

Planning, Development and Environment Strategic Policy Committee

Minutes of meeting held on 24th May 2022

Council Chamber, County Buildings, Wicklow

Present:

Cllr. Edward Timmins; Conor McCarthy; Cllr. Sylvester Burke; Cllr. Patsy Glennon; Michael Byrne

Apologies:

Cllr. Shay Cullen; Tessa Stewart; Cllr. Erika Doyle; Jim Wood; Cllr. Gerry O'Neill

In attendance (WCC):

Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services; Marc Devereux, Senior Engineer; Jackie Carroll, Senior Executive Officer; Sorcha Walsh, Senior Planner; Fergal Keogh, Senior Engineer; Joanne O Dowd, Senior Executive Engineer; Deirdre Whitfield, Administrative Officer; Grainne Fennell, Senior Staff Officer

Item 1 Adoption of minutes of meeting held on 1st March 2022 and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th December 2021 were proposed by Cllr. Sylvester Bourke and seconded by Cllr. Edward Timmins

Item 2 Receive presentation on Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)

The members received a comprehensive presentation on the LECP. The input of the SPC and the PPN and other stakeholders will inform the scope of the plan. It was noted that increasingly, climate action is embedded in the community actions.

A comprehensive discussion ensued, with issues raised including Social Housing policy, and the viability of Community Creches. The members were advised that childcare will be part of the plan, through consultation with the Co. Wicklow Childcare Committee.

The timeline for the implementation of the plan has been extended until end 2022. The Advisory group will include representation from Climate Action, Planning and the PPN.

Item 3 Planning and Development

- **Forward Planning – Update on Co. Development Plan 2022-2028**

The Members were updated on the current status of the draft Co. Development Plan 2022-2028.

At meeting held at the end of March 2022, the Members of Wicklow County Council, resolved that the Draft Development Plan be amended. The proposed amendments constitute material alterations to the Draft Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028.

Submissions or observations regarding the Proposed Material Amendments to the Draft Plan were invited with closing date of Wednesday 25th May 2022 and 34 submissions were received to date with further submissions expected from the OPR and the NTA. The submissions will be considered and brought back to the September meeting for consideration.

Item 4 Receive presentation on the draft Glyphosate Policy

The members received a presentation on the draft Glyphosate Policy which was approved by the Climate and Biodiversity Action SPC and will be on the agenda of the full Council for the June meeting.

The draft policy was considered by the members and discussed at length and it was noted that the matter had been discussed with the District Engineers. It was noted that the Tidy Towns would promote the policy and that the criteria for judging included awareness of biodiversity and retention of habitats.

It was noted also that this policy has no implications for agricultural practises.

Item 5 Receive presentation on the Investment in and Upgrade of Recycling Centres

The members received a comprehensive presentation on the proposals for significant investment of the Recycling Centres. The proposed investment is required due to the need to modernise and refurbish the facilities against a backdrop of increasing expenditure (30%) and reducing income (70%). The members were advised that the level of service provided in the County is lower than that provided nationally. The feedback from the online public consultation in June 2021 showed that 87% of the public in Co. Wicklow have a kerbside collection and 78% have a green bin. The public appreciate the recycling centres as they perceive that there is a greater variety of material taken and it is more environmentally friendly, due to its ethical recycling routes. Most agreed that additional services would be welcomed, particularly soft plastic, paint and large bulky items.

There is increasing focus on the Circular Economy and social enterprise with CA sites in line with the obligations on the Council under its Climate Action objectives.

Regard should be had to the Polluter pay principle which is enshrined in EU and Irish legislation and the public should be able to provide receipts to demonstrate how they are disposing of their waste.

It was noted that significant improvements are planned for West Wicklow with a proposal for a new facility

An ongoing income stream will be required to fund this investment which will benefit the public at large. A small public charge will be required which will bring Wicklow in line with all other local authorities in the country in terms of funding infrastructure (Wicklow is the only county with no recycling charging infrastructure and Wicklow and the Dublin Local Authorities are the only ones not charging for Mixed Dry Recyclables). This income stream will be ringfenced for ongoing investment in the centres.

Levels of charges vary from €3-€6 and an initial charge of €3 was suggested to the members. The members were asked for their support for this and to set a rate before the matter is brought before full Council in June.

A general discussion ensued, with some members expressing concern about the introduction of another charge to the public at a time of inflation and with regard to the LPT. The proposal to provide a facility in West Wicklow was seen as a positive action and it was noted that WEE and glass will remain free of charge..

Other members suggested that a minimal charge of €2 could be introduced to ease this into the public mindset.

Whilst it was understood that the imposition of the charge is an Executive Function and the agreement of the members is not required, the support of the members to the planned improvements and charge proposals was sought. The members agreed to note the proposal but not to agree the rate, and to bring this before full Council.

Item 6 Any Other Business

Tree Management Policy – It was agreed that the Tree Management Policy be placed on the agenda for the next meeting as it had been requested by one of the members

Planning resources – concern was expressed regarding the workload in planning and the additional workload relating to the LRD. The members were advised that sanction had been sought for 2 additional members of staff to assist with this.

Vacant Homes Officer – it was clarified that Wicklow County Council was implementing the requirements of the Vacant Homes strategy but had not created a new staff post for the role, which is being undertaken by existing staff member.

Harbour Byelaws – the draft Harbour Byelaws will be circulated to the SPC prior to going on public consultation over the coming months and will be brought back to this SPC in September.