

## Finance Strategic Policy Committee

### Minutes of Meeting Held 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024

#### 1. Draft minutes of the Finance SPC meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2023.

The draft minutes were proposed by Cllr. Paddy McCartan and seconded by Philip O'Callaghan.

**The minutes were adopted.**

#### 2. Matters Arising.

**None**

#### 3. Correspondence.

**Noted.**

Ongoing correspondence with Government through the term of this Committee on Visitor Accommodation Charge and Rent Arrears proving very unsatisfactory.

Members discussed this and commented:

- This Committees suggestions are being constantly challenged which is unacceptable
- Serious effort needs to be made to overcome this. Part of the local elections campaign should be to give local authorities more power to deal with rents arrears and visitor accommodation tax etc.
- A recent official Council of Europe report – Ireland has the 4<sup>th</sup> worst system of local government in the Council of Europe area.

**Agreed to:** Forward correspondence to Government if a policy decision is made to introduce a Visitor Accommodation Charge.

#### 4. Report 03 - 2024 Housing Rent Collection and Arrears Recovery

**Noted.**

The Committee welcomed the attendance of Michelle Robinson, Tara Robertson and Clive Ahern to the meeting. Tara and Clive gave a comprehensive presentation to the members highlighting:

- An increase in rent receipts of 10% between 2020 and 2023
- Total number of occupants in all properties 64,995
- Average weekly rent charge is €79, single occupancy €48.56 and families €94
- Total rent arrears €38,138
- Credit on Accounts €4,948.460
- The increase in rent receipts over the 4 year period was attributable to
  - Increase in tenancies
  - Increase in average weekly rent
  - Focus on engaging tenants in paying weekly rent as a priority

Positive actions taken by the Housing and Community Department in 2023:

- Completion of the Arrears Recovery Procedure
- Debt Management training provided to Executive Housing Officers
- Online self-service balance enquiry available via Citizen Hub for tenants
- Staff recruited and upskilled
- Housing IT System upgraded

- Rent staff meet with all new tenants to inform them of their rent obligations with new tenants signing up to household budget/direct debit and pay two weeks rent in advance.

Members discussed and commended the officials responsible for the report and in particular to the valuable work of Tara Robertson and her commitment to engage with people on the ground with regards to arrears etc.

#### **5. Report 02 - 2024 Update on Community Wealth Building Phase Noted**

Kathy gave an update on the status of the CWB initiative and the priorities going forward including:

- ✓ DCC Online learning platform for staff to learn about CWB
- ✓ Department leads to create better awareness in each Department
- ✓ Planned to engage with 2 or 3 anchor institutions in Dublin to participate in CWB activity and hold an event for this group to allow DCC to share its CWB experiences
- ✓ Continue with a values-based and geographically targeted approach to the recruitment of GO's as currently being piloted in Cherry Orchard.

Members discussed the report and asked

- If the recruitment initiative could be moved to other areas of the city and Kathy advised that she will discuss with HR as a number of areas are being considered. Policy needed on it.
- If the Docklands Business Forum could be engaged with regarding anchor institutions. Kathy advised that we would try and engage with as many anchor institutions as possible.

#### **6. Report 03 – 2024 Civic Crowdfunding. Noted**

Kathy updated the Committee on Crowdfund Dublin City. Kathy described the projects submitted and verified and currently crowdfunding. Projects focusing on gardening to bio-diversity to local history to community development, sports and healthy communities were approved. Members asked if the funding (€300k) is not spent in Phase 1 of the project would it be ring-fenced for Phase 2 etc. Kathy confirmed this would be the case. Kathy thanked Mary Curran and Jackie O'Reilly for their hard work in launching the initiative.

**Agreed to:** Approve a DCC pledge to the projects listed from the Crowdfund Dublin City fund and for the report to be submitted to the February Council Meeting for approval of the full Council.

#### **7. Audit Committee Minutes of meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2023. Noted.**

**Agreed to:** Request the administrator of the Audit Report to circulate a description of the various abbreviations used in the minutes to this Committee to enable them to better understand the report.

#### **8. A.O.B.**

9. Next meeting Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024 at 2.30pm which will be the last meeting of the Committee.

Signed: **Councillor Séamas McGrattan**  
**Chairperson**

Date: **18<sup>th</sup> January, 2024**

**Members Present**

Cllr Séamas McGrattan  
Cllr Dermot Lacey  
Cllr Mary Callaghan  
Cllr Anthony Connaghan  
Cllr Fiona Connolly  
Cllr Christy Burke  
Cllr Paddy McCartan  
Cllr Darcy Lonergan  
Cllr Daryl Barron  
Cllr Niall Ring  
Dr. Caroline McMullan, DCU  
Aidan Sweeney, IBEC  
Philip O'Callaghan, PPN  
Eric Fleming, ICTU  
Alan Robinson, Docklands Business Forum

**Officials**

Kathy Quinn, Head of Finance  
Mary Curran, Finance Secretariat  
Sophie Kelly, Finance Secretariat  
Zoe Flood, Finance Secretariat  
Tara Robertson, Housing and Community  
Clive Ahern, Housing and Community  
Michelle Robinson, Housing and Community

**Apologies**

Lord Mayor Daithí de Róiste  
Sohini De