Planning & Building Control SPC
Minutes of Meeting of 28th April, 2025

In the Chair: Cllr John Fleming

Present: Cllr. Anthony Donohoe, Cllr. Craig Doyle, Mr. Anthony Neville, Mr. Sean Joyce, Ms. Liz Hore, Mr. Tom Banville, Mr. Diarmuid Houston, Ms. Deirdre Kearns, Mr. James Lavin, Mr. Colm Moriarty, Mr. Bryan Beale, Caroline Horan (remote), Ms. Janine Fitzgerald, Ms. Monica Gaynor. Cllr. Garry Laffan and Cllr. Michael Sheehan

Apologies: Cllr. Pat Barden, Cllr. Ray Shannon, Ms. Mary Browne, Mr. Ned Lyng, Mr. Craig Innes and Mr. James Petherbridge.

Introductions

Cllr John Fleming (Chairperson) welcomed everyone to the 1st Planning and Building Control Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) Meeting for this new term and each member present at meeting introduced themselves.

SPC Work Programme 2025 - 2029

Ms. Liz Hore thanked those on the previous Planning & Building Control SPC for their continued support and hard work previously and delighted that 1 of the greater pieces of work carried out was the Taking in Charge Policy document which was Adopted by Wexford County Council.

Mr. Tom Banville gave a brief introduction regarding the Strategic Policy Committee for 2024 – 2029. Areas covered were as follows:

- Statutory basis for SPC's,
- The role of the SPC,
- Terms of reference of SPC's,
- SPC Framework,
- Remit of SPC and
- SPC Work Programme

Tom gave a summary of roles, works and expectations of the SPC.

A draft Work Programme 2025 – 2029 will be drafted for discussion for the next SPC Meeting in June.

National Planning Framework

The Government approved the revision to the National Planning Framework (NFP) on 8th April until 2040. This revision allows for the following:
Population growth is expected to grow up to 6.3 million by 2040 (250,000 more than predicted in 2018),

Associated housing requirements and plan for approximately 50,000 units per annum to meet population and housing needs.
Very large focus on climate change and
Infrastructure is delivered to meet with population projections.
It was noted that Wexford County Council are constantly meeting figures for the 3 year plan and had predicted figures within current County Development Plan. Wexford Count Council are being prioritized due to being closest to meeting targets.

New Planning and Development Act

The new Planning and Development Act 2024 has been approved and signed and is now in the planning implementation phase and the Government are anxious to get it implemented. This is a major reform of legislation and it was promised to give updates at further SPC meetings. This legislation is to give clear and more consistent national planning policy and guidance.
At present it was noted that no new resources are available to implement the new Act.

Development Contributions Scheme Review

Ms. Liz Hore informed the SPC members that Wexford County Council are in the process of doing a Development Contributions Scheme review and that an internal review team has been set up. The current Development Contributions Scheme being used is from 2018 and a review is essential. Further updates will be brought to future SPC Meetings.

ePlanning Update

Mr. Tom Banville gave a update on the position on E-Planning. Wexford County Council is now 1 of 3 Councils not connected to the National Planning EPortal. It is envisaged that the 1st application should be accepted by end May. Cyber security has been the issue in Wexford County Council to date.

Local Area Plans Update

Ms. Deirdre Kearns, Senior Executive Planner, outlined that the emerging draft Wexford Town Urban Area Plan is a complex plan which will set the planning framework for Wexford Town and ensure that it optimises its status as a Key Town and is an attractive place to live and work. Ms Kearns outlined that the plan will include all the elements required by legislation but also includes additional elements such as a complete Urban Design Strategy (UDS), Rainwater Management Plan and a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. The plan also looks beyond the statutory period to ensure that the town is future-proofed and that appropriate infrastructure is delivered over the medium and long term.

With regard to the Urban Design Strategy for the town Ms. Kearns outlined that it will ensure that place-making is central to planning decisions in the future. It contains 13

separate Neighbourhood Framework Plans for existing and planned areas. The frameworks will focus on the delivery of sustainable neighbourhoods which have appropriate facilities, amenities and services and which are inclusive, well connected and attractive. The UDS also contains a Town Centre First Strategy which will focus on the regeneration of the Town Centre. Ms Kearns explained that the Forward Planning Section have been working with the regeneration Unit and Town Team to ensure that the plan is robust and includes the views of the residents and stakeholders in the town. The consultations included an internal workshop with the Town Team and a themed walkabout and workshop led by the Town Team, attended by the public, on the 15th of February. The UDS also includes a Master Plan for the Ballynagee area, which will deliver two schools, a football stadium, the Wexford Campus of South East Technical University and in excess of 400 houses.

The plan will also include a Rainwater Management Plan incorporating Nature Based Solutions. It will be the first plan of this scale in the country. The focus of the plan is the sustainable management of rainfall with an emphasis on using nature-based solutions. The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy will set out a long-term framework for the management of the town's green and blue assets and plan new spaces and green connections. It has been informed by town-wide habitat mapping and identification of key areas for protection.

While plan development is progressing well, it is dependent on the commencement of the relevant section of the Planning and Development Act 2024.

Marine Planning Framework

Ms. Liz Hore outlined that the Council will have new responsibilities arising from the developing marine planning area. She stated that the adoption of the South Coast Designated Marine Area Plan off the Wexford coast together with the permitted Arklow bank development will bring opportunities for economic development in Wexford. It is hoped that an update is possible for the next SPC meeting.

AOB

Motion

At the April meeting of Wexford County Council, the members passed a motion in relation to the need to protect and enhance Town Centres and protect Town Centre Retail provisions to protect ground floor retail space and discourage the conversion of dedicated shop areas into apartments and besites in urban centres etc. It was agreed for it to be referred to the Planning and Building Control SPC Meeting.
A discussion was held about various businesses in New Ross and Cllr. John Fleming stated that applications should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. However, Mr. Diarmuid Houston stated that a planning application should be submitted rather than exemptions for these premises. Mr. Houston agreed to circulate background information to all the members of the Planning and Building Control SPC for their information.

Heritage Forum

Ms. Liz Hore informed the committee that works are due to commence, however, Wexford County Council are awaiting an Architectural Heritage Officer.
Ms. Hore also congratulated Mr. Colm Moriarity for recent grants received for various areas such as Ballycogley, Ballyvaldon, Carnagh, Clonmines, Killag and Lady's Island.

Taking in Charge of Estates

Mr. Anthony Neville enquired about estates to be taken in charge and issues arising in delays.
Mr. Tom Banville stated that he had made a presentation to each district recently about all estates to be taken in charge. There are issues with legacy estates however, the matter will be looked into further.

Minutes of Meeting – 25th April, 2024

As this is the first meeting of the new committee it was agreed that only the existing members of the previous Planning & Building Control Committee could sign the minutes of the previous meeting, which took place on the 25th April, 2024.

Proposed: Cllr. Anthony Donohoe
Seconded: Cllr. Garry Laffan.

It was also agreed that Cllr Garry Laffan would sign same.

Next Planning & Building Control Meeting

A date of 23rd June was set for the next SPC Meeting at 11.30 am.

The following dates were suggested for the rest of the year as follows:

22nd September, 2025 and
24th November, 2025.

The meeting concluded.

Signed:

_____ Date: _____