

Finance Strategic Policy Committee
Minutes of Meeting Held On 17th November 2016

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2016

Minutes agreed

2. Matters arising

a) Pyrite Works

Cllr. P. McCartan queried the recent introduction of classifications on the severity of pyrite by the Pyrite Resolutions Board and the National Standards Authority of Ireland. He noted that it is estimated that approx. 1,000 of the 10,000 claims fall into the serious category. He enquired as to the impact this new categorisation will have on Dublin City Council's accountability on this issue. K. Quinn confirmed that she has been in communication with B. Kenny, ACE, on this matter and as progress is not being made with advancing claims with the relevant insurance companies, Dublin City Council needs to revert to the Department regarding funding for these works.
Agreed: A further report will be requested for the next meeting.

b) Housing Acquisitions update from B. Kenny, ACE, Housing and Community Services Department

Agreed: Correspondence noted

c) Outstanding Domestic Waste Debtors update from V. Norton, Executive Manager, Environment and Transportation Department

Contents of report from V. Norton was noted. Queries were raised on the following issues:

- As the vast majority of this debt has been written off (€6.68m) it would seem unfair to pursue a minority of families for their debt (€1.2m).
- What is the position with families who have moved on from Greyhound who initially took over the collection service and pursuing them for any outstanding debt.
- Queries were raised regarding the debt collection agency engaged to pursue this debt. The level of success achieved and a cost benefit analysis of this engagement.
- Reference was made to the fact that the central Finance Department are not engaged in the collection of this debt and the fact that it is left to the operational department whose core function is not debt recovery.
- Cllr. McGinley noted that due to media coverage, a debt collection agency has contacted him seeking an opportunity to recover not only €1.2m debt but also the debt deemed to be uncollectable.
- It was highlighted that a service was provided by Dublin City Council therefore the debt is due regardless of the time period lapsed.

V. Norton noted that a significant number of invoices were issued to "The Occupier" at the residence and legal opinion has advised that it would be impossible to recover those debts in any legal proceedings. In addition, it was noted that outstanding amounts below €1,000 would not be economic to follow through on. He pointed out

that the statute of limitations prevents the Council pursuing debts outstanding for six years or longer.

V. Norton noted that Greyhound engaged a debt collection agency called Pay Away to pursue the outstanding debts and Dublin City Council are currently trying to establish how much of this debt is realistically collectable. However, it was highlighted that Dublin City Council are ensuring that outstanding charges are recorded. This provides that when someone is seeking to obtaining the necessary conveyance clearance when selling their property, Dublin City is insisting that these outstanding amounts are paid.

Dublin City Council will actively pursue the collection of this debt and will consider avenues including debt collection agencies, selling the debt on and all the legal and economical issues that arise.

Reference was made to the use of the current Hi-Affinity IT System which was used to hold water and waste collection data. Since the transfer of water services to Irish Water, it is considered too expensive to maintain this system and consideration is being given to the transfer of the data to a database for monitoring.

Agreed: A further report was requested providing both the historical and current activities referenced during the above discussions.

d) Rates Exemptions on Government properties – letter to Seamus McCarthy, C&AG dated 5/10/16

S. McCarthy responded directly to Cllr. McGinley noting that the issues raised are a policy matter which are not a matter for the C&AG and recommending that the issue should be raised with the relevant government department.

e) Cost of compiling NOAC performance indicators

M. Pyne, ACE, HR Department provided correspondence relating to the costs associated with the compilation of this dated for the performance indicators.

Agreed: Report noted.

3. Dublin Business Innovation Centre

Michael Culligan, DBIC made a presentation to Committee members covering the work of the DBIC noting the following areas:

- Empowering entrepreneurs to start-up and scale
- DBIC delivering the most comprehensive range of supports
- Access by Start Ups to Finance via DBIC
- Incubation facilities in the Guinness Enterprise Centre
- Enabling collaboration and innovation
- Future Scope May 2017

In a follow-up video and presentation M. Culligan spoke on the Guinness Enterprise Centre (GEC) and noted the following:

- Facilities available to Start-Ups within the largest enterprise centre in Ireland
- 90+ companies turning over €40m+
- GEC is the ultimate start-up ecosystem supporting companies to scale, fostering a culture of community and supporting business development.
- Expansion plan for the Centre to double its size

At the conclusion of the presentations, the work of the DBIC and GEC were commended by the committee members. Queries followed around issues such as:

- International competition for entrepreneurial start-ups,
- Funding opportunities – seed capital etc
- What policies can be developed to assist these businesses – assistance sought in the policy area to support the development of a Super Hub
- Numbers of direct jobs created is 3,000
- Cost to rent out space in GEC in comparison to other centres – costs are getting extremely high in the Docklands area for space however area such as the GEC and Digital Hub are affordable at entry level start-ups and above.
- Impact of the Brexit vote and interests being expressed
- Intellectual property rights protection for innovative ideas
- Location of enterprise centres in the inner city and consideration of suburban locations
- The contribution of the DBIC to the ecosystem of the community in the inner city and assistance from the committee is always available.

4. Local Enterprise Office – Grants Allocations

Greg Swift from the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) provided the members with an overview presentation of their work covering the following areas:

- The LEO is the First Stop Shop for business supports with funding support, export assistance, online trading vouchers, training, mentoring and networking opportunities.
- 3 types of grants available – feasibility, priming and expansion.
- Statistics on the number of grants approved, number of jobs created, total value of grants approved and the value of refundable/loan aid approved to businesses.
- Statistics were provided on the number of grants allocated for Export Assistance and Trading Online Vouchers.
- Details were given on the Micro Finance Ireland loans processed.
- Details on the Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur competition and Inner City Enterprise Social Enterprise Grant Scheme.
- The level of enterprise soft supports available such as mentoring, advice clinics, training and networking opportunities.
- The role of the Dublin Start Up Commissioners Office and other representational and supporting services provided.
- Case Studies of successful business originally supported by the LEO.
- Local Economic & Community Plan.

Following the presentation, members raised queries/made observations on the following:

- Enquiries about whether preference shares are taken in companies.
- Limited availability of skill development opportunities.
- Movement from City Development Board into the LEO structure – pros and cons.
- Details on the system for loan repayments
- Provision of space for businesses and referrals to the GEC and other centres.
- A breakdown of business sectors supported noting there is a 40% allocation to the technology sector.
- Dublin holds its own against other areas in the country. However issues arise when they wish to increase in scale.

The Committee commended the ongoing work of the Local Enterprise Office and thanked Greg Swift for his contribution.

5. Community Group Lettings/Licences

A copy of a report from P. Clegg, Planning and Property Development Department was circulated to members. This report in essence demonstrates the value in financial terms to the city of these community lettings. Cllr. McGinley drew attention to the current open market value of €10m for these properties although it may be higher.

Reference was drawn to the fact that some of those letting the buildings are making a significant income for the payment of a relatively low rent. However, these lettings are a minority grouping.

It was pointed out that the services that the vast majority of these community groups are providing is invaluable to the local communities and this must be acknowledged in addition to highlighting the monetary value of these lettings by Dublin City Council.

Agreed: It was agreed that a report should possibly be presented to the Area Committees in the first instance highlighting the provision of these community facilities through lettings/leases and then return this item to the Finance Strategic Policy Committee.

6. Finance Strategic Policy Committee – Meetings Schedule 2017

Noted and agreed

7. Rates Exemptions (Schedule 4)

Report was presented to the Committee and the contents were noted. It was pointed out that the City Council are not in a position to change the current exemptions.

Cllr. Lacey highlighted that there is currently no tracking system at reserved council level for legislative changes going through the Oireachtas.

Agreed: K. Quinn will refer this to the Protocol Committee.

A. Sweeney noted the lack of consultation with the local authority sector with regard to this legislation as they are not involved in the valuation process. He further pointed out that this legislation not only extended the exemption categories but also extinguished the previous list kept by the Valuation Office. He expressed regret that legislative consideration that was going to financially affect the local authority sector did not provide an opportunity for them to contribute to the debate.

Cllr. McCartan queried whether commercial rates are paid by internet based companies and bookmakers. K. Quinn clarified that online trade is not something that is assessed by the Valuation when they come to value a premises. A warehousing facility for this business would be assessable.

K. Quinn detailed a meeting that she and the Chair had with the Government's Chief Digital Advisor regarding these issues including the benefits to the export trade and the adverse corresponding impact on the local community and the impact on retailers who are paying rates on their physical presence.

Agreed: The issue of online trade will be listed as an agenda item for the next meeting.

8. Audit Committee minutes – 12th May 2016

Minutes noted.

9. A.O.B.

Work Programme Update

It was agreed that an update to progress on the work programme would be presented to the next meeting.

Signed: Councillor Ruairi McGinley
Chairperson

Date: 17th November 2016

Attendance:

Members

Councillor Ruairi McGinley (Chairperson)
Councillor Paddy Bourke
Councillor Tom Brabazon
Councillor Dermot Lacey
Councillor Paddy McCartan
Councillor Micheál MacDonncha
Councillor Noeleen Reilly
Councillor Nial Ring
Aebhric McGibney, Dublin Chamber of Commerce
Morgan O'Regan, Docklands Business Forum
Aidan Sweeney, IBEC

Officials

Kathy Quinn, Head of Finance
Vincent Norton, Executive Manager, Environment & Transportation Department
Greg Swift, Local Enterprise Office
Fiona Murphy, Senior Staff Officer, Finance Secretariat
Fiona Collins, Assistant Staff Officer, Finance Secretariat

Guest Speaker

Michael Culligan, Dublin Business Innovation Centre
Julian Seymour, Dublin Business Innovation Centre

Apologies

Lord Mayor Brendan Carr
Councillor Ray McAdam
Councillor Larry O'Toole
Councillor Hazel De Nortúin
Dr. Caroline McMullan, DCU
Joanna Piechota, Irish Polish Society
Eric Fleming, ICTU