

Planning Strategic Policy Committee Minutes of Meeting 5th March, 2015

In the Chair: Cllr Jim Moore

Present: Cllr Tony Dempsey, Cllr Anthony Donohoe, Cllr Robert Ireton, Mr Anthony Neville, Cllr Oisín O'Connell, Mr Tony Larkin, Director of Service, Mr Diarmuid Houston, Senior Planner, Mr Tony Nolan, Administrative Officer, Ms Caroline Creane, Staff Officer,

Apologies: Cllr Malcolm Byrne and Mr Ned Lyng

The chairman, Cllr Jim Moore welcomed everyone to the meeting. As Mr Anthony Neville, nominee from the South East Branch of the Construction Industry Federation is in attendance for his first SPC meeting everyone introduced themselves.

Minutes and Matters Arising

On the proposal of Cllr Robert Ireton and seconded by Cllr Tony Dempsey the minutes of the SPC meeting held on 12th December, 2014 were approved by the members.

A brief discussion took place around the payment of property tax on houses within an unfinished estate. It was noted that Revenue will not allow a councillor to act on behalf of a householder unless that person is present with them during representations. A query arose around which estates are classed as 'unfinished' and if Riverchapel Lane is on that list. Mr Diarmuid Houston, Senior Planner agreed to look into same.

Derelict Sites

A Derelict Sites Policy document was circulated to the meeting for discussion. Mr Tony Nolan outlined the key responsibilities of Wexford County Council:-

- To maintain a derelict sites register which records all details of derelict sites within its functional area.
- The local authority must take reasonable steps to ensure that any land should not become derelict.
- A derelict site notice is served on the owner or occupier of land requiring the carrying out of specified works required to stop the site being derelict or from becoming derelict.
- A local Authority may compulsorily acquire any derelict site situate within their functional area.
- A derelict sites levy of 3% may be applied on sites within an 'urban' area as specified by Ministerial Order.

It was noted that there are currently 55 derelict sites in the County and 22 of these have incurred a levy. A list of 'urban' areas is attached to the discussion document (Appendix 1) these are the areas in which WCC can apply a derelict site levy. Enniscorthy has been very proactive within the past few years. It is a very slow process, emphasis is given to the key inner town areas and tourist routes. The meeting was informed that Wexford town and Gorey does not have much dereliction. A discussion took place around the timeframe of rectifying a derelict site, if the owner/occupier complies with the derelict site notice it could

take a few months if not, it could take up to 18 months. The local authority can acquire derelict sites by CPO.

It was agreed that at the next meeting areas would be identified to be prioritised, a map showing tourist areas was attached to the discussion document, 3-4 sites could be used as a model. This is to be discussed further. Also at the next meeting it was agreed to discuss when an unfinished estate become a derelict site.

A short discussion took place on the dangerous houses recently knocked down in Ballycanew, WCC expended €20,000 on these sites. It was noted that if a site is derelict and planning permission is sought then the planning contributions can be waived or reduced if its on the derelict sites register.

Planning Activity Report 2014

The Senior Planner outlined the main points of the circulated 'Planning Report 2014':-

- 82% planning permission grant rate for 2014
- Built Heritage Jobs Leverage Grant Scheme 2014 generated 1681 employment days, received government grant aid to the value of €161,000.20 and the cost of the projects were €387,219.17
- WCC Conservation Small Grant Scheme 2014 generated €235,373 worth of works
- WCC received funding of €483,135 under the Special Resolution fund benefiting nine estates throughout the county

A brief discussion took place around solar panel parks and whether there is a policy for same. The Senior Planner told the meeting that there is no policy nationally or in the UK. It was discussed whether WCC should take the lead in develop a policy.

Building Control

A brief synopsis of 'Building Control (Amendment) Regulation 2014' was circulated to the meeting. It was noted that the cost is a major issue for people, on average a one-off house could cost between €3,500 - €8,500 to be certified. The members discussed the new certification procedure, it was noted that it may put small businesses out of work, its adding additional cost to the build, it cuts out self-built houses. In the UK every stage is inspected by the Council.

It was noted that the only power that Wexford County Council have is to check the records of the materials used in the build. It was discussed if Wexford County Council should start preparing a submission on the building control regulations and to organise a meeting with the Minister to discuss.

The Director agreed to draw up a draft submission and it will be emailed to the SPC members to ask for feedback. If necessary, an emergency SPC meeting will be called to discuss this issue further.

A further discussion took place about the new regulations and the following was noted in relation to the UK system which works well:-

- Private industry can certify.
- All drawings would be compliant to regulations.
- Level playing field for construction

- 14 stages and checked at each stage
- All materials are certified

It was noted that The Construction Industry Federation want the same system of building control certification in Ireland as in the UK. The certification of drawings has changed here and the range of cost is a problem. Homebond are going to fix the fees at €3,000 for the assigned certification of a house and this will be launched at the end of March. They will also monitor the build of the house.

Supporting Rural Communities

It was agreed to identify 1 or 2 villages and look into these to use as a pilot / model, possible areas discussed were Screen and / or Kilmore Villages.

Unfinished Housing Estates

Following on from the last SPC meeting a few items were discussed in relation to unfinished housing estates:-

- There are developer installed sewerage schemes throughout the county that are malfunctioning, the engineers are looking into finding the best solution on how to deal with them and Wexford County Council are stepping in to do the work and will look for Government funding for same.
- Irish Water won't take these systems over.
- In relation to public lighting, WCC hired someone to identify the problems / issues outstanding.
- Bond money is being used to rectify estates and the Building Control Engineers are focusing on the more difficult estates at the moment.

Schedule of Meetings 2015

It was agreed to identify dates for the SPC meetings for 2015, they will be held in the Block A downstairs meeting room, meeting to start at 10.45am preceded by tea/coffee in room at 10.15am details as follows:-

- Thursday, 4th June, 2015
- Thursday, 3rd September, 2015
- Thursday, 10th December, 2015

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: 
Chairman

Dated: 18th June 2015

Planning Strategic Policy Committee Minutes of Meeting 18th June, 2015

In the Chair: Cllr Jim Moore

Present: Cllr Tony Dempsey, Cllr Anthony Donohoe, Cllr Willie Fitzharris, Cllr Oisín O'Connell, Mr Tony Larkin, Director of Service, Mr Diarmuid Houston, Senior Planner, Mr Tony Nolan, Administrative Officer, Mr Sean Kavanagh, Senior Executive Engineer and Ms Caroline Creane, Staff Officer,

Apologies: Cllr Robert Ireton, Mr Anthony Neville, Cllr Malcolm Byrne and Mr Ned Lyng

Minutes and Matters Arising

On the proposal of Cllr Tony Dempsey and seconded by Cllr Anthony Donohoe the minutes of the SPC meeting held on 5th March, 2015 were approved by the members.

Building Control Exemptions

The Information Document No 2 published by the Dept of Environment, Community and Local Government was circulated to the meeting. The Senior Planner took note of the views of the SPC members and will coordinate them to the department. The Senior Executive Engineer focused on the questions on page 13 of the document and his report on same was circulated and discussed.

It was noted that there are 180 commencement notices in at the moment. The relationship between completion certificates (Building Control) and compliance certificates (Planning) was discussed in terms of the respective roles. A completion certificate for building control does not equate to compliance with planning permission.

A draft for consultation only 02/04/2015 copy of "*Sample Preliminary Inspection plan for single unit dwelling on a single development*" was passed around at the meeting, it will be emailed to each member after the meeting. It was

noted that there is no formal process to regularise a development if a commencement notice was not lodged.

A brief discussion took place around the Disable Access Cert (DAC) fee which is currently €800, it is the same for every build large or small. However, the Minister announced last week that there is new relief where a fire cert and a DAC are required and the fee will be reduced to €500 for both.

As the building regulations are complex people need access to good professional advice cheaply and to a person who will be accountable for the build. A discussion took place around the self-build house which affects people more in rural areas. At the moment the role of the assigned certifier is a chartered Architect, Engineer and Surveyor but the view was expressed that it should be expanded to include appropriate competent persons eg architectural and building technicians with a relevant diploma or cert. The view was also expressed that a penalty ought to be introduced that would penalise bad / erroneous

certification. It was noted that consideration could also be given to striking off an assigned certifier where they are found not to be competent.

Taking-in-Charge

A brief discussion took place around the role of Irish Water in the taking-in-charge process. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed on behalf of Wexford County Council and other councils which define the relationship between Irish Water and the Local Authority going forward. A number of estates have been put through the taking-in-charge process but the MOU protocols will be assigned to every other estate going forward.

The Senior Executive Engineer informed the meeting that Wexford County Council has no budget to complete estates that are not up to taking-in-charge standard. At the moment priority is given to estates where the sewerage systems are not working as opposed to footpaths / lighting issues. It was noted that bond money is being used to rectify estates.

Planning Activity Report

The recently launched booklet "Access For All – Gardens, Parks & Community Spaces" and the "Planning Activity Report – May 2015" were circulated to the meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the SPC is due to take place on Thursday, 3rd September, 2015 it was agreed to have tea/coffee in the meeting room at 10.30am and the meeting is to start promptly afterwards. It was agreed to circulate all reports at least one week prior to the meeting.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: James Ryan
Chairman

Dated: 4th Sept 2015

Planning Strategic Policy Committee Minutes of Meeting 4th September, 2015

In the Chair: Cllr Jim Moore

Present: Cllr Robert Ireton, Cllr Willie Fitzharris, Cllr Oisín O'Connell, Mr Anthony Neville, Mr Tony Larkin, Director of Service, Mr Diarmuid Houston, Senior Planner, Mr Tony Nolan, Administrative Officer,

Apologies: Cllr Tony Dempsey, Cllr Malcolm Byrne, Mr Sean Kavanagh.

Minutes and Matters Arising

On the proposal of Cllr Willie Fitzharris and seconded by Cllr Jim Moore the minutes of the SPC meeting held on 18th June, 2015 were approved by the members.

The reduction in fees for Disabled Access Certificates was revisited as were matters relating to Taking in Charge and Irish Water. The meeting was advised that the DAC fee would not normally be applied to small scale adaptations to improve accessibility. It was agreed that a synopsis of the taking in charge position would be issued to the members of the S.P.C. The meeting further clarified the relationship between Irish Water and the Local Authority and the function / role of the Memorandum of Understanding within the taking in charge process.

Urban Regeneration and Housing Bill 2015

The meeting was advised of the content of the Act by D. Houston Senior Planner.

The changes in legislation which included changes in the calculation of contributions, amendments to the Part V (Social and Affordable housing) elements of the Planning Act and the introduction of a Vacant Sites Levy were highlighted and formed the basis of a discussion to which all members contributed.

The meeting queried the impact of the changes to the contribution scheme and the consensus view was that this would be difficult to assess in terms of loss of income (if any) to the Council. The establishment of a quantum in respect of the above was considered and may require the allocation of not insignificant resources from planning to assess.

The meeting expressed the view that small infill building projects may be incentivised as a result of the changes to the requirements of Part V.

It was agreed that copies of the relevant legislation together with explanatory notes would be issued to the S.P.C. members

Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2015.

The meeting was appraised of the content of the new regulations i.e. the establishment of a process within the regulatory building control framework to exempt self build and Extensions from the requirement for Certification. The implications of these amendments formed the basis of a discussion to which all members contributed and the views expressed were wide ranging and varied in terms of support for the amendments or otherwise with the perceived dilution of the regulatory requirements presenting as a source of concern.

It was agreed that copies of the relevant legislation together with explanatory notes would be issued to the S.P.C. members

Planning Activity Report

The meeting was presented with a report on Planning activity

Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of the SPC was not decided.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: 
Chairman

Dated: 10th Feb 2016.