**Minutes of the Housing, Community, Culture and Library Strategic Policy Committee**

**16 October 2020**

Attendees; Adam Wyse, Donal Barry, Damien Geoghegan, Conor McGuinness, Catherine Horan, John Pratt, Seamus Ryan, Jason Murphy, Breda Brennan, Olivia O’Reilly, Conor Nolan, Paul Johnston, Kieran Keogh, Jane Cantwell, Ivan Grimes, Margaret Organ, Paula Paul

Apologies: Una Dunphy, Rosemary Kennedy

1. The minutes of the meeting held 17 July 2020 were approved. Catherine Horan gave a brief update on the introduction of the new differential rent scheme which had been discussed at the meeting on 17 July and subsequently at the September Plenary meeting of Waterford City and County Council.
2. Draft Anti-Social Behaviour Policy – Ivan Grimes gave a brief introduction of the draft Policy document which was circulated in advance of the meeting, including the following;

* Vast majority of Council tenants are law abiding and are good citizens and neighbours
* ASB in a neighbourhood can have a very negative impact on the quality of life of tenants
* Estate management unit seeks to promote good behaviour and peaceful enjoyment, Community provides support to residents groups.
* Legal obligation on LA’s to have ASB strategies in place, current strategy in place since 2015
* Housing legislation sets out the functions and powers that Councils have to deal with ASB
* ASB is legally defined. That definition includes drug dealing , violence, threats & intimidation. It also includes behaviour which causes a person to have reduced enjoyment of their home – not specified in ASB definition but could be interpreted as excessive noise, loud music.
* Enforcement needs to take account of AGS active investigations, Council’s enforcement powers (evictions, repossession excluding orders) require court action and as such the level of proof required is high
* Neighbour disputes quite common with counter claims of ASB
* Lack of complaints
* Tenancy agreement sets out various obligations, behaviour
* ASB checks with AGS on all new allocations including transfers – highlight any criminal convictions
* Health & Safety of staff is critical – it is a criminal offence to intimidate or threaten a housing official or their family
* Excellent working relationship with AGS (via JPC and with community, drug squad) and with other agencies such as D/SP, Tusla, Probation, Prison Service

The draft Policy was discussed and the following points were noted;

* On-the-ground presence of Estate Management Officers very important and suggestion that community based offices might be re-opened
* Request that contact details of Estate Management Officers and the areas they cover be circulated to members
* Health and safety for staff noted as a key priority
* Consideration to be given to treatment of domestic violence, treatment of victims of ASB and possibility of transfers for victims
* Update of ASB policy needs to be aligned with Tenants Handbook and Tenancy Agreements

It was agreed that the draft Policy would be discussed further at the new ASB sub-group and the following members of the SPC agreed to participate in that group;

* Cllr. Conor McGuinness
* Cllr. Damian Geoghegan
* Cllr. John Pratt
* Cllr. Jason Murphy

1. WCCC Vacant Homes Action Plan – the Council’s Action Plan was circulated in advance of the meeting and Paul Johnston gave a presentation on the implementation of the Plan which was adopted by the Council in 2018, a copy of the presentation is attached.

It was agreed that the Plan would be discussed further at the new Vacant Homes sub-group and the following members of the SPC agreed to participate in the group;

* Cllr. Breda Brennan
* Cllr. Seamus Ryan
* Cllr. Jason Murphy
* Cllr. Damian Geoghegan

1. Establishment of sub-group to consider expansion of library services – the following members of the SPC agreed to participate in the group;

* Cllr. Seamus Ryan
* Cllr. Breda Brennan
* Cllr. Adam Wyse

1. Establishment of sub-group to consider the process for allocating Supporting Waterford Communities Grants - the following members of the SPC agreed to participate in the group;

* Cllr. Adam Wyse
* Cllr. Conor McGuiness

1. Arts Practice Grants and Arts Festivals Grants

Arts are extremely challenged at this time, Conor Nolan is helping and supporting on line applicants on line, and the grant applications are due in this evening and can be submitted on the website Submit.com which is a new service. He has been in contact with the previous applicants of 2018 and 2019 and had taken calls and sent out information in the post. There are about 20 applications in which is less than past years where there were 50-70 applications received of which 30-40 were successful. The applicants are asked this year to come up with two outcomes one to take place on line or other safe alternatives. Conor also gave the good news that there is now a grant for new writers and producers.

Margaret Organ spoke about the Arts Festival grants and they need to be submitted by 06th November 2020. Margaret has also contacted previous applicants to encourage them to apply and is working on community development. There will need to be a clear plan on health and safety as the festivals move on line.

1. AOB

Ivan Grimes informed the group that the budget workshop date is provisionally booked for 24th November.

Adam Wyse suggested that the next Housing, Community, Culture and Library Strategic Policy Committee meeting is provisionally booked for Thursday 19th November at 6pm on Microsoft Teams.