

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC POLICY
COMMITTEE COUNCIL CHAMBER/ZOOM MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 26th JUNE 2023**

Present: Cllr. Vincent Blake, Cllr. Melanie Corrigan – remote, Cllr. Gail Dunne, Cllr. Anne Ferris – remote, Caroline Fox (CF), Máire Halvey (MH), Aisling Hubbard (AH), Kevin Mann (KM), Brendan Martin (BM), Michael Nicholson (MN), Mai Quaid (MQ), Jenny Sherwin (JS), Sile Stewart (SS) – remote, Irene Sweeney (IS), Clodagh Whelan (CW), Niamh Wogan (NW), Colm Moules (CM), Lynda Stoppford (LS)

Apologies:

In Attendance: Karen Quinn, Sinead Cassidy, Lia Reynolds – remote, Sandra Dunne – remote

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

{1} Adoption of the Minutes

Adoption of the minutes of the meeting of 13th March 2023 was proposed by GD and seconded by IS.

{2} Matters Arising

No matters arising.

{3} Presentation on Support from Wicklow Child and Family Services (WCFS) for those seeking international protection by County Wicklow Partnership (CWP).

BC introduced Pauline Gallagher, Project Worker at WCFS and Djamal Rouibet, SICAP Support Worker. BC advised the aim of the presentation today is to raise awareness of the work being carried out and to highlight the issue of insufficient resources to meet the demands for support county wide as well as country wide. It was explained that the main focus in SICAP and WCFS is to integrate families and individuals who have endured traumatic circumstances, into communities. The exercise today is to highlight the issues, challenges and potential opportunities that could be accrued as well.

Pauline Gallagher provided a synopsis of what her role within WCFS entails and provided a detailed presentation outlining the direct provision support provided to those who have arrived into the Country seeking asylum, including accommodation, access to medical services, social welfare services such as PPSN's, education and childcare. The slides from the presentation have been circulated to committee members.

Djamal Rouibet summarised his role within CWP and provided the committee with details of the numbers of asylum seekers currently accommodated in the various direct provision centres throughout Co. Wicklow. Djamal discussed the challenges faced by CWP in providing support for a wide range of issues, namely medical and dentistry services, social welfare services, access to the labour market and researching the validity of their educational qualifications in line with Irish requirements, Safe Pass and Manual Handling training courses. The most significant barrier is language and access to interpreters.

BC reiterated the inordinate volume of work involved in providing these supports and the presentation provides a glimpse of the work being carried out on the ground.

JS advised that details of the event organised with children in Kippure was highlighted in the report circulated in advance of the meeting. JS said the children were very enthusiastic and put on a phenomenal performance. JS is

organising to take the children accommodated in Baltinglass to the West Wicklow Festival and has also secured 40 tickets for the circus.

IS congratulated CWP and WFCS on the tremendous work and enquired if any referrals have been made to the Wicklow Chamber of Commerce.

Djamal advised that people with professions such as chefs, builders and drivers have access to the labour market, however in some instances Safe Passes are required and improved English speaking skills. A dentist, for example, will have qualifications set to the requirements of their country of origin, however in Ireland, all qualifications in the medical field must be recognised by RCSI. In addition, a Stamp 4 is compulsory even if the qualification is recognised in Ireland.

MN stated that the DCEIY has decided to implement a local integration model, regardless of country of origin. There will be a Grade 7 position, two Grade 6 positions and a Grade 4 position, which will be fully funded by the department.

{4} Project Ireland 2020 Rural Regeneration Programme Updates

- **CLÁR**

CW provided an update to the committee as per report circulated in advance of the meeting.

Three applications were submitted totalling €126,000.00. A decision is expected to be received in September and drawdown will be due in March 2024.

- **Town and Village Renewal Scheme**

CW said there is an application submitted under the Business Acquisition Measure in relation to the purchase of the unit above the library in Blessington. The purchase must be finalised by 9th October 2023.

JM enquired as to a project that wasn't submitted for Coolboy..

CW explained that it may not have met the criteria. The criteria changes every year. Also, it could have been the case that the project wasn't ready to commence. Details of the current scheme are awaited.

JM expressed the importance of keeping regular communication with the various community groups.

- **Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme**

CF advised that applications are being considered for the Hollywood, Dunlavin and Manor Kilbride areas. A larger project is proposed in relation to promotion and education on a national level regarding the importance of respectful behaviour while accessing trails on third party lands. The project is estimated to cost circa €500,000.00.

- **Community Enhancement Programme**

MH informed the committee that the Community Support Fund 2022 is close to being announced. Provisional verbal approval has been received from DRCD and once formal approval is confirmed, members will be advised. This is anticipated to occur within the next couple of days. A Letter of Understanding will issue to each recipient outlining what is required from them. A total of 171 applications were received and total funding of €3,088.34 was awarded. Applications are assessed with assistance from Jim Callery and the deadline in which to spend the grant is August 2023.

- **Community Awards Scheme**

MH advised there was an increase of almost 21% compared with last year, on the number of applications received. A maximum of €500 can be awarded per organisation and the main focus is social inclusion. 270 community groups submitted applications. The first batch of payments will be released this week. Some

financial details are awaited from the new community groups and updated details from various existing groups before payments can be processed.

JM thanked CCSD for the work involved in administering the grant.

LS enquired how the grant funding is divided between groups.

MH said that the maximum grant of €500 is awarded to 15 groups, €250 at minimum is awarded to residents' associations, sports groups. Advertisement through the PPN has increased awareness of the availability of the grant.

LS asked if there is a lot of work involved for the group in compiling an application.

MH explained that the forms for CAS are very simple and the requirements are basic. The CEP application forms require more information because of the stringent guidelines set by the department for the purpose of audit control.

LS agreed this is a great scheme for the community groups.

VB commented that it is clear the groups are delighted with the funding from his interactions with them.

MM commended the administration of the community grants and believes that it creates positive communications between groups in sharing ideas.

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

MN advised that there has been no announcement yet but it is expected any day now.

The application last year was not successful but the application has been reviewed and improved since and it is now robust. The application will be submitted as soon as the scheme opens.

MM asked if it is known why the original applications were declined

MN explained that geography is a factor. There are usually two or three applications submitted and the department will generally only approve one, two in some cases. The funding is finite so the department tries to distribute it fairly across the country. MN is confident that at least one application will be successful this year.

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

MN provided an update as per report circulated in advance of the meeting.

- **Community Recognition Fund**

CF advised the plan is to progress the Baltinglass Community Park. The estimated cost being €425,000.

JM enquired when the scheme will open and if Shillelagh will be considered:

CF believes it should be called by the end of the year. €1.6m is approved for Co. Wicklow. There will be seven projects with the intention being to fund one project per Municipal District. Currently it is envisaged that there will be two projects in Bray for Community Centres, two in Arklow connected with Coral Leisure and a park project in Rathdrum. The areas that accommodated the majority of Ukrainian asylum seekers are to receive the most funds. 283 submissions were received from across the county. The projects will be delivered by next year.

CF explained that in Bray, the Holy Redeemer Community Centre will be upgraded and the Old Court house, now owned by WCC, will also be renovated.

MM enquired about the Arklow projects.

CF said that €121,000 is expected to be awarded to develop a multi-use pitch at Coral Leisure beside the running track and a park is to be developed in Rathdrum near the schools, which will cost in the region of €80,000. The Rathdrum Development Association owns the site and will agree to this development.

{5} Strategy Updates

- **Greenway Strategy**

Blessington eGreenway

CF said the significant request for further information from An Bord Pleanála is extended to January 2024 to avoid disturbing the habitats in the area, bats in particular. The requested surveys are due to be carried out in October.

- **Arklow to Shillelagh**

CF stated that the trail has been determined and this is being put back out to public consultation. The website will be launched and will contain all relevant information and updates pertaining to the Greenway.

JM expressed disappointment with the Blessington Greenway. He stated that local businesses will be affected as they will have to delay investment due to the planning issues and will now have to review their plans.

CM echoed JM's point.

CF explained that Planning is a slow process but the work carried out will stand to WCC. The consultants are consistently working on environmental reports and surveys for the sensitive areas of the Greenway. Also, the website will address any communication concerns that the communities may have.

- **Play & Recreation Strategy**

Playgrounds

MH provided an update as per report circulated in advance of the meeting.

Playground Maintenance

The annual inspections took place earlier this year. The results have been forwarded to the Municipal Districts. Tenders have been sent out and progress reports will be available. One Municipal District is starting work this week.

Leisure Centres

CF discussed the Part 8 for development of a gym at Coral Leisure Centre in Wicklow but funding has not been secured as yet. A portacabin remains on site. Funding has been secured for work on the changing rooms at Coral Wicklow and Coral Arklow has been approved for funding in respect of access doors, upgrade works and the pool access.

- **Age Friendly Strategy**

Recruitment for the Healthy Age Friendly Homes programme is ongoing. Five Regional Co-coordinators have been appointed by the Age Friendly Ireland shared service, at Meath County Council, and interviewing for Healthy Age Friendly Homes Coordinators is underway by the Public Appointment Service.

Age Friendly Ireland ran a national Radio Campaign, in May, to encourage older people to reconnect with their local community groups and the wider Older People's Council.

The 2023 National Convention of Older People's Councils was hosted by Age Friendly Ireland and Kerry County Council, in Tralee on 11th & 12th May. The theme for the convention this year was 'Reconnecting Fáilte Ar ais – Welcome Back'. The delegation from each county included the Age Friendly Programme Manager and 3 OPC members, including the Chair of the OPC. The PPN are organising a roadshow with presentations on the Age Friendly Strategy to encourage engagement. 120 members attended the AGM in the Glenview Hotel where information stands were set up to provide advice to the members. Following the OPC AGM and the recruitment campaign for new OPC Volunteers, an induction session was held in Clermont House on 8th June, for volunteers nominated or expressing interest in active engagement with the Older People's Council Executive group.

- **Arts Strategy**

JS provided an update as per report circulated to committee prior to meeting.

Links were included in the report to Creative Places. Baltinglass next week.

The competition for the new co-ordinator is closed now and the new members of staff are expected to commence by September. Both will be Grade 5.

JS advised that the collaborators have all highlighted the need for an increase in funding to sustain general operations into next year. JS asked if this could be considered for the next budget.

- **Creative Ireland Strategy**

JS advises the 2023 Creative Wicklow Grant Scheme provides for funding of €20,000 for grants to local heritage groups.

SLA's have been confirmed for the next 5 years.

A new funding stream was announced for creative climate measures, the overall total funding will be €3.6 million.

Seed funding of €1,000 for artists in Blessington has been awarded to each of the 5 successful applicants for the purpose of development and research.

- **Library Strategy**

BM provided an update as per report circulated to committee prior to meeting.

There was a call for a project to be submitted mid-June for the new Ballywaltrim library refurbishment. The design and concept has been discussed and the project is shovel-ready. Stage one which was approved has been re-submitted as part of the national strategy. A drawdown history was requested by the department and the quantity surveyor's report shows that good progress is being made. It is hoped that €2m in funding will be awarded.

All libraries now have Age Friendly Recognition status. Alterations to facilities have been completed. A table quiz was organised in May to celebrate 50 years of Ireland being an EU member. Fourteen teams entered the quiz which was held in Woodenbridge.

Pride celebrations also took place in different libraries and the Pride flags remain in place.

VB expressed congratulations to the libraries for marking 50 years in the EU.

CM enquired as to the status regarding the library in Aughrim.

BM advised this is an engineering matter. An application has been submitted to Uisce Eireann and a tender is going out for construction and sewerage works underground.

AF praised BM and the team for getting age friendly recognition across all libraries.

MM echoed AF's comments and acknowledged the work that went in to achieving this.

{6} Wicklow Sports & Recreation Partnership Updates

- **Wicklow Sports & Recreation Partnership**

AH will circulate a report to the committee after the meeting.

A database review is taking place nationwide. The database will feature information on spaces for activity, pitches, parks, forests and beaches for example. Wicklow Sports Partnership has submitted all elements for the website and App. Denise O' Shea has taken up her new position in Physical Activity for Health. Bray and Greystones area will be piloted in year 1 and will include post rehabilitation assistance. The learn to cycle programme had a 50% success rate and trained parents in how to teach children to cycle. Outdoor spin classes are organised for Greystones.

'Her Outdoors' commences on 14th August and aims to encourage females to access outdoor activities. In year 2 it is intended to incorporate diverse mediums i.e. land and water activities. A national Volleyball competition will be launched at Brittas Bay by Volleyball Ireland, who are also providing two permanent volleyball nets at Brittas Bay beach. The National Play day is planned soon which will entail unstructured pop-up play areas in Blessington, Bray, Baltinglass and Rathdrum. The Play Pack will launch on Wednesday

and will be available in every library. 'Run With Ray' at Avondale House was a huge success and a great PR exercise. A total of 110 children are attending various summer camps organised by Wicklow County Council or other groups. Activities include swimming, basketball and football. Investment has been made into swimming caps and goggles. The camp for teenagers with disabilities is almost fully subscribed. Marathon Kids took place in Arklow 6 weeks ago and had 700 participants. David Gillick, Olympian, attended the event. The grant scheme for sports club is expected to be announced at the end of August and will cover four different elements this year.

- **Healthy Ireland & Healthy Wicklow**

AH gave us an update on the following - application submitted on 27th January 2023 and the main focus was on disadvantaged communities and long term, strategic programmes. 2 high level performance indicators were chosen under the Healthy Ireland Framework which align with LECP, LSP Strategy and Sláintecare Healthy Communities. After various consultations and partnership development the 2 performance indicators chosen for Wicklow are as follows: Increase in individual level of positive mental health as per energy and vitality index, decrease in % of those at risk of poverty and basic deprivation (refer to report).

{7} Disability Inclusion Steering Committee Update

CW provided an update as per report circulated to committee prior to meeting.

Laura O'Callaghan and Clara Jenkinson provided a presentation at the recent Roadshow for community engagement. The final strategy for communication boards is awaiting approval. Clara is leading with the MD's but there have been delays due to differing opinions as to how to proceed.

VB highlighted the achievement of the Irish Special Olympics team in Germany and offered huge congratulations.

MM praised the fantastic work within the Sports Partnership around disability inclusion and also the implementation of the toolkit by the committee. MM attended the presentation in the Arklow Bay Hotel and stated it was an amazing event.

MN advised that Clara and Laura worked very hard to drive this initiative.

{8} Any other business

CM is pleased with the great work being carried out and the number of upcoming events that have been organised.

(9) Proposed dates for future meetings

- Mon 11th September 2023
- Mon 11th December 2023

Signed:

Patricia Blake

Date:

11 sept 2023