limited resources to people with a disability and kept applications open under the disability and mobility grants measure.

Following a review of the progress made on the waiting list for Housing for Older People it was approved by the SPC to reopen the grants scheme for HOPS in 2015 in line with the recommendations of the report. The scheme will be dependent on the funding allocated from the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and will be matched with a 20% contribution by Wexford County Council

Proposed by: Cllr Oliver Walsh Seconded by: Cllr John O'Rourke

6. Any Other Business

The Director proposed future dates for SPC meetings for 2015 on the first Tuesday of months in question at 2:30,

February

April

June

July

September

November

The first meeting in 2015 to be held on Tuesday 3rd February 2015 at 2.30pm in Holmestown following a guided tour of the facility.