

MINUTES OF STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING ON HOUSING, SOCIAL INCLUSION & CORPORATE SERVICES on 8th March 2024 at 11.00 a.m. in the Council Chamber, Courthouse, Cavan.

In attendance:

- Cllr Val Smith, Chairperson
- Mr Eoin Doyle, Director of Service
- Ms Lynda McGavigan, Cavan County Council
- Mr John Wilson, Cavan County Council
- Ms Bridie McBrearty, Cavan County Council
- Ms Ramona McAvenue, Cavan County Council
- Cllr Paddy McDonald
- Cllr Patricia Walsh
- Cllr Madeleine Argue
- Cllr Trevor Smith, Chairperson

Apologies:

- Cllr P Elliott, Development and Construction
- Cllr Clifford Kelly
- Mr John Donohoe, Community & Enterprise

Cllr V Smith, Chairperson welcomed everybody to meeting.

30 MINUTES

Cllr M Argue proposed the minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2023 and seconded by Cllr T Smith.

40 Human Resources & Corporate Affairs Annual Report

L McGavigan gave an update on HR & Corporate Affairs.

- **Recruitment**

The recruitment competitions held in 2023 attracted 1,275 applicants and a significant number of employees have been appointed as a result of these competitions, including new employees joining the organisation and in many cases, existing employees attaining promotion.

The Council was also among only four local authorities in Ireland to participate in the WAM programme, a graduate programme for people with disabilities. Three staff were employed on this programme in 2023 and a further four graduates will be employed in 2024.

- **Gender Pay Gap Report – was published in December 2023**

The Gender Pay Gap is not the same as equal pay. Employment Equality legislation provides for equal pay for like work. All male and female employees in the local government sector are paid equally for work that is the same or similar or for work of equal value, therefore this report does not examine equal pay.

In terms of gender balance on 30th June 2022 62% of all Cavan County Council's employees were male and 38% were female, and this remained the same in 2023. The Mean Gender Pay Gap shows that on average, in 2022 females are paid 2.01% less than males whereas in 2023 females were paid 0.94% less than males. The Median Gender Pay Gap shows that the median rate of pay in 2022 for females is 8.31% higher than the median rate of pay for males and in 2023 this increased to being 14.23% higher for females than the median rate of pay for males.

More detailed information in relation to part-time employees, pay band quartiles etc. is outlined in the Gender Pay Gap Report which is available on the Council's website or on request from the Human Resources Section.

- **Staff Welfare**

Work/Life Balance Options

Employees have access to a wide range of schemes that aspire to assist employees achieve a proper work life balance. Schemes include parental leave, force majeure leave, work sharing, shorter working year and career breaks.

Blended Working

In accordance with national guidelines for the public sector, blended working arrangements were also introduced in 2022. Blended working is a combination of office based/on-site and remote working which can be undertaken at home, in a hub or alternative office-based location.

Staff Newsletter

In 2021 we reintroduced a staff newsletter, which proved very popular amongst employees and continued on a regular basis. The newsletter provides information to staff on Council activities and also information on health and wellness issues, as well as updates on retirements, new staff joining the organisation etc.

Wellness Programme

The Council continues a Wellness Programme for staff which not only promotes the Council's employee assistance programme, but also encouraged employees to participate in Council

organised free talks and workshops on issues such as mindfulness, men's and women's health promotion, physical activities, parenting advice etc. throughout 2023.

- **Learning & Development**

A comprehensive Learning & Development Programme was delivered in 2023 to enable staff carry out their role in a confident, competent manner and contribute effectively to the overall vision of the organisation and the accomplishment of its goals and objectives. Staff training was delivered via 38 online courses and 249 in-person courses, with specific emphasis on health & safety and mandatory organisational training needs. Cumulatively, training was provided to 1,189 indoor staff and 859 outdoor staff. Support continued to be provided to staff wishing to pursue further education study programmes.

Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)

Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) is the mechanism used to support and improve performance at individual, team and organisational levels and is a means of engaging, supporting and developing individual staff members. The competency framework, now embedded in the organisation for both Senior and Middle Managers, is an integral part of our PMDS process. Performance Management and Development System in Cavan County Council is driven by the Senior Management Team.

- **Corporate Affairs**

Freedom of Information (FOI) Statistics 2023:

Cases brought forward from 2022:	0
Number of applications received:	60
Number of applications granted:	32
Number of applications part granted:	2
Number of applications refused:	16
Withdrawn/Dealt with outside FOI:	8
Ongoing requests:	2

Data Protection

GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 came into effect in May 2018. GDPR has wider scope, standards and sanctions & is seen more fit for purpose in the digital age.

Data Protection Statistics 2023: Subject Access Requests 2

- **Council Meetings and Elected Members**

During 2023 the Council received a visit from H.E. Stanislav Vidovic, Ambassador of Slovenia to Ireland and hosted Cathaoirleach's and Civic receptions to honour Michael Hanley, Lacken Camogie Team, members of Jugendblasorchester Kurnachtal EV, Cavan Under 16 Ladies Football Team, Breffni Blues Special Olympics Club and Cavan Tidy Towns Committees. As part of the Cavan Calling festival the Council also hosted a reception in honour of our Cavan Associations and our Twinning/Sister Cities & Partners from the United States, Canada, Australia, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Ireland.

- **Register of Electors**

The Electoral Reform Act 2022 was signed into law on the 25th July 2022. This Act is a fundamental strengthening of our electoral system and processes, and it will make them more streamlined, effective, inclusive and resilient into the future. Under the new Electoral Reform Act 2022, the processes of producing a draft, final and supplement registers have been replaced by a single live and continuously updated register. This means that the same process is in place all year around and electoral records can be updated at any time up to fifteen days before an electoral event. The most significant change to the electoral register process lies in the move from fixed statutorily imposed deadlines for updating electoral register to continuous or rolling registration which can now be done online or through a form. From the age of sixteen years, one can apply to be added to the Pending Electors List and the registration system will record the elector as pending until they reach the eligible voting age of eighteen years. Once they reach eighteen the registration system will automatically update their status to active.

50HOUSING PROGRESS REPORT

J Wilson presented the report on the capital and void programme of work as follows:

- The current Local Authority New Build programme consists of 27 no. housing schemes for 417 units at various stages of planning, design, and construction.
- Approved Housing Bodies – the current programme consists of 3 no. housing schemes for 21 units at construction stage.
- The overall 'Housing for All' new build programme (LA & AHB) for 2022-2026 is 490 units. 135 units were delivered in 2022 & 2023 and expected delivery for 2024 is 133 units.
- Local Authority Acquisitions – strategic acquisitions only ie must be to meet a specific need eg disability or risk of homelessness. 16 no. houses are currently in the process of being acquired.
- Cavan County Council has returned 342 vacant houses back to use over the past 6 years. So far in 2024, work is ongoing on returning 20 No vacant units to use.
- The Energy Retrofit Programme – In 2022 & 2023, 71 units have been retrofitted. Our current allocation for 2024 will enable the retrofitting of another 15 units.
- Croi Conaithe (Towns) Fund
Stream 1 Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant - 244 applications received to date, 47 of which require further information and 146 applications are approved in principle and 6 no grants paid to date.

B McBrearty presented a report on progress in the housing office since previous meeting.

- Approved applicants for social housing support - 557 nett together with 580 on the transfer list making the total number approved 1137.
- A total of 1006 have availed of the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme and there are currently 429 total active tenancies.
- There are 328 household in accommodation provided under the Rental Accommodation Scheme and 137 through the Approved Housing Bodies.
- NTQs – 15 RAS, 28 HAP.

- CRTIS – 8 applications assessed and sent to the Housing Agency.
- Allocations and new LA tenancies
2023 offers: 168 (Council & AHB) offers sent and 21 refusals (12%)
2023 tenancies: 160 (132 Council 28 AHB)
- The Council have had 35 homeless presentations to date and have provided accommodation to 16 households. B McBrearty advised the Council are looking at alternative options to deal with increasing numbers of homeless presentations and those moving to emergency accommodation.
- Currently 6 active Housing First Tenancies. Cavan CC are unable to accept any further referrals at present due to the Service Provider Peter McVerry Trust's difficulty in recruiting staff.
- 29 loan applications received in 2023, 5 approvals in principle issued, 6 in progress.
- 22 applications received under the Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme this year and are in progress.
- A total of **€1,739,019** of which the Council contributed €347,804 was paid out in grants at 31 December 2023 in respect of 187 grants. The Council had sought an increase on the allocation for 2023 initially €1,551,980 funded 80% from the Department €1,241,584 and 20% by the Council.
- Rent App is in use and 46 households are active.
- ASB (YTD) – 48 complaints received since beginning of year, 26 cases closed. Regained possession of 1 abandoned property, 1 case referred for legal advice/action.

60 HOUSING & DISABILITY STEERING GROUP MEETING REPORT

B McBrearty gave an update. She advised that Cavan County Council's Local Strategic Plan for Housing Disabled People 2022 – 2027 is currently being finalised. Once complete it will be presented to the SPC and Members at a future meeting. 23 people with disabilities and 9 with exceptional medical needs have been housed since the beginning of 2023 which accounts for 20% of the total number of allocations.

70 AOB

Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme – Circular 48/2023

BMCB gave an update on the latest amendments to the tenant purchase scheme.

- The minimum reckonable income to qualify for the Scheme is now €11,000.
- Amend time in receipt of social housing supports – one tenant only to fulfil the 10-year requirement
- Additional DSP payments should now be considered primary income, specifically the Widow's/Widowers'/Surviving Civil Partner's (Contributory & Non-Contributory) Pension, Invalidity Pension, Blind Pension & Disability Allowance.
- Additional DSP payments should now be considered secondary income, specifically the Working Family Payment, Age 80 (Pension) Increase & Rural Social Scheme.

Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme

Cavan have been allocated a 2nd Resettlement Programme – 120 additional Syrians refugees to be housed in county. BMcB advised communication between the Department of Children Equality Disability Integration and Youth and Cavan County Council will begin in the second half of the year.

Local Elections June 2024

Cllr Val Smith thanked the Executive for their support and hard work over the last 5 years and wished his colleagues, the Elected Member the best of luck in the upcoming local elections. Cllr Smith also wish Cllr Madeline Argue the best of luck in her retirement.

80 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting: A date of the next meeting will be scheduled following the outcome of the Local Elections on 7th June 2024.

Signed: _____
 Chairperson

Date: _____