

Finance Strategic Policy Committee

Minutes of Meeting Held 20th May 2021

1. Draft Minutes of the Finance SPC meeting held on 25th March 2021

The draft minutes were proposed by Cllr. D. Lacey and seconded by Cllr. N. Reilly. The minutes were adopted.

2. Matters Arising

Housing Rents

A request for a report on Housing Rent Arrears was made.

Agreed: It was agreed that a letter would issue to Housing & Community Services requesting an update for the September meeting.

Rates Waiver

K. Quinn provided an update on the rate waivers applied to date and the number of appeals lodged. 161 appeals amounting €544K have been sent to the Department and 72 appeals amounting to €330K were not recommended as they do not meet the qualifying criteria.

It was noted that it is too early yet to know the impact on rates payments over the full year. No information is available regarding a possible waiver for hospitality for the 3rd quarter of the year.

3. Correspondence

a) Local Property Tax Review – correspondence received from Minister P. Donohoe

Noting the contents of the response received, it was agreed that a letter would issue to the Minister for Finance seeking a meeting with a delegation of SPC members to discuss the LPT reform in the context of local government funding.

Agreed: it was agreed that the three issues to be raised are i) removing exempt status from new builds since 2013, ii) the operation of the equalisation fund and iii) the loss of grant funding / substitution of LPT receipts coming from the determination by Government that DCC is self-funding.

b) Housing Loans Arrears – letter to Darach O'Connor, Housing & Community Services Department dated 20/4/2021

It was noted that a report on this item was listed on the agenda for this meeting

4. Housing Loan Accounts in Arrears – Analysis

Teresa Conlon and Gabrielle Malone, Housing & Community Services Department presented a report to members. This report covered the follows:

- History of Arrears
- Breakdown of Arrears to 31st December 2020
- Mortgage to Rent
- Covid 19 and Mortgage Payment Breaks
- Types of loans available

At the conclusion of the presentation, the Housing Loans team were complimented on their work.

Additional clarification was sought around the following areas:

- Criteria for eligibility for the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan and the disadvantage to separated/divorced buyers – exceptions can be made in extreme circumstances.
- Impact of the increase in the MARP premium fund rate – it was noted that there was no impact on the number of loan applications.
- Intervention when accounts fall into arrears – Mortgage to Rent criteria need to be met to transfer over. Face to face meetings are important in arrears cases. Court proceedings are necessary when they are not engaging. DCC link homeowners into MABS to help them consolidate debts. There is also the option to capitalise the loan and extend the loan period.
- Possible impact of the cap on the maximum loan amount of €320K in the Dublin market - It was noted that houses below this amount are available in the housing market.

Agreed: It was agreed that further analysis sought on historical arrears figures will be compiled and circulated to members.

5. Cash in the community

K. Quinn presented a report on this initiative and the context it has with regard to its inclusion in the SPC terms of reference were presented where it clearly details community development as a priority.

The impact of bank branch closures and often consequent reduction of cash in circulation in the local economy was noted. The potential impact of less cash in circulation in the community can have a direct effect on trade for local businesses by consumers who do not use credit or debit cards. Further knock on effects on commercial customers, new business start-ups and vulnerable members of the community are evident.

It was noted that in the UK there is a pilot initiative underway to enable communities to access cash at different pop up locations where for example staff from the main UK banks operate a bank clinic at a room identified locally and rented out providing advice on different days. Another initiative offered is to increase the number of ATMs, operating without charge, in the pilot areas.

The Committee were asked to consider if this was an initiative that they would wish to proceed with by approaching the banking sector to propose the establishment of a project in Ireland.

Agreed: It was agreed to proceed with this proposal.

It was noted during discussions that followed that there has been a significant increase in the use of digital tools during the current pandemic period. In addition, An Post have expanded their counter services.

Agreed: It was agreed that the Dublin Economic Monitor would be contacted to request that research into cash in the community and any relevant trends in this area for the Dublin economy would be examined.

Agreed: It was agreed to establish what low cost options are available to customers from the commercial banks.

6. Community Wealth Building

A detailed research report was presented by K. Quinn to the committee on Community Wealth Building. The report provided a broad understanding of the topic covering the following:

- What is Community Wealth Building
- Components of Community Wealth Building
- Place
- The role of Anchor Institutions
- Community Wealth Building in the US: Cleveland
- Community Wealth Building in Europe – Mondragon
- Community Wealth Building in the UK – Preston
- Next Steps

The committee thanked K. Quinn for the amount of work put into the report presented and welcomed the proposal of seeking a presentation from some of the advocacy organisations involved. Comments made included:

- Create something of value for local communities.
- Include the negatives as well as the initiative too.
- Rates waivers for new small businesses setting up in disadvantaged areas.
- Cash hauls from drug seizures should, after due process, go back into the communities they come from.
- Use of unused industrial estates in areas for the co-operative community.
- Proposed a half day workshop on this proposal
- Noting the presence of the LCDC, what would be the role of Dublin City Council
- The approach in procurement must be made carefully.
- Clear definition of a community must be given i.e. Dublin, areas etc.
- Co-ordination of the initiative must be clearly developed
- Skills survey in the areas must be undertaken and also there's a need to talk with a group of anchors.

Agreed: It was agreed that a presentation would be made to the next SPC Meeting scheduled for September with the intention of organising a wider workshop for councillors, anchor businesses and community organisations in the future.

7. Video Series Stats

A summary report on the development and promotion of the infographic videos was presented to the committee.

Agreed: It was agreed that this type of communication would be expanded with other areas to be looked at such as tree pruning, gutter cleaning, street cleaning and activities that happen at night time.

8. Revised Standing Orders – Amendments to SPCs

Contents of the report were noted.

Signed: Councillor Séamas McGrattan
Chairperson

Date: 20th May 2021

Members Present

Cllr Séamas McGrattan (Chairperson)
Cllr Mary Callaghan
Cllr Anthony Connaghan
Cllr. Daithí De Róiste
Cllr. Alison Gilliland
Cllr Dermot Lacey
Cllr. Darcy Lonergan
Cllr. Paddy McCartan
Cllr. Noeleen Reilly
Cllr. Nial Ring
Tara Lillywhite-Torpey, Dublin Chamber of Commerce
Professor Caroline McMullan, DCU
Philip O'Callaghan, PPN
Aidan Sweeney, IBEC

Officials

Kathy Quinn, Head of Finance
Teresa Conlon, Administrative Officer, Housing & Community Services Department
Gabrielle Malone, Senior Staff Officer, Housing & Community Services Department
Fiona Murphy, Senior Staff Officer, Finance Secretariat
Mary Curran, PA to Head of Finance, Finance Secretariat
Brendan Dorney, IS Department

Apologies

Jack Daly, Docklands Business Forum
Eric Fleming, ICTU
Cllr Daryl Barron
Cllr James Geoghegan