

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC POLICY
COMMITTEE (SPC) COUNCIL CHAMBER/ZOOM MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23RD
October 2024**

Present: Cllr. Caroline Winstanley, Michael Nicholson, Máire Halvey, Cllr. John Snell, Cllr. Aoife Flynn Kennedy, Cllr Miriam Murphy (Hybrid), Cllr. Warren O' Toole, Irene Sweeney, Niamh Wogan

Apologies: Mai Quaid, Colm Moules, Cllr. Melanie Corrigan

In Attendance: Eilidh Dunlop, Diarmuid O Keeffe, Patricia Carmody, Lorraine Dunne, Izzie Kinsella

Chairperson Cllr. Caroline Winstanley opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.
Those in attendance introduced themselves. Michael Nicholson gave the list of apologies.

(1) Adoption of the minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on the 19th of February 2024 were noted.

(2) Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

(3) Staff Structure:

Michael Nicholson and Máire Halvey gave an outline of the new staff structure, including the Community/Financial Administration Staff & Health & Wellbeing staff, and Máire mentioned that the new Local Community Safety Partnership Section will be appointing two new staff.

(4) Project Ireland 2040 Rural Regeneration Programme Updates:

- **CLÁR**

Patricia Carmody stated that in relation to CLÁR 2024, all six projects applied for in 2024 were successful. She also stated that on the 7th of October 2024, over €240,000 funding was announced under the scheme by Minister for Rural Development and Community Development Heather Humphreys TD. This means that the total investment is now over €13.5 million in support of over 310 projects in Clar areas nationwide so far under the 2024 programme.

- **Town and Village Renewal Scheme**

Patricia Carmody also stated that the existing Town & Village Projects would be completed by the Social Development Directorate but that all new applications would move to a new directorate and wouldn't come under this SPC.

Projects ongoing include:

Ashford Boundary Wall at the GAA pitch (T&V 2022)

Blessington Community Hub (T&V 2022)

Enniskerry (T&V 2022)

Cllr. Snell asked about the CLAR programme and why it was so limited in Wicklow. Michael explained that the CLÁR programme was very targeted in areas and projects and only 7 townlands in the most rural part of Wicklow actually qualify under the programme and that we actually did very well to secure any funding. Irene Sweeney asked about funding for Arklow Running Track and Máire confirmed that a contractor would be appointed soon for these lights.

- **Local Enhancement Programme (LEP) 2024**

Máire confirmed that the LEP Grant helps disadvantaged areas in both rural and urban areas.

Máire added that 175 projects were successful in receiving funding in the 2024 LEP. €176,338.11 was allocated for Co Wicklow, of which €29,389.69 was set aside for Women's Groups and that payment of the Grants to the qualifying applicants was almost complete, with 149 grants going to the general applicants and a further 26 to Women's groups.

Cllr. Snell added his congratulations to all the staff involved in administering the grants. Irene requested a list of the various women's groups that received funding.

- **Community Awards Scheme (CAS) 2024**

Máire confirmed that over 230 local groups and organisations were awarded grants by Wicklow County Council as part of the Community Awards Scheme 2024. The notification letters were sent out in early June. The payment process began shortly afterwards, and the status is as follows:

Number of groups awarded a grant: 239

Number of grants paid as of 17th October 2024: 217 (Approx €65,450)

Number of grants payments in progress: 10

Grants awaiting further information from recipients: 12

Michael Nicholson explained that in relation to all grants paid out by the council, there was an onus on us to ensure that all allocated money is spent properly, with proper receipts produced, for audit purposes.

Cllr. Flynn Kennedy opened up a general discussion about the Council's own community grant scheme and wondered if it could be administered differently as the practice of giving every group something, means that the amounts per group can be very small and she wondered if it would make more sense to give more money to less groups on a rotational basis asked. Cllr. Snell agreed that it might make sense to allocated groups €1000 each and look after each group over a number of years and would cut down on the administration of the grants for staff.

Michael Nicholson confirmed that this option had been considered by the previous SPC and rejected but he was happy to list it on the agenda for the December SPC meeting for further discussion. Cllr. Flynn Kennedy also requested that the grants be publicised better as Bray and Greystones applicants often miss out on schemes.

Niamh Wogan asked that the staff make themselves available to assist groups to fill out the application forms and it was confirmed by Máire Halvey that this service is always available.

Cllr. Miriam asked if the council could be a bit more flexible when it came to insisting on receipts etc but Michael added that this was a department and auditor requirement and if the council is not satisfied that the money was correctly spent, it may have to be returned, but this could also be discussed at the next meeting.

- **Community Recognition Fund (CRF) 2023**

Máire Halvey confirmed that 7 Groups received 2023 CRF funding, namely:

- Bray Community Centre
- Baltinglass Community Park
- Bray Parish Centre
- Wicklow Town Placemaking Project
- Arklow Playing Pitch
- Rathdrum Community Park
- Greystones Community Park

These projects are all underway, with estimated completion dates in Quarter 4 of 2024.

- **Community Recognition Fund (CRF) 2024**

Máire Halvey stated that The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, announced on 2nd August 2024, €16.5 million to deliver 185 community Projects across the Country. The Community Recognition Fund 2024 aims to support the development of community infrastructure and facilities for the entire community, in recognition of the contribution being made by communities across the country in welcoming and hosting significant numbers of arrivals from Ukraine and other countries.

Máire Halvey added that Wicklow will receive funding for the following projects in this phase:

- Old Coolattin Country Club CLG & Wicklow County Council
- Dunlavin GAA Club
- Imaal Hall Committee
- Newtown GAA
- Arklow Town Team
- Bray Area Partnership
- Rathdrum Playground Committee

There will be a further call for next phase applications in late 2024.

Máire Halvey confirmed that it was likely that the scheme would have a closing date of early January 2025, and it was designed to provide community type facilities in those communities throughout the County, who have accepted refugees. There was a query better advertising of the scheme, Máire Halvey added that we use every available source of advertising to let groups know of these grants.

(5) Strategy Updates

- **Age Friendly Strategy (Stephanie Lang)**

Máire Halvey gave the update in the absence of Stephanie Lang. Main points from this strategy include the “Healthy Age Friendly Homes” project which is a support Coordination programme that aims to enable older people to age in their own home and reduce the need to transfer to Long-term residential care. The rollout of the programme commenced in January 2024.

- **Older Peoples Council**

The Older People's Council (OPC) met on the 5th of September 2024 in the Brockagh Centre, Laragh where issues such as Health, Transport and Technology were discussed. The Wicklow AGM will be held in the Arklow Bay Hotel on 1st November 2024 where a number of stands providing information to the older person will be provided.

Michael clarified the difference between the OPC and Age Friendly Alliance.

- **Disability & Inclusion Strategy**

Cllr. Winstanley noted that there is a potential for Accessible Tourism in Co. Wicklow, giving people with disabilities the chance to visit Co. Wicklow. Cllr. O'Toole noted in relation to disability, that a lot of housing estates don't have good wheelchair access or parking, we should be asking the Planning section about this issue. Michael Nicholson added that we meet planners & engineers regularly to stay disability aware, and parking is a big disability issue. Máire Halvey noted that that disability is part of everyday life and with regards to disability rights, W.C.C. do a good job and that the Planners are aware of issues, but more work and communication is needed, and also helping Tourism is a priority.

Michael Nicholson noted we made sure the new attraction at Avondale was age and disability friendly as with some walks at Glendalough. Cllr. Snell noted that he would like the AD Callers scheme to be listed on the agenda and to help group with funding, as it has worked well in Wexford CoCo, and he thanked W.C.C. for implementing.

(6) Updates

- **Pride of Place 2024**

Máire Halvey gave the Pride of Place update.

Each year, Wicklow County Council submits community groups who have excelled in their communities. This year, Wicklow County Council has entered three nominations:

ENTRY	CATEGORY
Wicklow Town Team- Murals Project	Community Tourism Initiative
Tinahely Community Recycling Centre	Creative Communities
Tearmann Gardens, Baltinglass	Inclusive Communities

On the 14th of October 2024, a ceremony was held in the Council Chamber to commend the three groups for their nomination and wish them the best going forward to the National Awards. The winners of the National Pride of Place Competition will be announced at an Awards Ceremony in Monaghan on Saturday 2nd November 2024.

Michael Nicholson added that they are always looking for nominations, as they put forward 3 or 4. Aoife noted that Bray finally had a nomination. Michael added that there is a lot of work involved, as groups have to make a presentation to the judges. It is a whole of Ireland competition with both the North and South of Ireland involved. He reiterated that they will be looking for nominations for next year.

- **Comhairle na nÓg**

Máire Halvey gave the Comhairle na nÓg update stating that the position of Co-ordinator had to be filled. Michael Nicholson gave a brief outline on the running of Comhairle na nÓg and advised that there are 25 schools involved and around 18 attend the AGM. Michael noted that some of those involved have gone on to become Councillors.

- **Healthy Ireland/Healthy Wicklow (Lorraine Dunne)**

Lorraine Dunne gave an update the Healthy Ireland Fund Round 4 2023-2025, based on these 2 Performance indicators.

1. **Increase in individual level of positive mental health as per Energy and Vitality Index**

Partners: Wicklow Local Sports and Recreation Partnership, Healthy Wicklow and Wicklow Travellers Group

Projects: Active Communities – in two areas of disadvantage Tinahely/Shillelagh/Carnew & Rathnew.

Supporting Traveller Community to engage in a programme of activities in CEART Wicklow Town

2. **Decrease in those at risk of poverty and basic deprivation.**

Partners: Healthy Wicklow, CYPSC Coordinator, LCDC, Sláintecare Healthy Communities LDO, BAP and CWP
Bray Area Partnership was successful in hosting the approved County Wicklow Food Coordinator position which is funded under the Healthy Ireland Round 4 allocation. Interviews for the position took place in April 2024 with Aisling Kirwan being the successful candidate commencing the role in May 2024

Cllr. Snell thanked Lorraine and her colleagues for their work.

- **Sláintecare Healthy Communities (SHCP) (Izzie Kinsella)**

Izzie Kinsella gave the Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme Update and advised that this programme is about helping disadvantage areas, e.g. Bray-Ballywaltrim. Izzie stated that the projects are chosen through a Needs Analysis Assessment. In 2024, the entire €75,000 budget went to the play therapist project. Cllr. Flynn Kennedy noted the pressure on Bray, big and little Bray. Deprivation in little Bray is chronic and that it is a much fractured area. She noted

how important it is in motivating councillors to support these projects. A feasibility study will be prepared by the end of November 2024. Michael noted that Bray was chosen nationally using a deprivation index.

- **Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme (Marion Van Der Wel)**

In Marion's absence, Máire gave the Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme update and advised that Wicklow was one of the top counties in the country in respect of homes visits. Marion is liaising with housing services etc, and there are issues like falls with the elderly etc. Máire noted that there are possibilities to extend the scheme and employ more than one person. Michael stated that a lot of home visits are being carried out and they can involve 4-5 follow up visits, so there is a huge amount of work involved. Michael added that the Right Sizing Policy is in process and the draft will be going before the Housing SPC. This would allow people to downsize. The Age Friendly Alliance is involved in this. He noted that it is a voluntary scheme, no one will be forced to downsize.

- **Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC)**
- **Local Community Safety Partnership**

Michael gave the Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) update, and the Local Community Safety Partnership Update.

Cllr. Snell spoke about issues regarding addiction and the harm caused to children, Tusla being slow to react, and the Gardaí are also aware, but little is being done. Cllr. Winstanley stated that there is a steering group in Bray that are looking at such issues and mentioned that MECPATH should be invited to present to the SPC.

Michael Nicholson discussed the Planet Youth initiative which originated in Iceland and has created a large reduction in the use of drugs amongst young people. Michael added schools in the county are currently being surveyed. Cllr. Flynn Kennedy requested that the work Comhairle na nÓg has done in relation to drugs should be circulated.

(7) Any other Business.

Michael noted that feedback is needed for the Corporate Plan. Máire said that training will be organised for SPC members, both general training and more specific training. Cllr. Flynn Kennedy asked that the dates be set for SPC meetings for the year ahead. Michael noted that there is a legal obligation to have 4 SPC meetings per year, Cllr. Winstanley suggested that every quarter may not be enough and proposed every two months? Cllr Snell suggested that SPC members should also go to view projects and see work being done, as well as having groups come in and present what they have done? Cllr. Winstanley suggested "Executive Summaries" from SPC meetings should be shared across other SPCs?

Máire gave the LAIT update. John enquired as to whether LAIT should be in this SPC and was advised that LAIT was now part of the new Integration & Emergency Response Directorate.

- Chairperson Cllr Caroline Winstanley thanked everyone for attending the meeting.
- Michael Nicholson advised that the next SPC meeting will take place in December 2024

Signed: Caroline Winstanley

Date: 16/12/24

**Cllr. Caroline Winstanley,
Chairperson.**