

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC POLICY
COMMITTEE COUNCIL CHAMBER/ZOOM MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 11th December 2023**

Present: Cllr. Vincent Blake (VB), Cllr. Melanie Corrigan, Brendan Martin (BM), Michael Nicholson (MN), Jenny Sherwin (JS), Síle Stewart (SS), Marlena Murphy (MM), Clodagh Whelan (CW), Cllr John Mullen (JM), Aisling Hubbard (AH), Irene Sweeney (IS), Mai Quaid (MQ), Cllr. Anne Ferris (AF), Máire Halvey (MH), Caroline Fox (CF)

Apologies: Lynda Stopford (LS), Niamh Wogan (NW), Colm Moules (CM), Sandra Dunne (SD)

In Attendance: Karen Quinn

Cllr. Vincent Blake opened the meeting, welcomed everyone, and gave the list of apologies.

The minutes of the last meeting held on the 11th of September 2023 were adopted. There were no matters arising from these.

Matters discussed:

Project Ireland 2040 Rural Regeneration Programme Updates:

- **CLÁR**

(CW) There has been an announcement from the Minister on one of the applications 'Developing Community Facilities & Amenities.' This measure was made through the Local Authority. There were 3 eligible applications that were made to the Department of Rural and Community Development under this measure.

The funding for measure 2 totalled €94,034 which was approved for direct applicants from County Wicklow – Rathdrum Cancer Support €44,034) and Wicklow Irish Community Rapid Response (€50,000) were awarded funding under the CLÁR Funding Scheme (Measure 2: Mobility, cancer care and Community First Responders Transport). In total, Minister Humphrey announced over €2 million for 37 vehicles for Mobility, Cancer Care and Community First Responders throughout the country. Successful applicants under Measure 1 and 3 of CLÁR 2023 will be announced at a later date.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

(CW) The closing date for submissions of Expressions of Interest in the Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2023 was the 5th of October. The TVR2023 Projects Assessment and Selection Panel, met in Wicklow County Council on Tuesday 10th October to determine which projects would be selected by Wicklow County Council for submission to the Department of Rural and Community Development this year.

All expressions of interest were assessed based on the eligibility criteria and priorities contained in the 2023 Towns and Village Renewal Scheme Outline. The panel selected 5 projects for development into an application for grant funding. These were submitted to DRCD on the 10th of November 2023.

Projects submitted are as follows:

- Wicklow Town Pump Track (Murrough) €225,000
- Kirikee Community Hall, Glenamallure €250,000
- Carnew, Main Street €500,000
- Tinahely Town Centre (Dwyer Square) €250,000
- Lacken Community hall €250,000

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

(CF) The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) supports the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure and the necessary repair, enhancement, or promotion of existing outdoor recreation infrastructure in countryside areas across Ireland. The Scheme is funded under "Our Rural Future" which specifically prioritises the growing outdoor activity tourism sector as part of a long-term vision for a vibrant and sustainable rural Ireland.

There were 2 successful applications announced on the 21st of November by Minister Humphreys. These are: Lugnaquilla Recreation Plan which aims to manage visitor numbers, land use, habitats, and safety in changes to access routes. The total estimated costs are €50,000 and the amount of ORIS funding awarded from the Department of Rural and Development was €45,000.

Bray Head Sustainable Recreation Plan was also successful, this project involves managing and protecting the landscape and ensuring safe and appropriate recreation. The total estimated cost was €50,000 and of that amount we received ORIS funding amounting to €45,000.

- **Community Enhancement Programme**

(MH) The number of groups awarded a grant were 171 and the number paid up to the 5th of December 2023 was 164 which amounts to approximately €298,734. 3 payments are currently being processed for payment (€5,900). The number of grants awaiting further information from recipients is 4.

Funding has just been announced by the DRCD in respect of the Local Enhancement Programme 2024. Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, and Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities, Joe O'Brien TD, announced on 6th December 2023 €176,338.11 in capital funding under the "Department of Rural and Community Development Local Enhancement Programme 2024" for Co. Wicklow, €29,389.69 of which will be ringfenced for Women's sheds.

This funding will provide capital supports essential for the many small community groups and organisations, particularly those who serve disadvantaged areas in rural and urban areas.

There will be a particular focus on small capital works/improvements, and the purchase of equipment for community use. The funding may be used but is not limited to; improved access for persons with a disability; enhancing community participation for disadvantaged and marginalised groups and improving energy efficiency of community facilities to reduce ongoing costs.

The scheme is designed to ensure local priorities are identified and met, so as to improve and enhance community facilities for all. It will be administered through the LCDC and will be advertised in the New Year.

Concerns were expressed around 'overlapping of the 2 schemes (CEP and CAS)', as their names are similar.

(MH) stated that there would be less confusion this year as the 'Community Enhancement Programme' will be changing its name to 'Local Enhancement Programme 2024'. But she said that she would try space them out in terms of release dates.

- **Community Awards Scheme**

(MH) gave us an update on figures from the 5th of December 2023 ranging from (€72,200). There are 7 grants currently being processed for payment (€2,250). The number of grants awaiting further information from recipients are 12.

- **Urban Regeneration & Development Fund (URDF)**

(MN) We are awaiting details of the next round of applications. Wicklow submitted 3 applications the last time round, in Bray Wicklow and Arklow. Bray was successful and the intention is to resubmit Arklow and Wicklow the next time round.

- **Rural Regeneration & Development Fund (RRDF)**

(MN) A new call has just been announced under 'Category 1'. This is the 5th call under this category. This call is for large scale strategic projects, that have the necessary planning consent in place and are effectively 'Shovel ready' projects. The closing date is the 8th of February 2024, and the in-house team are considering projects under this call.

- **Community Recognition Fund**

(CF) The following 7 projects are progressing, with completion dates estimated in quarter three 2024:

Bray Community Centre – Internal works including electrical upgrade, painting, flooring, and heating system improvement works, external works including – windows & doors replacement, safe removal of asbestos and exterior painting, other works include – accessible lift, protected stairway works and insulation upgrade.

Baltinglass Community Park - Riverside walking path, new playground and MUGA refurbishment

Bray Parish Centre - Internal works including electrical upgrade, painting, and fittings.

Wicklow Town Placemaking Project - Refurbishment of assembly hall (total area 2,000 sq ft) to include new heating system, Internal painting, insulation, install 3 phases, refurbish kitchen, toilets, and meeting room areas. Installation of universally accessible outdoor community gym facility along the Murrough, in order to extend upon and complement the existing community facilities present. Improvements to the seafront promenade linking Wicklow Harbour to the existing Murrough community facilities and beyond to the Murrough coastal walk (refer to report).

Strategy Updates:

- **Greenway Strategy**

(CF) Planning documents were submitted to An Bord Pleanála under Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act, with a deadline of 4th March 2022. On 16th of March 2023, WCC received a request for further information (RFI) from An Bord Pleanála. The Board had sought a response to this RFI request by the 8th of June 2023. However, due to the significant information sought by ABP, an extension to the 29th of January 2024 was granted by ABP.

WCC staff, in conjunction with Aecom, the consultants, are continuing to prepare a full comprehensive response to this RFI to meet this deadline. There has been a couple of meetings held to allow the public to engage and express their opinions in relation to the 'Arklow to Shillelagh' walk (refer to report).

- **Play & Recreation Strategy - Playgrounds**

(MH) Inspections in respect of playgrounds, MUGAs (multi use games areas) and outdoor gyms, skate parks and Astro pitches were completed by RoSPA in January 2023. The reports have been received by Wicklow County Council. These reports were forwarded to the Municipal Districts for consideration and appropriate action to be taken, where required.

Works have been conducted by Municipal District staff based on the findings of the inspections in Blessington, Dunlavin and Grangecon. The balance of works is due to be addressed in early 2024. 90% of works are complete at present in Arklow MD.

- **Leisure Centres**

(CF) Both Coral Leisure swimming pools in Arklow and Wicklow have had work completed to upgrade their facilities. In Arklow, the doors have been fixed and in Wicklow, they have received funding to upgrade the changing rooms.

- **Age Friendly Strategy**

(CW) The Aughrim 'Walkability' audit was conducted in July 2023, coordinated by the Age Friendly Ireland Regional Manager Southeast (Alice Corbett) and the County Wicklow Age Friendly Programme Manager (Clodagh Whelan). A diverse group of local community participants, with a mix of abilities and disabilities, included Kunstverein, Aughrim Tidy Towns and Active Retirement Group representatives. The audit report has been circulated to relevant stakeholders. The Age Friendly Programme Manager met with Municipal District Administrator and Executive Engineers on the 14th of November to discuss an action plan to address some of the recommendations from the 'Walkability' audit (refer to report).

- **Arts Strategy**

Culture Night (Oíche Chultúir) returned to Wicklow on Friday, 22nd September 2023. To celebrate Culture Night this year, Wicklow County Arts Office commissioned, collaborated, and supported an extensive programme of events and activities in over 12 locations across the County Wicklow. With an estimated 3,700 people in attendance across all 20 events, the Wicklow County programme featured a diverse range of events and happenings purposefully selected to open up pathways to creativity. The Wicklow Culture Night programme regularly featured in local press with over 10 articles published in the lead up to Friday 22nd September.

(JS) 'Our Wicklow Women' returned in November 2023 as part of the final strand of programmes for the Decade of Centenaries to explore the changing role of women in society at the turn of the century. This 2-day programme celebrated Irish activist, feminist, politician, and businesswoman 'Jennie Wyse Power's' connection to County Wicklow as part of Creative Places Baltinglass and supported through the Decade and Centenaries Programme (2012 – 2023), which was funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media (refer to report).

A 'Capacity Building' session was hosted by Creative Places Baltinglass on November 3rd, offering a networking opportunity for artists and creatives in the Baltinglass area. The event, attended by 15 individuals, introduced the upcoming Artist One-to-One Coaching scheme, which opened for applications on November 6th, 2023.

- **Creative Ireland Strategy**

Wicklow County Council Arts Office invites applications for 2024 Arts Act Funding Schemes which are designed to support artists, communities, art festivals, art participations and art form development across County Wicklow. Applications are open from 1st December 2023 and the deadline for receipt of applications is Friday the 16th of February 2024 at 4pm.

- **Library Strategy**

(BM) gave us an update on the Capital Projects. The Chief Executive's report on the proposed new Ballywaltrim Library was presented to Bray Municipal District members and management at their October meeting, where it was enthusiastically endorsed. The DRCD's libraries capital programme has not yet been announced, and indications from LGMA are that it is more likely to now be early 2024 when this occurs. In the meantime, "as build" drawings are being created by the architect, which will be ready to be passed onto

the QS in the coming weeks. The perceived timeline sees the 'Bill of Quantities' being completed by mid – late March when they will then go to tender for construction.

Although the 2022 Baltinglass RRDF proposal was not successful in receiving additional funding, the Chief Executive has requested that some elements of the Baltinglass courthouse proposal should proceed. In particular, the work from home hubs, and the approved additional floor plus a less costly relocating of the adult library into the court room. In addition to the necessary repair works to the courthouse wing of the building, it is foreseen as a reasonable compromise, which will improve the facilities.

Legal matters are currently being completed to purchase an additional floor in the current Blessington library unit, in the town centre development. This will see the space available doubling in size. The new unit will require a basic make over but it is structurally sound. It will double as an arts facility for west Wicklow and the library's study, IT and outreach services will be relocated there. This will create more space in the current library for development of reader services.

Wicklow Sports & Recreation Partnership Updates

- **Wicklow Sports & Recreation Partnership**

(AH) Wicklow LSP have submitted our Compliance statement to Sport Ireland and adhere to the governance code. We have reached the required 40% female representation on our committee in accordance with requirement from Sport Ireland, we currently sit at 57%. Funded bodies that do not comply with this, will have up to 50% of their funding withheld in 2024, until they reach 40%.

Physical Activity for Health Pilot - Wicklow is one of 5 sites that will be piloting this initiative. We have been awarded a further €20,000 in programme funding for activities delivered in the greater Bray and Greystones area. Also, the Katie Taylor bursary will be advertised this week and will have a closing date of the end of January.

- **Healthy Ireland & Healthy Wicklow**

(AH) Fit Farmer Programme – due to its success in the summer the Irish Heart Foundation Mobile machine returned to Carnew Mart on Thursday 16th November. Two nurses were on site to give a free health check and expert advice to 24 individuals from the farming community.

In collaboration with the HSE, the new health promotion officer was also present on the day. She promoted the new stop smoking service in Carnew Disco Yoga, which is a unique yoga class inspired by those who simply want fitness to be fun and uplifting but also looking for a new way to unwind and socialise. Due to its demand and success, it is continuing every Tuesday up to the 19th of December in Our Space, Rathnew.

Ladies Strength & Conditioning Programme – liaised with the home liaison officer in St Coen's National School. A targeted ladies only strength & conditioning programme started on 9th November and will continue every Thursday until Christmas. 20 ladies are participating in this programme.

Disability Inclusion Steering Committee Update:

- (CW) The first Disability and Inclusion Strategy for County Wicklow was approved by the Disability and Inclusion Steering Committee (DISC) and presented to the full council on the 2nd of October by Laura O'Callaghan, Disability Information Officer (Disability Federation of Ireland). The strategy was proposed by Cllr Miriam Murphy, second Cllr Tommy and adopted unanimously by the full council. A formal launch event was held in the Arklow Bay Hotel on Thursday the 2nd of November.

Update on the Local Authority Integration Team (LAIT):

- (MN) A Local Authority Integration Team (LAIT) is being established in each Local Authority. The Wicklow LAIT will in place in January 2024. The team will play a significant role in the overall integration strategy for the Council and the focus will be on the following cohorts of people: Applicants for International Protection (IP Applicants), Those with Refugee, Subsidiary Protection, or Permission to Remain status, Programme Refugees, Beneficiaries of temporary Accommodation (BOTPs). While the LAITs are not expected to be responsible for the creation or management of the Local Migrant Integration strategies, they will be a key player in the delivery of those strategies.

Cllr Vincent Blake thanked everyone for attending the meeting and advised that the next meeting will take place sometime in March 2024.

Signed:



Date:

19 Feb 2024

Cllr. Vincent Blake,
Chairperson.