Planning & Building Control SPC
Minutes of Meeting of 25th April, 2024

In the Chair: Cllr John Hegarty

Present: Cllr. Anthony Donohoe (remote), Cllr. Garry Laffan, Mr. Anthony Neville, Mr. Tom Doyle (remote), Mr. Zeno Winkens, Ms. Liz Hore, Mr. Tom Banville, Ms. Deirdre Kearns, Mr. James Lavin, Ms. Fiona Fenlon, Mr. Mick McCormack (remote) and Ms. Monica Gaynor.

Apologies: Cllr. Bridin Murphy, Mr. Diarmuid Houston

Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting, which took place on the 11th January, 2024 were agreed.

Proposed: Mr. Anthony Neville
Seconded: Mr. Tom Doyle

Cllr. John Hegarty enquired about matters arising that are not on the agenda to be discussed.

Draft Taking in Charge Policy –
The Draft Taking in Charge Policy is going to the next Council Meeting on 13th May for adoption.

RSES – 2 Year Report
Ms. Deirdre Kearns stated that the report to the Southern Regional Assembly was submitted and can be circulated to all Councillors and SPC members following the Council meeting in May. This is a detailed report which showcases the work of the various Council Departments of Wexford County Council.

Pre-Planning Meetings
Ms. Liz Hore informed the SPC members that Planners are down 50% in Wexford County Council at present. Interviews were held last week for Executive Planners, Assistant Planners and Graduate Planners but unless there are more Planners available to Wexford County Council it will be challenging to avoid delays for Pre-Planning meetings.

It was agreed to deal with item no. 4 on the Agenda next.

County Development Plan – Core Strategy Monitoring Report

Ms. Fiona Fenlon provided details of the Report.

Core Strategy Monitoring - to be reported on annually – information to be provided on a settlement basis and an overall planning authority basis insofar as possible. This report will be accompanying digital maps that illustrate spatial trends in development regarding residential, commercial and settlement consolidation sites under categories of key towns, large towns and various levels of service settlement areas. This report was completed from June 2022 to June 2023.

Plan Objectives Monitoring (including Strategic Environmental Assessment monitoring) to be reported on every two years – Report on the progress achieved in securing the objectives to be given to Members two years after making the Plan.

The Annual Core Strategy Monitoring will feed into the two-year report.

Cllr. Garry Laffan joined the meeting.

Cllr. John Hegarty asked Ms. Fiona Fenlon to go over some of the rural Ireland figures and Cllr Garry Laffan asked about the residential planning permissions particularly Castlebridge.

Wexford County Council's Core Strategy and Development Plan are on target.

Cllr. John Hegarty enquired about the industrial/commercial targets.

Ms. Deirdre Kearns informed the committee that the Regional Authority are looking to encourage creating a strategy to work on an Eastern Economic corridor to develop Dublin to Rosslare Harbour to Waterford which will include Gorey.

E-Planning Update

Mr. Tom Banville gave a presentation and update on the position on E-Planning. He stated that the goal is to take in an application by the end of May. Ongoing testing on the portal and entry of test applications onto APAS with the current E-planning team is taking place. It is intended to ramp up the testing in June, July and August through the National Portal.

Monthly progress meetings are taking place with the LGMA on the rollout for Wexford County Council and monthly progress meetings are also taking place with the APAS Local Authorities.

Some of Wexford County Council's delays are issues when testing on its own IT security and receiving applications.

Mr. Tom Banville confirmed that all application types can be submitted through the system online including LRD's and paper applications will also be accepted by Wexford County Council.

Local Area Plans Update

Ms. Deirdre Kearns, Senior Executive Planner, gave an update on the local area plans.

Wexford Town Local Area Plan

Work on Wexford Town Local Area Plan is progressing well with both site work to inform zoning and objectives and strategy development underway.

A number of productive workshops have been held with LOCI, the consultants employed to carry-out the Urban Design and Master Planning for the town. The consultants are initially prioritising the Ballynagee master plan and the Town Centre First Strategy and will then move to the wider plan area.

A joint meeting has been held with the consultants preparing the Rainwater Management Plan, the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, the Urban Design Strategy (including the Masterplan for Ballynagee and Town Centre First Strategy) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessments to co-ordinate inputs.

Preliminary recommendations have been received from JBA, the consultants appointed to carry out the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, and discussions have been held with the OPW. This will inform land use zoning.

The consultants preparing the Rainwater Management Plan are currently preparing a pluvial model for the entire town and from which they will develop town-wide proposals for managing rainwater water including nature based solutions and guidance for developers. This will be integrated with the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy which is being prepared in tandem. Work on habitat mapping in the plan area is due to commence in late April/early May.

Chair stressed the importance of delivery of the plans.

Planning Legislation Update

S.48 of the Development Contributions Waiver Scheme has been extended until the end of 2024. Also, the waiver for water and wastewater scheme has been extended.

Designated Maritime Area Plan for Offshore Renewable Energy - Following on from the publication of the South Coast Offshore Renewable Energy Designated Maritime Area Plan Proposal in July 2023 it is anticipated that the Draft Plan will be published by the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications at the end of April. Officials from the Department will present the Draft Plan to the May meeting of the Council to include a wider map showing Kilmore Quay to Cork. We are advised that there will also be a public consultation meeting held in County Wexford in May.

Regeneration Unit Update

Mr. Mick McCormack (Town Regeneration Officer (TRO)) gave a detailed presentation on the work within the Regeneration Unit.

Town Centre First

Work is progressing on the application process for the 2024 Town Centre First Suite of Supports.

Measure 1. Town Team Support Fund: Establishment of up to 3 Towns Centre First Teams in Co. Wexford. An application has been made to the DRCD under this measure which provides €10,000 for capacity building and or data collection and research per Town.

Measure 2. Wexford County Council was successful in securing Courtown/Riverchapel which was selected as a Phase 2 TCF Town. €30,000 will be received to complete a TCF Plan for Courtown/Riverchapel.

Work has commenced in Courtown/Riverchapel area, meeting Stakeholders and an Internal meeting was held with all of the relevant WCC Departments to get a sense of Courtown and WCC involvement in the area.

Measure 3. In the Suite of Town Centre First Supports is the project development measure which could see €50,000 allocated to a max of 2 projects (90% funding). 2 projects were identified to progress to full application stage and Wexford County Council are assisting the groups in making these applications for a very competitive process.

The 2 groups are: 1. Feachtas Ealaoin t/a St Michaels Theatre.

2. Kilmore Scope

Town Centre First meetings are progressing in both Enniscorthy and New Ross.

New Ross Town Team hosted a delegation from Margistar on the 18th April where 40 delegates/academics from 27 Counties around Europe came to New Ross to discuss Town Centre First and the New Ross experience to date on their TCF journey.

New Ross is awaiting the announcement of the RRDF applications for projects identified through the New Ross Town Centre First Plan process.

Vacant Homes

To enhance awareness and support for owners of vacant/derelict properties and sites, the Regeneration held a series of Roadshows from the 8th to the 12th April in each Municipal District around the County. These informative events were to enlighten the public about various grants and programmes tailored to address vacant

and derelict properties, ultimately contributing to the reduction of Vacancy Levels in County Wexford.

As part of this initiative a brochure to promote the various measures/incentives was created to help support people with vacant/derelict properties. There is a substantial increase in the number of applications for Croi Conaithe as a result of this initiative.

Ready to Build

In relation to Ready to Build we are looking at some possibilities for 2024. Brief details of Ready to Build are as below,

- Local authorities will make available serviced sites at reduced cost to support self-build home ownership.
- The level of discount to the individual will depend on the level of servicing cost incurred by the Local Authority before the sale of the site but will not exceed €30,000 (being the max amount the Local Authority can claim from Department to get services to the site).
- Have direct access to adequate mains water supply and mains wastewater disposal infrastructure.
- Local Authorities will manage the prioritisation of applicants in line with the framework of priorities as outlined by Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Local Authority Meeting with CIF

Taking in Charge Policy - It was agreed to hold a workshop with the Housing Department if the document is approved at the next Council meeting. The public will be notified if adopted.

It was agreed to hold a meeting between Mr. Ronan O'Brien and Mr. Tom Banville.

AOB

Ms. Liz Hore gave an update on Pre-Planning Meetings and stated it is planned to reduce the waiting times to 8 weeks following recruitment campaign of planners. She also said the major Pre-Planning Meetings have been very busy this year with an increase of 20 meetings up to 22nd March, 2024 up on last year.

Ms. Hore thanked Cllr John Hegarty as he is stepping down as Councillor, who has been a valuable member of the Council and member of the Planning and Building Control SPC.

Cllr. John Hegarty thanked all the staff of the Planning Department as the workload has increased significantly.
Cllr Hegarty also thanked all the members on the SPC and wished the current members of the Council good luck in the upcoming local elections.
Congratulations were expressed to Cllr. Bridin Murphy on the birth of her 3 week old daughter.

The meeting concluded.

Signed:



Date: