

Planning, Development and Environment Strategic Policy Committee

Minutes of meeting held on 21st October 2021 Via Zoom

Present:

Cllr. Sylvester Bourke, Jim Wood, Cllr. Gerry O'Neill, Cllr. Patsy Glennon, Tessa Stewart, Shane O'Connor, Cllr. Shay Cullen, Michael Byrne

In attendance (WCC):

Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services; Jackie Carroll, Senior Executive Officer; Sorcha Walsh, Senior Planner Joanne O'Connor, Senior Executive Engineer; Tom Griffin, Senior Executive Chemist; James Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer;

Item 1 Minutes of meeting of 19th July 2021 and Matters Arising

The minutes were proposed by Jim Wood and seconded by Michael Byrne.

There were no matters arising.

Item 2 Circulars and Correspondence

Housing For All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland

Housing For All – the members were updated on the recently launched National Strategy, Housing For All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland.

- The Plan reaffirms that the Strategic Housing Development (SHD) process will be abolished in 2022 and replaced with a revised “Large-Scale Residential Development” process in the coming months.
- Expanded Part V requirements to increase the percentage contribution from 10% to 20% and applied to affordable as well as social housing.
- Updated active land management powers with fairer sharing of the increase in land values resulting from zoning decisions and more gain for the community.

- Overhaul and simplification of planning legislation to ensure certainty and stability.
- Ensure “public participation” at an early stage of delivering on “Urban Development Zones”
- Introduction of a new tax to activate Vacant Lands for Residential Purposes, to replace the Vacant Site Levy
- Focus on providing an adequate supply of available serviced zoned land, within required densities.
- Judicial Review process reforms and introduction of new division of High Court for Planning and Environmental cases to reduce planning delays.
- Implement new regulations requiring Short Term and Holiday Lets to register with Fáilte Ireland - responsibility for enforcement will lie with the Residential Tenancies Board. The local authority will continue to address illegal or unauthorised structures or changes of use

Notice of Motion – Cllr. Jodie Neary

‘That Wicklow County Council look into the possibility of establishing an underground waste system in County Wicklow and establish a pilot project in a Municipal District to look at a long-term solution to the litter crisis”

It was agreed that this NOM be referred to the Planning, Development and Environment SPC for their recommendation.

The Members were advised as follows –

Wicklow County Council has engaged with other local authorities to assess their experience with this initiative to date.

There would be a large capital cost to excavate the ground and place bins underground. Most existing bin locations would not be able to accommodate them due to density of underground

services. Emptying receptacles of this size would cause considerable disruption in an area and may require the closure of footpaths and roads for a period of time.

Local Authorities that implemented the initiative have reported serious issues with location, drainage, flooding, jamming of the chutes, problems with servicing and collection and ultimately incurred significant costs removing them entirely.

The perceived benefits of installing this system are far outweighed by the likely negative issues.

Wicklow County Council is changing from regular litter bins to Smart Solar Compactor Bins as funding allows. Smart Bins hold approximately x5 the capacity of a regular bin and provide automated real time collection notifications for more efficient management of collection schedules. They are solar powered so do not require a connection to the electricity network, provide space to place advertising and prevent windblown litter. The newer smart bins are also hands free for infection control.

Following discussion of the above, the members agreed that no further action would be taken in regard to this proposed initiative and that a response issue in this regard.

Item 3 Planning and Development

Development Management

The members were advised of the volume of planning applications dealt with in 2021 to date, with 1,194 applications received, which represented an increase of 34% from 2020.

Responsibility for SHDs will revert to Local Authorities and formal guidance is awaited.

It was noted by all that the implications of the new Housing strategy and the reversion of the SHDs to the Council will have further resource issues for the Planning and Development Section. The members were advised that there is a national working group looking at resource issues for Planning and Development.

Following query raised, the members were advised recent changes to the Extension of Duration (S.42)

- Section 42(1), allows an extension of duration of a permission only where substantial works are carried out. A decision to extend the appropriate period of a permission shall be made not more than twice under Section 42(1) and where a second decision to extend an appropriate period is made under this section, the combined duration of the 2 extensions of the appropriate period shall not exceed 5 years
- Section 42(1B) allows a further extension to the appropriate period, as extended or further extended by such an additional period not exceeding 2 years or until 31 December 2023.

A query was raised on the recent An Bord Pleanála decision in relation to development in Ballinalea, Ashford. It was noted that a granted permission is not included in target figures for Ashford as the houses are not yet built. No town can grow by more than 30% unless it is a designated growth town.

Forward Planning

County Development Plan Review

The consultation period for the draft County Development Plan 2021-2027 ended on 30th of August 2021. Over 300 submissions were received which are currently being reviewed.

Regarding draft guidelines for consultation, Wicklow County Council has made a submission and flagged the resource related to implementation and monitoring. New systems will also be required.

Item 4 Environment

Draft River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027

The members received a presentation on the Draft River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027 and noted that the submission period closes on 31st March 2022.

It was noted that the status of water quality in Wicklow was impressive overall, with 13 water bodies categorised as High, 58 as Good and 33 as Moderate.

The engagement and cooperation from the farming community was acknowledged as a major contributor to the excellent ongoing results in Wicklow.

The comprehensive presentation was welcomed by the Cathaoirleach and the committee members. The work of the Pollution Control team on the protection of the water bodies was commended.

Waste Management

The members received a presentation on Waste Management, with areas concerning the review of the recycling centres, kerbside collection of soft plastic and use of EV vehicles highlighted.

In response to query on the recent removal of bottle banks in Blessington, it was noted that the landowner had initiated this action and the Council was actively seeking an appropriate, alternative site as a matter of urgency.

Arklow Flood Relief Scheme

The members were update on the status of the Arklow Flood Relief Scheme and noted that 9 submissions had been received in relation to the CPO and, accordingly, there would be an Oral Hearing.

Work is ongoing at present, including working with NPW in relation to otter surveys as they are a protected species and further analysis being undertaken on a particular plant that is also protected.

It was noted that significant earthworks would have to be undertaken. The Qualceram site was suggested as suitable for the purpose of the scheme to reduce impact on the North Pier and South Beach.

Harbours and Ports

An overview of the Harbours and Ports was given to the members and it was noted that an extra member of staff had been appointed into this area which has proved beneficial.

Wicklow – dredging is required

Item 5 Any Other Business

There was no further business.

Signed:

Cathaoirleach

Dated:
