# Housing & Community SPC
## Minutes of Meeting 11th November 2021

**In the Chair:** Cllr Joe Sullivan

**Present:** Mr William Considine, Cllr Jim Codd, Cllr Lisa McDonald, Cllr John O'Rourke, Cllr Fionntán O'Suilleabháin, Mr Michael Wall, Ms Carolyne Godkin A/Director of Service, Ms Martina Donoghue AO Housing, Ms Michele Bridges-Carley AO Housing, Ms Liz Burns Arts Officer, Ms Linda Curtin Screen Wexford, Ms Eileen Morrissey County Librarian and Ms Caroline Creane SSO Housing

**Apologies:** Cllr Frank Staples

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

The Committee extended sympathy to Breda O'Sullivan on the passing of her husband, Larry.

## Minutes

The minutes of the SPC meeting dated 26th May 2021 were approved on the proposal of Cllr John O'Rourke and seconded by Cllr Fionntán O'Suilleabháin.

## Housing for All Programme

The Acting Director gave a presentation to the meeting on the Housing for All programme. She informed the meeting that the new housing plan was launched on 2nd September 2021 and that the aim was that *'Everyone in the State should have access to a home to purchase or rent at an affordable price, built to a high standard and in the right place, offering a high quality of life'*. It was noted that the plan outlines 4 pathways to achieve the objectives and it contains 213 actions.

At present in Wexford, there have been 1,088 units delivered from 2018 to date in 2021; with a further 840 units in the pipeline and 580 units under consideration. The 5yr social housing target under the plan is 1,150. A housing delivery action plan is to be submitted to the Dept by 17th December 2021.

A lengthy discussion took place on the plan and other housing matters. It was noted that additional resources may be necessary to deliver the programme. There are plans for a full time Vacant Homes Officer. It was noted that a number of housing staff have transferred to other positions and their vacancies filled by temporary staff members. The Director noted that staffing under the workforce plan is adequate when all staff are in work but the Covid pandemic has been challenging.

A short discussion took place on the homeless unit and the members welcomed the inclusion of Social Care Workers. It was noted that they will have more interaction with the clients and work out in the communities.

## Traveller Accommodation Programme

The Housing AO presented the progress report on the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024. Wexford County Council have committed to providing 100 accommodation units

(20 per year) within the lifetime of the programme. The target between July 2019 to end of October 2021 is 47 units and, to date, 42 traveller families have been accommodated. It is worth noting that in 2021 five accommodation offers were also refused.

A brief discussion took place about the Equality Review in respect of Traveller-specific accommodation published by The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission which made 9 recommendations, it was noted that most of these are national issues. In Wexford only 4% of Traveller families are currently seeking traveller specific accommodation. If they opt for general social housing supports, this cannot be funded from the traveller funding allocation.

## Adverse Weather Homeless Protocol

The Homeless Co-ordinator informed the members of the Adverse Weather Homeless Protocol which becomes operational in the event of a severe weather alert being issued by Met Eireann or a temperature of 0° or lower predicted.

She informed the meeting that two Social Care workers have been employed on contract and they have proved invaluable to the Homeless Services and Support Unit (HSSU). They are experienced in dealing with homeless clients, particularly clients who have difficulty engaging with services. The Social Care Worker develops a care plan specific to each client. They work with the client on an ongoing basis and link them in with other relevant service providers, with a view to regularising their housing situation.

A short discussion took place on housing applicants who do not qualify for services in Wexford. It was noted that when clients are referred to their own Local Authority, Wexford County Council covers their travel cost. Also, contact is made with the relevant Local Authority in advance.

A lengthy discussion took place on a number of other housing issues, including the HSSU being centralised, the lack of private rented properties in Wexford and Gorey and the HAP levels in County Wexford.

## Screen Wexford

The Screen Wexford Co-ordinator gave a presentation to the meeting, she outlined the mission of Screen Wexford and spoke about the key activities. They aim to fund local projects to encourage and support new filmmakers. Screen Wexford in collaboration with other WCC depts will deliver new training initiatives and events to develop the local file sector in Co Wexford. To date they have rolled out 4 training initiative and a further 5 are in the pipeline.

The meeting was informed that Carbon Neutral filmmaking is high on the agenda. A new website will launch in December 2021. Since Screen Wexford was set up thirteen months ago, they have facilitated 25 productions and enquiries are increasing, approx. 3,500 people have visited, 90 newsletter subscriptions and an average 30 emails a day. A short discussion took place about getting more young people involved, perhaps through the schools.

## Sensory Library Services

The County Librarian gave a presentation to the meeting, she outlined the sensory toys and assistive resources catalogue. A short discussion took place about how the sensory collection worked. Membership and registration is free at all libraries. Users must have a letter of referral from an Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist, Resource Teacher, Medical Practitioner or other professional working with them. Teachers and SNA's may borrow on

behalf of their school but must supply a referral letter from their school principal. A sensory pod funding by Health Ireland has been very well received. This is a quiet space for people with Autism. A sensory garden has been developed this year in Wexford, designed by Mary Reynolds, Irish Gardener and Chelsea Flower Show winner.

## Schedule of SPC meeting

On the proposal of Cllr Jim Codd and seconded by Mr Michael Wall the following schedule of SPC meeting have been agreed by the members:-

| | | |
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| 2nd February | 6th April | 1st June |
| 7th Sept | 2nd Nov | |

## Next Meeting

The next SPC meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 2nd February 2022.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Chairman

Dated: _____