Housing & Community SPC
Minutes of Meeting 7th June 2023

In the Chair: Cllr Joe Sullivan

Present: Mr William Considine, Cllr Jim Codd, Cllr Fionntán O'Suilleabháin, Cllr Frank Staples, Cllr Joe Sullivan, Mr Michael Wall, Ms Carolyne Godkin Director of Service, Ms Michele Bridges-Carley AO Housing, Ms Kelly Nolan CO Housing, Mr Shay Howell SEA Housing, Ms Sinead Casey Senior Engineer, Ms Amanda Byrne SEO Human Resources

Apologies:

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes & Matters arising

The minutes of the SPC meeting dated 19th April 2023 were approved on the proposal of Cllr Jim Codd and seconded by Cllr Fionntán O'Suilleabháin.

Deputation of Firefighters from the Fire Services

The Director of Service issued an invitation to the Chief Fire Officer approximately 1 week ago. No response was received. This invitation will be re-issued. Cllr Jim Codd welcomed that the invite be re-issued but feels that it would have been liked if it was issued sooner than a week ago.

Cllr Jim Codd thinks that an invitation should be extended for a special meeting, scheduled sooner than the next Housing & Community SPC. Cllr Frank Staples queried if time could be given at the next full meeting. The Director of Service will ask for a date that would suit the Fire Services and would be agreeable to call the SPC.

Mr Michael Wall feels that this is not the place to discuss pay and working conditions. Cllr Joe Sullivan feels that we need to get behind them and support them if their pay and working conditions are not good. "Operational Plan" was the issue to be discussed at the SPC.

Director of Service - Framework/Plan is a 5-year plan brought by executive to the SPC. Information & Education piece to be provided for the members of the SPC.

Cllr Frank Staples had user experience with the Fire Services recently and when he spoke with them, they were very frustrated. Mr William Considine states that it never hurts to give people a hearing.

Housing Capital Build Programme

The Senior Executive Architect gave an overview of how all projects are processing. They are currently looking for sites to buy to add to the programme, but this is difficult as many sites have no services. Sites must have access to services, demand and need.

There are 3 Design Build Projects at present. They are located in Gorey, Wexford and New Ross.

The Senior Executive Architect is currently engaging with other Local Authorities regarding framework and documentation required.

Competitive Dialogue – went to Cork City and met with those delivering through this method.

Currently meeting and exceeding commitments and this is a good pipeline which is delivering.

Cllr Frank Staples asked about the progress of the 2nd phase of Rosetown. The Senior Executive Architect reports that the builder is now onsite. There is difficulty with getting Irish Water to deliver services in where we have land and need.

Cllr Fionntán O'Suilleabháin asked:

1. There is anything that can be done to put pressure on Irish Water to put smaller areas on their work programme

2. The delay in delivery of affordable projects seems to be nationwide as a lot of counties seem to have the same target date in 2025.

Senior Executive Architect responded:

1. Wexford County Council are annually requested by Irish Water to provide them with our top 6 areas. We keep in touch with Irish Water and keep on identifying land.

2. Cllr Fionntán O'Suilleabháin queried if there were more staff in housing, would this help to reduce timeframes. Senior Executive Architect advised that if there were more staff, they would be as busy as the existing staff, certain projects may be delivered a bit quicker.

Mr William Considine queried reed beds and willow beds as he has experience in with his project re. willow beds in Duncormick and feels that Wexford County Council doesn't like willow beds. He is reporting back that they do work and for it to be noted. He suggests that a review of this should be done as it may support the acceptance of willow beds.

Cllr Jim Codd is very heartened to hear what Mr William Considine has said. Areas such as Wellingtonbridge, Taghmon, Duncormick and Ballycogley all require 7, 8 or 9 houses and rural communities are dying. Cllr Jim Codd proposes that someone should attend the next meeting to give an update on how willows work. This was seconded by Cllr Fionntán O'Suilleabháin.

The Director of Service said she will speak to our environmental scientist to prepare an information session for SPC.

Mr William Considine states that the only maintenance required is that 3 rows are planted and 1 row is cut back every year.

A short discussion took place about the rising popularity of modular homes, Cllr Jim Codd has asked if the council have taken any steps to look into this type of housing. Senior Executive Architect states that the council do consider all types of housing mechanisms and he would be happy to speak with anyone on this matter. There are concerns regarding building regulations and energy consumption. They also still require land and streetlights. It could be challenging disposing of these homes when turning them into long-term housing. Cllr Jim Codd expressed concerns about the

expense and shortage of housing. He reports that caravans are coming in through Rosslare daily and people are living in them.

Cllr Fionntán O'Suilleabháin has heard of a number of modular houses being built in Limerick through Peter McVerry, the quality of these houses compared to old prefabs is more advanced using modern technology. The houses have been built for Ukranians in Limerick and in 3 years' time they will be used for social housing.

Cllr Joe Sullivan enquired how many social houses have been delivered in the last 4 years. Every county council needs to beef up their housing. Director of Service reports that 1,497 houses have been provided through a variety of schemes. Housing staff have dedicated a lot of time to AHB's, pricing, inflation, Irish Water and land availability are all contributing issues.

Cllr Jim Codd adds that there is also 28 people looking for 1 house in rural villages. He would like an update on the field in Taghmon. Director of Service says that the housing agency are happy to go for planning. Respond will submit an application and the sports club will submit plans. When there is a date for submission, she will update Councillors. Respond will look at a phased delivery and review the demand after the first phase. These units will predominantly consist of 1 and 2 beds and have ground floor access for special needs. 1 bed units are currently 1/3 of our demand. Director of Service suggested a site visit to one of our 1 bed units to see that the standard and design of these units are very high.

Mr William Considine suggested that during the design stage, units could be built in such a way that you could plug on a second bedroom. Director of Service advised that this is due to planning density – she would disagree with the principles, but it is not really practical. Cllr Jim Codd feels that 1 bed units will lead to isolation, a young person will accept it, but the older person will become sickly. He would like the life cycle to be reviewed.

Cllr Jim Codd has motions that Wexford County Council builds nothing smaller than 2 bed accommodation. This motion was seconded by Cllr Fionntán O'Suilleabháin.

Cllr Frank Staples accepts what Cllr Jim Codd but wouldn't agree with completely stopping it.

Any other business

Cllr Fionntán O'Suilleabháin feels that the Bi-Centenary programme of events are very heavily south-based. He knows it is up to local areas to organise their local events and that there is nothing in the Gorey area. Would there be supports available for local groups if they came forward? Director of Service advises that this is not within her remit, she thinks it is facilitated through planning, she will pass it on.

Cllr Jim Codd requested an update for the move of property for the lady in Taghmon. Is there a start date for the building extension? The Director of Service proposed alternative accommodation, she can provide him with a timeframe for the technical delivery and will seek an update.

Next Meeting

The next SPC meeting is Wednesday, 6th September 2023.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____

Chairman

Dated: _____