

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC POLICY
COMMITTEE COUNCIL CHAMBER/ZOOM MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 13th MARCH 2023**

Present: Cllr. Vincent Blake, Cllr. Melanie Corrigan – remote, Cllr. Gail Dunne, Cllr. Anne Ferris – remote, Caroline Fox (CF), Máire Halvey (MH), Clara Jenkinson, Kevin Mann (KM), Brendan Martin (BM) – remote, Michael Nicholson (MN), Mai Quaid (MQ), Jenny Sherwin (JS), Síle Stewart (SS) – remote, Irene Sweeney (IS), Clodagh Whelan (CW), Niamh Wogan (NW)

Apologies: Aisling Hubbard, Cllr. Miriam Murphy

In Attendance: Sandra Dunne, Patricia Carmody, Lisa Mc Mahon, Lia Reynolds – 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 12th December 2022 was proposed by GD and seconded by IS.

{2} Matters Arising

No matters arising.

{3} Community Recognition Fund 2023

MN provided an update.

Out of this €50 million fund, €1.6 million was allocated to Wicklow and will be distributed across MDs on a pro rata basis. The funding is specifically targeted at projects that are located in communities, towns and villages which are hosting the Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection and/or International Protection Applicants. This is a great fund to benefit the whole community. Feedback was sought through public consultation (240 responses), Elected Members, the PPN, MDs, LCDC, Ukrainian Community Response Forum and a press release. Ideas were collated and seven major projects of scale were submitted to the Department for consideration. A copy of the final submission will be circulated to members.

{4} Project Ireland 2040 Rural Regeneration Programme Updates

- **CLÁR**

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

The Measures for the next launch of the CLÁR programme are currently being considered. The Department have advised a call for 2023 applications will open in March. CW will advise when details are released and welcomed ideas for projects.

- **Town & Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)**

€600k was announced in December for the 2022 scheme. Six allocations have been announced but letters of offer have not yet issued - awaiting clarification on funding agreement from the Department.

A budget of €19 million is allocated for the 2023 scheme; €17 million for standard TVRS and €2 million for Connected Hubs.

- **Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)**

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

2019-2022 projects are ongoing – most are underway while some may need Part 8's (eg. Sugar Loaf Trail update). There are deadlines for drawing down money but the Department are generous with extensions.

There has not been a call for 2023 applications as of yet. This delay may be due to the Community Recognition Fund.

If any members have suggestions for ORIS projects (trails, promo videos, outdoor play areas etc), these can be sent to CF for consideration.

- **Community Enhancement Programme (CEP)**

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

The Community Support Fund under the CEP 2022 has an allocation €309k and is administered through the LCDC. Closing date for applications is Fri 31st March. This fund was advertised through the PPN, MDs and local newspaper.

A specific fund of €100k was ring-fenced for Women's Sheds nationally and will be administered in conjunction with the CEP 2022. Wicklow has an allocation of €3,088 for this purpose.

- **Community Awards Scheme (CAS)**

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

The closing date for receipt of applications was Fri 24th February. Over 250 applications were received. Applications are due to be assessed by the end of March with letters of offer to follow in April/May.

In response to Cllr. Blake's query regarding the presentation of awards, MH advised that this may not take place this year but agreed it was good to meet the participating communities. MN advised that we could look into the possibility of holding an event.

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

MN advised that there has been no announcement yet due to a delay on the scheme.

However, a special interim, national URDF Fund of €15 million was announced, specifically focused on vacant resident dwellings and commercial buildings. The closing date for applications was Friday 10th March. The MDs submitted applications, coordinated by the Town Regeneration Officer. A project list will be circulated to members once received.

In response to IS's query, MN advised that WCC submitted applications for buildings that are known to be vacant even if not owned by the Council. These are open for discussion as CPOs or work to be done with owners directly to work out a plan.

IS enquired as to whether WCC are considering more stringent rules for vacant properties. MN advised that this is the purpose of the new Town Regeneration Officer – to work with Town Teams and MDs on plans for dereliction across the County. This is being looked at very actively.

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

MN advised that WCC are working through existing projects and are seeking additional funding due to price inflations. Members will be kept updated.

New funds have not yet been announced but hopeful this will have progressed by the next SPC meeting, once the Community Recognition Fund is in place.

{5} Strategy Updates

- **Greenway Strategy**

Blessington eGreenway

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

This application is with An Bord Pleanála (ABP) – no indication as to when we will receive a result. It is envisaged that there will be an Oral Hearing for this project. AECOM Consultants, in conjunction with WCC staff are reviewing the submissions received. The first Communications Working Group meeting took place on 6th March and it is proposed to launch a Greenway website over the next few weeks. This new website will cover all three Greenways as a platform for sharing information. CF thanked Sheena Hubbard for her work on this to date.

Cllr. Blake and IS noted the frustration amongst the public due to the delay with ABP. MN agreed it is a slow and complex process but advised it is a large application which could see an Oral Hearing take place. CF advised she has been in touch with ABP but no update has been provided. Members will be kept updated on progress.

Arklow to Shillelagh Greenway

The route options continue to be revisited for a few sections of the proposed route with updated ecological surveys just having been completed on those sections. Work continues in preparing documents and a report to identify the emerging preferred route for the Greenway. An update of the status of the project was communicated to the public via the Council's website and social media. It is currently planned to hold a public consultation on the emerging preferred routes in Q2 of 2023.

IS suggested more public meetings/engagement take place and also highlighted the positive results from Waterford, suggesting that statements could be included from other Greenway projects so as to show the advantages and benefits of Greenways to whole communities. CF noted that this could be tied into the new website. KM agreed that opposing voices are louder and including more positive stories would be beneficial, as well as meetings in towns located along the proposed Greenway route.

Cllr. Blake noted that momentum needs to be kept up so that the project doesn't fall behind. CF will pass on the comments to the team working on the Greenway.

Wicklow to Greystones Greenway

WCC has recently appointed consultants to this project and work has commenced, including data gathering and arranging detailed environmental surveys.

- **Play & Recreation Strategy**

Playgrounds

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

Inspections were carried out in January and reports forwarded to the MDs for consideration and appropriate action to be taken, where required. NW enquired as to what the next step is after MDs consideration. MH advised that required works can be done through the general fund and larger works through capital funds.

In response to Cllr. Dunne's query regarding the re-opening of Ashford playground, MH advised that negotiations are ongoing with the landowners and WCC are working to resolve this. MN further advised that if the playground is re-opened now, there would be concerns regarding disrepair of equipment which may need replacement.

In relation to Cllr. Dunne's query about new playground sites, MN advised that most playgrounds are funded through LEADER. If a new site was identified, a local community group could take on the project and apply for the funding. MN will discuss this further with Cllr. Dunne.

IS enquired if there is any plan for Pitch & Put in Arklow as the site badly needs fencing off. MN advised WCC is working on a plan to develop this and will keep members updated.

Leisure Centres

CF provided and update.

All four leisure centres are doing well with membership increasing.

Shoreline Greystones are looking into extending their gym area. This is going forward for planning.

CF advised that Patricia Carmody is working on the Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund which will include refurbishments and improvements to Coral Leisure Wicklow which could lead to planning for the gym.

The Sports Capital grant for Arklow and Wicklow is in the region of €30k for accessibility works.

Maintenance of Playgrounds

MH advised there is a capital grant scheme available in 2023 for the development and refurbishment of playgrounds. The seafront playground in Bray was submitted for inclusivity equipment. There is €18k available with 25% match funding from WCC. Bray MD has also put forward funding if the application is successful.

MQ advised that work is currently taking place on Baltinglass playground. MH advised that this is not part of the capital grant scheme.

- **Age Friendly Strategy**

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

The new Age Friendly Strategy for County Wicklow was launched by Minister Mary Butler on Monday 27th February. A website page was developed to support this launch and further engagement. The strategy can be viewed /downloaded on the website here: <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Community/Age-Friendly-Wicklow>

Cllr. Blake noted it was a great event and thanked Minister Butler for her attendance and all the work done by WCC. MQ acknowledged the work done by CW and the Minister's engagement with County Wicklow and thanked MN for his support for the Older People's Council (OPC). CW advised that the promo video from the last OPC Seminar can be viewed on the webpage above.

The next Age Friendly Alliance meeting will take place on 15th March to agree a work plan for 2023 and reporting processes. This will determine projects going forward.

The new triobikes are now in Carnew for use. Insurance was the cause of the delay.

The next OPC meeting will take place on 24th March to prepare for the AGM on 26th May and work on expanding engagement in Wicklow.

The Age Friendly Ireland National Convention will take place in May.

- **Arts Strategy**

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

WCC is recruiting an Arts Service Coordinator to work directly on the 'Creative Places Baltinglass' project. This role has been advertised and it will be a 2-3 month recruitment process. This project is progressing in the meantime.

In addition, a Creative Ireland Engagement Officer role is going to the Department for approval which will be advertised in the summer.

The contract for the N81 Knockroe Bends Public Art Commission has been offered to the successful applicant. More details will be announced in the coming weeks for this €100k commission.

Other programmes all operating as per plans. Information on grants and opportunities for artists are listed in the Arts Office newsletter and website.

SS advised that Wicklow Sings Festival took place last weekend. The event was fully booked and saw great engagement with choirs.

- **Creative Ireland Strategy**

The 2023 Creative Wicklow Grant Scheme is open for applications. The deadline is Friday 24th March.

- **Library Strategy**

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

The Capital Programme has not progressed as expected to date – things are going slower. Aughrim Library has gone through the Part 8 process and the tender for construction is due to issue in the coming weeks. KM noted the progression of Aughrim Library will be positive.

An opportunity has arisen to acquire a new unit directly above Blessington Library to increase its size. This has been included in the 2023 library capital budget. This would allow for a quiet study area to be developed, similar to the layout in Arklow, Greystones and Wicklow libraries.

Reports compiled by NOAC and the LGMA have shown that Wicklow libraries are above the anticipated figures for post 2019 library engagement. The Bray Library Comic Club was chosen to be presented at the International Library Conference in Denmark. In addition, a large range of outreach activities are ongoing across the County.

The initiative to welcome the community into libraries to save on heating bills at home has been greatly appreciated by the public. In addition, weekend papers are now available.

MQ highlighted a memory training initiative that has been rolled out across Europe and will discuss this further with BM.

MN noted that the investments in capital library projects have been successful and this has led to increased footfall. Wicklow is held in high regard by the LGMA and Department. MN thanked all the library staff for their consistent top ranking on reports. Cllr. Dunne and Cllr. Corrigan also acknowledged the work done and the success stories in Wicklow.

Cllr. Blake expressed thanks to Mary Carty ahead of her retirement, for her work in the library over the years

{6} Wicklow Sports & Recreation Partnership Updates

- **Wicklow Sports & Recreation Partnership**

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

Public consultation is underway to identify potential developments needed in Brides Head and Rathdrum.

Wicklow Sports & Recreation Partnership Sports Partnership was successful in receiving funding from Sport Ireland to recruit a Physical Activity for Health Officer to focus on those with health problems.

Wicklow Women In Sport Week took place last week with multiple events taking place across the County.

Marathon Kids is a 6 week activity programme delivered in schools with 14 schools and approx. 750 children signed up to take part. Irish Olympian David Gillick will attend and deliver a coaching session in Arklow on 27th April. Invitations will be circulated to Elected Members to attend this event.

In response to Cllr. Blake's query, CJ advised that the Community Sports Development Officer, Ashely Wynne, engages with schools directly and promotes Active School Week in May with activities and inclusivity training provided for teachers.

CJ shared with members that Ashley Wynne has been selected to represent Ireland in the IFT World Tennis Masters Team Championships in Turkey this month.

- **Healthy Ireland & Healthy Wicklow**

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

Lorraine Dunne is heading up the 'Hello, How Are You' campaign which focuses on mental health and wellbeing. It will be launched on 30th March.

Information on the Healthy Communities enhancement fund projects can be found in the report circulated prior to the meeting. MN advised that these projects are focused in the Bray area with great work being done.

MN acknowledged the importance of the work being done for improving the physical and mental health of the population..

In response to Cllr. Blake's query regarding signposting for schools on drug and alcohol awareness, CJ advised that An Garda Síochána are represented on the Local Sports Partnership Committee and engage with schools directly for online awareness and mental health. NW further advised that the Drug Taskforce visit schools directly.

{7} Disability Inclusion Steering Committee Update

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

The Accessibility Toolkit was successfully launched by the committee in December.

The first draft of the strategy is due to be presented to the DISC by the consultant in late March.

{8} Any other business

KM advised that will be his last SPC meeting, noting that his 5 years on the committee has been a great experience. KM highlighted the amount of work done by CCSD and acknowledged that the community aren't aware of the extent of this. Cllr. Blake thanked KM for his involvement.

(9) Proposed dates for future meetings

- Mon 12th June 2023 (rescheduled to Mon 26th June, 2pm)
- Mon 11th September 2023
- Mon 11th December 2023

Signed:



Date:

26 6 2023

