

Minutes of Meeting of Housing, Community and Culture Strategic Policy Committee held in the Council Chamber, Áras an Chontae, Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim on Wednesday, 27 September 2023.

Members Present:

Councillor Thomas Mulligan (Cathaoirleach)
Aodh Flynn
Councillor Frank Dolan
Councillor Mary Bohan
Councillor Paddy O'Rourke
Councillor Padraig Fallon

Officials Present:

Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services, Community and Cultural Services
Justin Fannon, Acting Director of Services, Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructural Services
Suzanne Duffy, SEO Corporate Services
Kieran Brett, Meetings Administrator
Aideen Kelly, Assistant Staff Officer

16 Adoption of Minutes

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Padraig Fallon
SECONDED by Cllr Frank Dolan

It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of 23rd May 2023.

17 Introduction of members of Research Division of IPA

The Cathaoirleach Councillor Thomas Mulligan welcomed Mr John O'Neill and Mr Fergal O'Leary from the Institute of Public Administration to the meeting.

Mr John O'Neill informed the members, that the IPA are carrying out a review of the role and operation of the Strategic Policy Committee's (SPC) in 6 local authorities on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Mr John O'Neill gave a short presentation to the members on the objectives of the review and sought the view of members on the following topics:

- Are SPCs effective and can their role within the local authority be enhanced?
- Does the SPC process have an impact in the development and review of policy?
- Are there any improvements to SPC's that should be considered?
- Is representation of external groups sufficient on SPC's?
- What additional factors need to be considered; are more or less SPC's required?
- Is there a requirement for an SPC to be mandatory for Climate Action?

Following the presentation, a discussion took place with between the IPA representatives, the members of the SPC and the executive.

- The SPC process is functioning well in Leitrim, there is good communication/good relationship between elected members and housing staff.
- The SPC gives an opportunity to discuss local policy within our county as opposed to national level and review policy if changes need to be made.
- The SPC gives the opportunity to hear views of other organisations which is important and can often bring a different perspective.
- There is engagement from other external committees and the issues raised by them are brought to various meetings for addressing.
- Representatives from housing estate residents' associations should be considered.
- How effective are the decisions made by SPCs?
- Many policies adopted at national level don't have a rural element.
- Where do our views advance to once decisions are made – is the decision noted and then sits without advancing further?
- The public need to have a greater awareness of the workings of the Council and the functions of an elected member in the workings of the Council.
- There is a need to consider the views of rural groups when formulating national policy.

Ms Mary Quinn advised the members, that previously a specific nominee was sought from the Residents Network. With the formation of the Public Participation Network (PPN) all community groups including residents' committees were encouraged to join the PPN. It was subsequently agreed that all non-elected SPC representatives would be drawn from groups affiliated to the PPN. The PPN will be asked to engage with residents committee to address any shortfall in representation.

Mr John O'Neill noted many of the views expressed had been reflected in other Local Authorities. He acknowledged there is frustration between local and national policy. He highlighted the importance of feedback which can help evaluate how SPC's are working and the expectation of the role of the SPC.

Ms Mary Quinn advised that Climate Action has already been considered in Leitrim through the Environment, Climate Action and Agricultural SPC. The members agreed and stated the structure of what is in place is adequate to deal with the issue and further duplication should be avoided.

Mr John O'Neill advised the members there will be a follow up survey to be completed and thanked the members for their participation in the discussion.

18 Housing Policy Update

Mr Justin Fannon provided the members with an update on the delivery of the Housing Strategy for Disabled people:

- In Q2, there have been 23 allocations, 8 of which have been allocated to people with a physical or intellectual disability, and 3 allocated to older people. The targeted delivery of allocations to older persons or those with a disability is being exceeded.
- The projected delivery for the year is 28 units, 5 units were delivered in Q2, 1 of which was reserved for a disabled person.
- No units were delivered by Voluntary Housing bodies.
- In Q2, the HSE provided 5 new home care packages.
- In Q2 there was 1 refusal. It was noted majority of properties go up on choice based letting.
- It is expected that 28 units will be delivered for 2023. There are 8 single storey dwellings coming on stream, 4 of these will be wheelchair accessible.

Ms Mary Quinn provided the members with an update on the delivery of Housing Services:

- Leitrim is on target to achieve the delivery of housing units as set out for 2023, however, an increased ask in delivery is expected and in order to achieve this all options will have to be examined.
- There are approximately 200 people on the housing waiting list.
- The annual assessment of housing needs is in progress which requires engagement with housing applicants to verify if a housing need still exists and if they remain eligible to be on the housing waiting list.
- Leitrim has to examine what schemes can be put in place to ensure continued housing delivery over the next few years. Items to consider include vacancy, derelict units, engagement with voluntary sector, new builds etc.
- At national level a data collection exercise is currently being carried out to establish is there a possibility of developing a policy around rightsizing.
- Age Friendly Ireland are recruiting an in county age friendly home person who will take referrals from HSE or local authority and will go out and visit people to assist and encourage them to live in their own homes for longer.
- Leitrim carried out an expression of interest survey relating to Affordable Housing Scheme and 58 expressions of interest were received. Following a more in depth analysis of the expression of interest received, the Local Authority will engage with the market to determine if there is sufficient interest in progressing a scheme.
- There may be enough people for sufficient interest in an Affordable Housing scheme to propose the development of a small number of houses in a town or village in the county under the scheme.
- Under Tenant Purchase Scheme, the Local Authority is not in a position to offer 1 and 2 bed properties for sale under the scheme as there is high demand for this type of property. This list will be reviewed every 6 months and if there is low demand in an area, particular cases can be examined.

In response to the housing update the members raised the following queries:

- Councillor Mary Bohan acknowledged how positive it was that Leitrim exceeded the target for disability allocation.
- Councillor Frank Dolan queried has there been any further development with the

provision of social housing for people with disabilities in Manorhamilton.

- Councillor Pdraig Fallon asked that when the Assessment of Housing Need is being carried out if a person does not respond to the letter issued, could they be written to a second time to avoid the situation where they are taken off the housing waiting list for not responding.
- Councillor Pdraig Fallon stated would prefer if a different situation existed regards the Tenant Purchase Scheme. He welcomed that the scheme remains under review.
- Councillor Paddy O'Rourke queried has there been a change in policy to allow people that have small land holdings to remain on the housing list. He is aware of instances where these people have been asked to submit land valuations.
- Councillor Paddy O'Rourke queried has anyone been excluded from the housing list based on assets they have declared.

Mr Justin Fannon stated there are approximately 50 persons on the housing waiting list with a disability and the majority of these would be classed as having an intellectual disability and for whom general housing is acceptable. In general terms it takes approximately 1 -3 years to provide housing to a person on the housing list although the list continues to grow.

Mr Justin Fannon informed the members that engagement has taken place with a developer, an Approved Housing Body, and the Department, regarding the provision of housing for people with disabilities in Manorhamilton. Discussions are ongoing with the department in relation to the developer's proposal, layout, and cost of the development. Once Departmental approval is granted, the Approved Housing Body will then be able to make a funding application to the Department to progress the development.

Ms Mary Quinn confirmed that she will liaise with the Housing Department to ensure more than one contact is made to a housing applicant when the Assessment of Housing Needs process is being carried out.

Ms Mary Quinn informed the member all guidelines are followed when assessing a person's housing need. She acknowledged there are certain questions asked, however, ultimately if a house is deemed uninhabitable, the person is entitled to be eligible to go on the housing waiting list provided they meet all other criteria. Leitrim County Council must base the assessment on the regulations that are in place by the Department.

Ms Mary Quinn and Mr Justin Fannon both stated they are not aware of any situation in relation to declaration of assets but undertook to review the matter.

19 Receive presentation on draft Library Development Plan 2023-2027

Ms Pauline Brennan invited Mark Tully and Maeve McCormack of Tully Meehan and Associates Ltd to give the members a presentation on the new draft Library Development Plan 2023 to 2027.

Mr Mark Tully informed the members of the requirement to prepare a 5 Year Strategic Library Plan. He advised that the plan is guided by the National Strategic plan already in place. In preparation of the draft plan, Tully Meehan & Associates Ltd engaged and consulted with stakeholders, staff and elected members, library users and non-library users.

They reviewed how the current library service meets the need of the community, looked at the number of libraries and where they were located. A survey was conducted, and the information was collated and was used to ascertain how the library service could be used to meet the community's needs in terms of the provision of local services over the next five years and how Leitrim Library Service will meet the vision of the National Library Plan.

Ms Maeve McCormack give an overview of the themes and objectives of the plan. These were tied in with the anticipated needs of the community and broken into three categories: People, Places and Connections.

Mr Mark Tully informed the members the document was prepared in draft format. He highlighted the themes and objectives of the plan are achievable and realistic. He advised everything that is included in the draft plan is in line with the National Library Plan.

Cathaoirleach Councillor Thomas Mulligan referred to Culture Night and events in the Libraries stating it was very successful and was very well attended.

Councillor Mary Bohan concurred with Councillor Thomas Mulligan remarks and complimented the County Librarian and her team on the fantastic work they do.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Mary Bohan
SECONDED by Councillor Frank Dolan

It was **AGREED** to present the Draft Library Development Plan 2023-2027 for consideration at the November plenary Council Meeting.

20 Summary of issues for the Corporate Policy Group

Ms Mary Quinn, Director of Services, summarised the items from this meeting for presentation to the Corporate Policy Group and plenary Council meeting.

21 Date and Time of the Next Meeting

It was agreed the next meeting of the Housing, Cultural, & Community SPC will take place on Wednesday 29th November 2023 at 10am.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

SIGNED: _____
Councillor Thomas Mulligan
Chairperson

SIGNED: _____
Kieran Brett
Meetings Administrator
Housing, Community and
Culture Strategic Policy
Committee

**DATE: Wednesday, 29 November
2023**