

County Wicklow Public Participation Network

Representative Reporting

Name of Committee: Community, Cultural and Social Development SPC

Name of Representatives: Gertie Sally & Kevin Mann

Date of Meeting Attended: 29th June, 2020

Present: Cllr Gail Dunne (Ch), Cllr Melanie Corrigan, Cllr John Mullen, Cllr Vincent Blake, Cllr Miriam Murphy, Gertie Sally, Irene Sweeney, Kevin Mann.

Michael Nicholson, Mary Tuite, Caroline Fox.

Meeting was held in a large room at the Clermont Campus in Rathnew. Two meter minimum social distancing was adhered to.

Chair thanked everyone for making the effort to attend the meeting. This was the first meeting since the implementation of the Covid 19 Pandemic restrictions.

Michael Nicholson outlined the work of the County Council in relation to the pandemic since the lockdown. The Council staff mostly continued to work, some from home and some from the Co. Buildings, helping to co-ordinate work in the communities. There were regular high level staff meetings throughout the lockdown to discuss urgent matters. Michael made it clear that although restrictions were being scaled back, that there is still a lot of vulnerable people who are in need of assistance. Michael felt that the pandemic had heightened the awareness of many people as to the needs of many throughout the county. He felt that the issue of food poverty and isolation were particularly exposed. He congratulated and commended the voluntary groups and numerous clubs, the length and breadth of the county that had used their skills and given their time to aid in looking after the vulnerable and isolated in our communities. Michael thanked the PPN, and in particular Helen and Grainne, for their exceptional work in the service of the communities of Wicklow.

Cllr. Gail Dunne thanked the County Council staff for their work and commitment to the service of the county. He also commended the voluntary groups and clubs around the county and had special mention for the PPN.

Cllr. Miriam Murphy echoed the chair's words but added that people with disabilities were still very vulnerable. Miriam mentioned that she had asked, prior to the meeting, that the Disability Officer, Laura O'Callaghan, should attend our meetings to report on issues around the county. Caroline Fox said, she had asked Laura to attend but that she had a previous commitment. Laura will be invited to future meetings. A report from DFI was part of the package sent with the agenda.

Kevin Mann thanked the chair for including the letter from PPN (in relation to "the vulnerabilities of people with disabilities during a pandemic") with the documentation for the meeting. Kevin asked that everyone look through it when they get a chance.

Progress on the Clar projects and the Town and Village renewal scheme was discussed. Miriam asked if we could be provided with a list of areas covered under Clar. Application deadline of August 28th 2020.

Town and village renewal scheme announced. Three application deadlines, 3rd July, 14th August, 28th August.

€62,000 has been allocated for funding under the Community Enhancement Scheme. Application to be sent to WCC. Before 18th September.

Work on the various schemes has not progressed very far because of the restrictions.

Commenting on the food and beverage strategy, Michael said that the pandemic had highlighted food poverty in parts of Wicklow since the schools were closed. Something that needs to be looked into more. The council had received some food donations which helped in the early stages.

Cllr. John Mullen spoke about the walkways around the Tinahely area. He said that during the lockdown they became very overgrown from lack of use. They require some maintenance, so funding may be required as it may require machinery to complete the work.

Discussion about greenways. The one in Blessington is funded and will get underway shortly. It is now thought that this greenway will not be completed until 2021. The Arklow to Shillelagh one still has some issues with landowners. The plan is to try and arrange funding for the Arklow to Woodenbridge section as this is ready to go and while this is being done keep working on progressing the remainder. Wicklow to Greystones, planning the route is going ahead.

Two new playgrounds opened Glendalough and Laragh, only one remaining now is Enniskerry. It is believed that there are ample playgrounds in the county so the focus now will switch to maintenance. The possibility of providing allotments in some areas was discussed. It would require the use of land, which isn't always available. Melanie Corrigan suggested that community gardens could also benefit the communities. Michael said he received enquiries about dog parks, all to be discussed further.

Digital poverty was discussed. Lack of access to PC's, tablets and laptops during the lockdown was a problem for school children and older people. Access to good broadband also hampering the delivery of education and spread of information about services and community help groups.

The libraries in Wicklow came in for special mention. They continued their work in as many areas as possible, delivering books etc to the elderly. We were also the first county to get back up and running. Thanks to the staff that put a lot of work into preparing for opening. Wicklow has the highest percentage of population use of libraries in Ireland. The upcoming new libraries in Wicklow Town, Baltinglass and the refurbishment of Aughrim will all attract even more use.

An interim report on Migrant Integration Strategy was circulated with our agenda. Worth a read.

Other reports and updates sent with agenda.

- Community Enhancement Programme 2020
- Disability Federation Ireland update
- Wicklow to Greystones Coastal Route update
- Capital Projects Update
- Arklow to Shillelagh Greenway
- Wicklow Sports and Recreation Partnership
- Libraries

- Arts Office
- Local Community Development Committee

The meeting ended.

Next meeting 21st September.

Kevin Mann.

Gertie Sally.