Planning & Building Control SPC
Minutes of Meeting of 11th January, 2024

In the Chair: Cllr John Hegarty

Present: Cllr. Anthony Donohoe (remote), Cllr. Bridin Murphy, Cllr. Garry Laffan, Mr. Anthony Neville, Mr. Tom Doyle, Ms. Liz Hore, Mr. Tom Banville, Mr. Diarmuid Houston, Ms. Deirdre Kearns, Mr. Craig Innes (remote), Mr. Tim Murphy (remote) Mr. James Petherbridge and Ms. Monica Gaynor.

Apologies: Mr. Zeno Winkens

Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting, which took place on the 12th October, 2023, were agreed.

Proposed: Mr. Anthony Neville
Seconded: Cllr. Bridin Murphy

Local Area Plans

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

Wexford Town Local Area Plan: Ms. Kearns advised that the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) consultants have been appointed and that the SEA Scoping Report had been completed. She also advised that contracts were due to be exchanged this week for the Urban Design Strategy for the Town including a masterplan of the Ballynagee/S.E.T.U lands and that the first meeting was due to be held next week. Contracts are also due to be exchanged for the Rainwater Management Plan incorporating Nature Based Solutions for the Town and Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.

Ms. Kearns advised that the first public consultation period had been concluded. A Consultation Paper had been placed on public display and public meetings held in the library. Seventy-three written submissions were received. The section had also held a facilitated stakeholder meeting to elicit feedback. A report summarising the submissions and consultations was submitted to, and discussed with, the Members of the Borough District of Wexford in November and submitted to the full Council in January. A Social Infrastructure Audit has also been completed and submitted to the Members and the Infrastructure Assessment Report is nearing completion. The

Local Transport Plan, which is being led by the Active Travel Section and which will inform the plan, is progressing well.

Enniscorthy Town Local Area Plan: Ms. Kearns stated that consultants have been appointed for the SEA and AA of the plan.

Mr. Diarmuid Houston stated that he hoped to present the draft Wexford Town Local Area Plan to Wexford District in the 2nd quarter of the year but would be more informed after meeting with the consultants.

Ms. Liz Hore joined the meeting in person.

Some concerns were raised regarding density proposals increasing, impacts of flooding and zoning land but Mr. Houston stated that these points would be covered in the Local Area Plan.

Mr. Craig Innes had to leave the meeting for another appointment.

It was agreed to deal with item no. 6 on the Agenda next.

RSES – 2 Year Report

Ms. Deirdre Kearns stated that Wexford County Council have a statutory requirement under Section 25A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to submit a report to the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) every 2 years setting out the progress made in supporting the objectives of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Region. The focus of the report is on regeneration, housing, economic development, and infrastructure. The report is currently being worked on and will be submitted to the SRA before the end of January.

Pre-Planning Update

Ms. Liz Hore gave an update on the Pre-Planning pilot event held on The Street in County Hall on Wednesday, 29th November, 2023. A report was circulated to all in attendance at the meeting demonstrating an overview of the event.

The event was aimed at reducing the number of customers waiting for a Pre-Planning Meeting as requested by the Elected Members.

All those awaiting a Pre-Planning Meeting were contacted by phone and invited to attend the Pre-Planning event.

The overall response to the event was positive and was successful in achieving its goal, resulting in the significant reduction in overall number of customers awaiting a Pre-Planning Meeting from 116 to 49 with almost 100% attendance on the day.

While the hosting of the event on The Street worked well on the day, there was feedback that the venue was too noisy.

It has been agreed to hold these Pre-Planning Meetings in the Planning Department Customer Service Section in future and schedule them weekly by district.

Mr. Diarmuid Houston stated that there is still some backlog in the Gorey/Kilmuckridge MD as Oisin Boland, new Executive Planner commenced work to replace Philip Newman who left Wexford County Council this week. Staff resources is still an issue with no Assistant Planners to replace positions available.

It was agreed to circulate a staff structure to members of SPC and all elected members to inform them which planners are responsible for each district.

Planning Bill – November 2023

Ms. Liz Hore gave an update on the new draft Planning Bill. The Draft was published in November 2023. All Councils have sent their submissions. Some of the changes discussed were the statutory timelines, penalties, Reform of An Bord Pleanala and judicial reviews.

There is a major recruitment drive for planners in each local authority. Many local authorities appear to be witnessing the same problems Wexford County Council are experiencing.

E-Planning Update

Mr. Tom Banville gave a short presentation and update on the position on E-Planning. He stated that the goal is to go live and accept online planning applications via the National Planning Portal by end March 2024.

E-Planning Progress Nationally:
24 local authorities are now live on National Portal. (LGMA prioritised all iPlan users).
7 local authorities which are using APAS are due to go live early 2024 and it is planned for Wexford County Council by end March. Some live pilot testing are being done in South Dublin and Dun Laoghaire at the moment.

Preparations in Wexford County Council to date are:
E-Planning Team has been established.
Ongoing test of portal and entry of test applications.
Monthly progress meeting with LGMA on Wexford rollout.
Monthly progress meeting with APAS local authorities and
5 person team within Planning Department and IT.

AOB

Draft Taking in Charge Policy

Cllr. John Hegarty enquired about the Draft Taking in Charge Policy which has been a focused work programme for the SPC.

Mr. Tom Banville stated that the wording on Water Services and Surface Water paragraph regarding "design and certification" and "fit for purpose" was still causing an issue and needed to be amended. After a lengthy discussion it was agreed that a further meeting between Mr. Anthony Neville, Mr. Tom Banville, Mr. Craig Innes, Mr. Tim Murphy and Ms. Fionnuala Callery would take place in next few weeks. Mr. Anthony Neville asked if Mr. Seamus O'Rourke (CIF representative) could also attend to agree the wording for same.

It was also agreed a copy would be sent to Cllr. John Hegarty (Chair) as soon as possible and should go to the next Council Meeting.

Housing Workshop

Mr. Anthony Neville suggested a possible Housing Workshop with CIF Members and Wexford County Council. An agenda and date/time for workshop is to be considered following discussion with CIF.

Date for the next Planning and Building Control SPC will be held on 25th April, 2024.

Signed:

John Hegarty Date: 25/4/24.