

Planning & Building Control SPC

Minutes of Meeting of 19th November 2019

In the Chair: Cllr John Hegarty

Present: : Mr. Diarmuid Houston, Mr. Craig Innes, Ms. Deirdre Kearns, Mr. James Lavin, Mr. Tony Larkin, Cllr. Garry Laffan, Mr. Peadar McDonald, Ms. Pauline Moore, Mr. Anthony Neville, Mr. Zeno Winkens

Apologies: Mr. Tom Banville, Cllr Anthony Donohoe, Ms Bridin Murphy

Cllr John Hegarty welcomed the attendees to the first meeting of the Planning and Building Control SPC. Cllr Hegarty outlined the need to encourage input from the members in the development of policy through the SPC and invited the members to include items for future meetings agendas.

Planning Department Restructuring

Mr. Diarmuid Houston, Senior Planner spoke about the re-structuring of the Planning Department. He explained that as Mr. Tom Banville, Senior Executive Officer has now joined the Planning Department areas of responsibility have changed. A hand out was circulated illustrating the new staff structure. He explained that the focus in the department is on improvements and efficiencies.

Cllr. John Hegarty asked details of the restructuring could be circulated to the members.

Planning Enforcement

Mr. Peadar McDonald, Senior Staff Officer gave an outline of the activity in Planning Enforcement. Detailing how cases proceed through the various stages.

A discussion followed where Cllr. John Hegarty asked if GDPR has had an impact on enforcement. Only that Enforcement Notices are now sent individually. Mr. Anthony Neville asked if the BCAR had had an effect on enforcement, is there a pattern of more compliance, has the Opt-Out had any effect? The Senior Staff Officer said a review could be carried out for the next meeting which would identify the number of opt-outs inspected and the percentage of those which required written notice for non-compliance

Derelict Sites

Mr. Tony Larkin, Director of Services noted that Members are very concerned about the number of derelict sites in the County. A dedicated team between Planning and Housing headed by Mr. Tom Banville, SEO is being set up to bring derelict properties back into use. This initiative will be constrained by staff resources and the fact that it costs the Council more to bring a derelict building back into housing stock than a greenfield site.

A discussion followed on CPO and the associated costs, funding, option of leasing properties.

Building Control

Mr. Craig Innes, Senior Executive Engineer spoke about the new regulations with regard to Building Control. Cllr. Garry Laffan raised a query regarding the new regulations and extensions. Mr. Zeno Winkens said that the regulations referred to 25% of the envelope of a development and not the floor area.

Mr. Craig Innes, SEE stated that inspection rates are up to 32% and that the most important message is that a Commencement Notice must be submitted prior to commencement of development.

Cllr. Garry Laffan asked about the position of developments granted before the new regulations came in. Mr. Craig Innes stated that those developments must be substantially completed before November 2020.

Development Plans and R.S.E.S

Ms. Deirdre Kearns, Senior Executive Planner gave an update on the County Development Plan and Town Development Plan timelines.

The SEP stated that Members managed to get important changes for Wexford agreed with regard to the R.S.E.S. though these changes have not been included in the Material Amendments which are due to be voted on next week. This was brought up at a meeting last week and all changes for Wexford were minuted and agreed.

A discussion followed: It was noted the plan focuses on cities and larger urban development. The cities of Limerick, Cork and Waterford are also in the Southern Region. Mr. Tony Larkin, DOS stated that this could have a bearing on future funding such as the recent announcement of €17 million for the Regional Water Supply for Gorey.

Mr. Anthony Neville welcomed the submission made by Wexford County Council. There was a discussion on population densities. Ms. Deirdre Kearns, SEP that the Department were considering revised population projections.

The County Development Plan has been paused to allow alignment with the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy. Cllr. John Hegarty asked if there would be a special meeting to go through the Development Plan. Mr. Tony Larkin, stated that the Chief Executive brings his draft of the plan to the Members, who may then make amendments. Mr. Diarmuid Houston, SP, said that the SPC can make formal submissions to the development plan. Ms. Deirdre Kearns said that workshops may also be more useful to Members.

The new office of Planning Regulator was explained.

AOB

- Cllr. John Hegarty asked if there has been a change in the percentage of refusals. It was mentioned that refusal rates can be influenced by preplanning. Rates can be compared to previous years.
- Cllr. John Hegarty suggested that a representative from RAI could be on the committee.
- Mr. Diarmuid Houston mentioned the intention to review the Contribution Scheme and will bring proposals to the next SPC
- Ms Deirdre Kearns advised of the commencement of consultation on the National Marine Planning Framework, this covers the coastline out to the coastal shelf. Planning applications for this area will now go to An Bord Pleanala.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: John Hegarty

Dated: 20/6/20