

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Minutes of the Planning, Environment, Agriculture & Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on MS Teams, Wednesday 29th September, 2021

I LATHAIR:

Baill: Cllr. Michael Connolly, Chairperson
Cllr. Donagh Killilea
Cllr. Moegie Maher
Cllr. Daithí Ó Cualáin
Cllr. Shane Curley
Aodán MacDonncha, Uasal
Mr. Mark Green
Mr. Colm Ryan

Oifigh: Ms. Valerie Loughnane, Senior Planner, Planning
Mr. Brendan Dunne, Executive Planner, Planning
Ms. Eileen Keaveney, Administrative Officer, Planning
Ms. Ann Dolan, Executive Scientist, Environment
Sinéad Burns, Assistant Staff Officer, Planning

Apologies: Cllr. Dermot Connolly

Item No. 1 - Minutes of the meeting of the Planning, Environment, Agriculture & Emergency Services SPC dated 23rd June, 2021

The minutes of the meeting dated 23rd June, 2021 were proposed by Cllr. Daithí Ó Cualáin, seconded by Cllr. Donagh Killilea and agreed.

Matters arising: Cllr. Killilea asked if there was any update on the vacant site register. Mr. Dunne said that Ms. Loughnane would address this later in the meeting.

Item No. 2 - Update on County Development Plan review

Mr. Dunne gave an update on the Draft County Development Plan. The plan was on public display and available for public consultation until the 30th July, 2021. A huge number of submissions were made on the plan – in excess of 2,500 submissions. The submissions related to a wide number of areas e.g. Quiet Man Greenway, Windfarm designations. Mr. Dunne also said that a number of submissions were received from Prescribed Authorities

e.g. the Office of the Planning Regulator, North West Regional Authority, the National Transport Authority (N.T.A.) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (T.I.I.).

These submissions are currently being correlated into various sections/headings. Mr. Dunne added that a number of submissions were received from Elected Members and this was a testament to the huge involvement of the Elected Members on the framing of the plan and also their involvement in the number of workshops held to discuss and put forward questions on the plan. Mr. Dunne said that on the preparation of the 2015 County Development Plan a total of 175 submissions were received with one of those being from an Elected Member. Mr. Dunne said that due to the high volume of submissions and just 4 Planners and 1 Senior Planner working on dealing with the plan, queries are not being responded to as quickly as they would like. However, the Forward Planning Team are working through queries as quickly as possible. Mr. Dunne gave a brief summary of some of the areas on which submissions were received – rural housing, submissions relating to the economic chapters and heritage chapters, zoning in relation to residential phase 1 lands. Mr. Dunne explained that all submissions will be reviewed and synopsisized and recommendations will be made. A Chief Executive's Report will be presented to the Elected Members on October 22nd. The draft of this County Development Plan is different from previous plans in that an online portal system was available for submissions to be lodged and a list of names of all that made submissions will be available on an excel sheet on the plan. Mr. Dunne continued that workshops with Elected Members will be held for discussions on the plan. The County Development Plan is to be adopted in April, May 2022.

Ms. Loughnane said that the volume of submissions was due to the amount of engagement with the public on the draft stage of the plan. The Forward Planning Team are correlating the submissions into sections. Ms. Loughnane added that the format is for each submission to have a synopsis and presented at the back of the Plan.

Cllr. M. Connolly asked as there was a detailed submission made by the Office of the Planning Regulator, what areas did it refer to.

Ms. Loughnane said that a significant submission was made by the Authority with 12-13 recommendations and a number of observations. The recommendations are things that the Local Authority have to implement and these areas were to do with core strategy, densities, housing need and G.T.P.S. These recommendations will be addressed and presented on the Chief Executive's Report. The observations are proposals to be considered and noted.

Cllr. Maher said that it was very positive the amount of involvement the public and Elected Members had on the draft plan. He also asked about the recent announcement that the Minister for the Environment and Local Government regarding changes in legislations for a major review of planning law. Would this affect the County Development Plan.

Ms. Loughnane said that changes in legislation are already underway for example Strategic Housing Development (S.H.D.) applications will be reverting back to the Local Authorities from An Bord Pleanála.

Judicial review, third party appeals and public participation are also mentioned in this announcement but Ms. Loughnane stated that public participation is governed by E.U. legislation so it may not be possible to change that legislation.

Cllr. M.Connolly said that to fast track timeframes would be welcome as there are significant time delays on certain processes.

Cllr. Maher thanked the Forward Planning team on their work on the County Development Plan.

Cllr. M.Connolly asked about some submissions made in relation to the County Development Plan. Acknowledgment letters were sent out to a number of people who had not made any submissions to the Plan. Cllr. M. Connolly wanted it noted that the planning process is legalistic and was concerned that anyone would undermine the integrity of the Planning Process. Cllr. Connolly also said he assumed that the Executive will be dealing with this issue accordingly.

Cllr. Killilea said that any level of dishonesty will be captured on the system, that the system was robust and he would not have any worries about this as anything invalid would be recorded. Cllr. Killilea asked if there was any indication of the number of these types of submissions received.

Ms. Loughnane said that there had been some submissions of this nature but not huge. Every submission is followed up on, acknowledgements are sent out and if these come back to the Planning Authority, the person involved is shown the submission, asked if it is theirs and if not the submission is withdrawn and noted.

Cllr. Killilea asked if this is widespread as Cllr. Connolly had indicated.

Ms. Loughnane said it was not widespread and only involved a small number of submissions.

Cllr. M.Connolly confirmed that there was a number of submissions and it was not widespread and wanted it noted that it is important that the planning process should be used with respect and dignity.

Ms. Loughnane added that it does not make any less of the remainder of the submissions made and that the Planning Authority are confident that the system is watertight.

Cllr. Killilea reiterated that the system is robust.

Cllr. M.Connolly asked for any further questions or comments – none were made.

3. Ballinasloe Local Area Plan

Ms. Loughnane said that Draft Ballinasloe Local Area Plan will be on public display in mid October for a period of 6 weeks until December, it will be advertised on the Council website,

newspaper, social media channels etc and she has spoken to the Elected Members of the Municipal Districts about the draft plan.

Today (29th September) workshops with the Elected Members of the Municipal Districts will be held from 5.30pm until 7pm. There is no pre-draft of the Local Area Plan, it is just a draft plan compiled on the basis of the previous Local Area Plan. Ms. Loughnane said that the workshops are beneficial for questions and clarification on the plan. Ms. Loughnane also said that there will be a Local Transport Plan within the Local Area Plans for Tuam and Ballinasloe and this plan will be drafted in conjunction with the Roads Authority. There will be webinars held throughout the process for members and appointments can be also held for consultations.

Cllr. M. Connolly asked if submissions made on the County Development Plan in relation to Ballinasloe, would these be duplicated for the Ballinasloe Area Plan.

Ms. Loughnane stated that while the submissions made on the County Development Plan related to Ballinasloe would be considered in making the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan, new separate submissions would have to be made on the Ballinasloe Local Area Plan to be considered in the Chief Executive's Report.

Cllr. Killilea asked when the Tuam Local Area Plan would be going on display as he believed it was mentioned at a previous meeting that it would be on display at the end of this year. Ms. Loughnane confirmed that the Local Area Plans of Tuam, Athenry, Gort and Loughrea would be reviewed in the 1st and 2nd quarters of 2022. However, this also depends on the progress of the County Development Plan as the Local Area Plans have to correlate with the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan.

4. Any Other Business (A.O.B.)

Cllr. Maher said that he had not had a chance to bring up at the Council meeting that he had a number of queries about difficulty in getting through by phone particularly to the Housing Section.

Ms. Loughnane said that she would pass this message on to the relevant staff.

Cllr. Killilea asked about the Community Warden situation in Tuam as nobody has been filling for the Warden who is off at the moment. He has received a number of complaints and there is no policing on the streets in Tuam.

Ms. Loughnane said that she will raise the issue with M.Owens D.O.S. to check if there is a resource available to deal with this.

Mr. Greene asked if there was a guarantee for 20% of one off housing as mentioned on T.V. programme last night. V.Loughnane said that it would be incorporated in the core strategy in the County Development under the National Planning Framework (N.P.F.).

Cllr. Killilea asked if there was an update on the vacant site register.

Ms. Loughnane said that there was a provision to enact a register in the County Development Plan and there will be a legal framework to start working on a vacant site register.

Cllr. M.Connolly expressed condolences to Cllr. Maher on the passing of his brother in law and Cllr. Killilea on the passing of his Aunt.

The meeting then concluded.