Planning & Building Control SPC
Minutes of Meeting of 1st September 2025

In the Chair: Cllr. Frank Staples

Present: Mr. Sean Joyce, Cllr. Anthony Donohoe (online), Cllr. Craig Doyle, Mr. Anthony Neville, Cllr. Garry Laffan (online), Cllr. Michael Sheehan, Cllr. Pat Barden, Ms. Liz Hore, Mr. Tom Banville, Mr. Diarmuid Houston, Ms. Deirdre Kearns, Ms. Lynda Lacey, Ms. Janine Fitzgerald Ceann Comhairle Deputy Verona Murphy (online),

Apologies: Cllr. Ray Shannon, Ms. Caroline Horan

Ms. Liz Hore opened the meeting by welcoming the new chairperson, Cllr. Frank Staples. Ms. Hore advised that there would be a change to the running order of today's Agenda and that the matter of the Development Contributions Scheme would be discussed after the Development Plan update.

Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting, which took place on the 3rd of July 2025, were agreed.

Proposed: Cllr. Craig Doyle
Seconded: Cllr. Michael Sheehan

Co. Development Plan Update

Ms. Deirdre Kearns provided an update on the ongoing work on the Wexford Local Area Plan. Ms. Kearns advised that the Housing Growth target figure of 1072 units for development has now risen to 1622 until 2034 and that the County Development Plan is being reviewed in terms of the re-zoning of land in order to accomodate this increase in required housing.

Ms. Liz Hore noted that Wexford has the fifth highest increase nationally in Housing Growth Targets and that the increase in the number of units for Wexford is a positive endorsement of the delivery of hosuing under the County development plan as outlined in the Southern Assembly two year review of the RSES.Wexford County Council can deliver is positive.

Mr. Diarmuid Houston outlined the processes of the re-zoning of land. Mr. Houston advised work is underway to appoint consultants in relation to the strategic and environmental assessments that need to be completed in order to revise the current plans.

A discussion took place regarding the zoning of land in New Ross and the requirement for more privately owned houses in the area, particularly in response to the expansion of the likes of Integer in the area. Cllr. Michael Sheehan noted that while it might be possible to re-zone land, the issue of lack of services in certain areas remains. Cllr. Pat Barden reiterated this point, stating that there are very few villages in New Ross that would have potential for development. Mr. Diarmuid Houston advised that the speed of development will be determined by the availability of infrastructure and services. Cllr. Sheehan further noted that the dual issues of the reduction in square footage for apartments and the lack of private affordable houses will have a detrimental effect on the area.

Mr. Sean Joyce queried the aim to build long term, sustainable communities given the lack of infrastructure in certain parts of the County. Mr. Diarmuid Houston confirmed that the County Development Plan has a settlement strategy contained therein which identifies the infrastructure required and what can be potentially be achieved.

Ms. Deirdre Kearns confimred that the first step in the variation process is to review the figures for the County as a whole and then the towns and villages will be reviewed at an appropriate time.

Mr. Anthony Neville, in noting that only 37% of zoned land makes it to commencement notice stage, queried if the Council would be looking for submissions from developers that can provide housing so as identify land that is not currently on the radar, as is the case in Fingal and Waterford. Mr. Neville also queried if the revised figures will require a new County Development Plan or will a variation suffice and what will be the timeline for these changes.

Mr. Diarmuid Houston acknowledged the positive working relationship Wexford County Council has with developers, so there is good knowledge to inform as to what zoned land is available and what restrictions currently exist in terms of Uisce Eireann limitations.

Ms. Deirdre Kearns advised that the Wexford Local Area Plan is in progress but having regard to the urgency to deliver additional housing that it will be a variation to the existing County Development Plan rather than a new plan. Ms. Kearns further advised that as this is a new process, it is hard to give a definitive timeframe however it was acknowledged that it was a key priority for the Planning Department.

Cllr. Pat Barden queried the process around a land owner applying for zoning and if a briefing document could be prepared to assist land owners in such an appliation. Mr. Diarmuid Houston advised that, to begin with, the owners would need to show access to services and that they should look at the settlement strategy within the CDP to see if their land falls into the relevant areas. In terms of a briefing document, Mr. Houston confirmed that it is not possible to advise on individual cases.

Mr. Houston also confirmed that the variations to the County Development Plan at this moment in time solely relate to zoning and anything that will faciliate housing development.

Proposed Draft Planning Contribution Scheme 2025

Mr. Tom Banville gave a presentation on the need for a new Planning Contribution Scheme together with an overview of the process and associated timeframes for the preparation and adoption of such a scheme. Mr. Banville advised that the new scheme is currently at preparation stage and that it will be necessary to go out to public consultation in the coming weeks.

Mr. Banville also provided an overview of the current scheme in comparison with other Local Authorities together with a table of the proposed draft development contributions.

Ms. Lynda Lacey confirmed that, following review of the current scheme, and associated receipts from contributions over the last number of years, it is necessary to increase the level of contributions to bring Wexford County Council in line with other Local Authorities and to provide additional funding for the Council's ambitious Capital Programme. Ms. Lacey advised that it is hoped that, if the scheme is sent out for public consultation in the coming weeks, it would be the aim to have a new scheme adopted for the start of 2026.

Cllr. Michael Sheehan queried the doubling of the contributions without any phased introduction and suggested that Wexford County Council should be cognisant of anything that tips the balance away from development. Cllr. Sheehan also queried if contributions receipted could be ringfenced for use in the district in which they were charged.

Ms. Liz Hore acknowledged that while it is a doubling in contributions, the base is extremely low and it is important to focus on the impact of the proposed contributions on the overall cost to build. Ms. Hore confirmed that this it is not possible to retain the contributions in the district in which they were charged given the nature of the current projects to be funded, whilst also noting that there is currently no reserve from which to fund such projects.

Mr. Anthony Neville acknowledged Wexford County Council's innovative move in 2013 in reducing the contribution rates in an effort to promote development. However, Mr. Neville asked that WCC consider the impact of loading all of the costs onto first time buyers.

Ms. Lynda Lacey re-iterated that it is important to raise additional funds through contributions given the extremely low levies currently in operation and the associated funding constraints in the delivery of the Council's objectives.

It was agreed to take a proposer and seconder to bring the matter of the draft development contribution scheme to the Council members for their consideration at the next Council meeting in September to bring to the full public consultation phase. s to facilitate public consultation and feedback on same.

Proposed: Cllr. Michael Sheehan **Seconded**: Cllr. Pat Barden

Ms. Lynda Lacey left the meeting at this point.

E-Planning Update

Mr. Tom Banville provided an update on the E-Planning system, advising that 80% of planning applications received are now through the system and that it is working well.

AOB

- Ms. Liz Hore noted that there were a number of new work programmes in Planning and that a new circular regarding renewable energy issued two weeks ago from the Department which sets out a new process to fast track the permit granting process for renewable energy projects. This is effective from the 1st of October 2025 and will contribute to our goals under climate action.

- Cllr. Michael Sheehan asked that a letter is sent to the Department requesting that public consultation on the review and use of the Section 5 exemptions regarding the conversion of certain commercial premises into residential units. Mr. Diarmuid Houston confirmed that this a motion that would need to be brought before the Council members for their consideration.

- Cllr. Sheehan requested that, given the level of planning changes and circulars issued in the last two months, a briefing document be prepared for the next Council meeting summarising all the changes coming into effect. Ms. Liz Hore confirmed that there was a meeting with the Department at the end of September and training for planning staff in Q3/4 and that a document could be prepared when full clarity is obtained regarding changes and associated implementation of same.

The meeting concluded. The next SPC meeting will be held in November to facilitate consideration of the Draft Development Contribution Scheme by the SPC members.

Signed:

Frank Sheehan Date: 24/11/25

Chairperson