

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Minutes of the Planning, Economic Development & Community Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held in Room GO1 on Tuesday 10th April 2018

I LATHAIR:

Baill: Cllr. James Charity, Chairperson
Cllr. Shaun Cunniffe
Cllr. Aidan Donohue
Cllr. Frank Kearney
Cllr. Thomas Welby
Mr. Gus McCarthy

Oifigigh: Ms. Eileen Ruane, Director of Services, Planning & Environment
Ms. Valerie Loughnane, Senior Planner, Planning
Mr. Kieran Coyne, Rapid Co-Ordinator, C&E
Ms. Caroline Hannon, Assistant Staff Officer, Planning

Apologies: Cllrs. Donal Burke, Billy Connelly & Dermot Connolly, Ms. Marian Brady, Ms. Frances O'Reilly & Ms. Patricia Tierney.

Item No. 1 - Minutes of the meeting of the Planning & Community SPC held on 4th Development 2017

Cllr. Charity welcomed all to the meeting and extended a warm welcome to Ms. Ruane in her new position as Director of Services. The minutes were proposed by Cllr. Kearney, seconded by Cllr. Cunniffe and agreed.

Cllr. Cunniffe queried if a submission had been made on the Draft National Planning Framework. Ms. Loughnane confirmed that a follow up submission was

made in relation to same and all comments received at the SPC Meeting and full Council meeting were taken on board in preparing the submission.

Cllr. Cunniffe commented that with the Flemish Decree ongoing people can't understand why they cannot obtain planning permission. Ms. Loughnane advised that there was no update on the Flemish Decree. She stated that it was the intention that the Department would liaise with the European Commission but nothing finalised at present to her knowledge.

Cllr. Charity queried the status of the Tuam Local Area Plan. Ms. Loughnane advised that the Draft Tuam Local Area Plan along with the relevant reports were on public display from the 19th January 2018 to 2nd March 2018, however following the adverse weather and closure of Galway County Council offices during the consultation period (1st & 2nd March 2018), the Draft Tuam Local Area Plan 2018-2024 consultation period was extended until Tuesday the 13th March 2018. She highlighted that 36 submissions had been received in relation to the Draft Plan. She outlined that discussions had taken place recently with members at a special meeting. She stated that there would be ongoing consultation and same would be on the agenda at the Tuam Municipal District meeting being held on the 16th April 2018 and at the Council meeting being held on the 23rd April 2018. She advised that it was agreed at the special meeting with members that they would work with the Planning Staff and submit their proposals before the 19th April 2018 so same could be prepared in advance of the Council meeting. Cllr. Cunniffe stated that the members wanted to bring the Draft LAP as best they could to the Council meeting. Ms. Loughnane explained that each submission would have to be gone through and discussed at the Council meeting but it was agreed that as much as possible would be dealt with at the Tuam Municipal District meeting. Cllr. Kearney pointed out that if there were any disagreements in relation to the plan then it could end up like the Bearna Plan and could be delayed so he asked if everything could be finalised at the Municipal District Meeting before bringing the plan to the council meeting. Ms. Loughnane advised that a third meeting would be facilitated if same was required to discuss the Tuam LAP but due to the very strict timeframe the Draft LAP had to go to the April Monthly Meeting of Plenary Council.

Cllr. Charity queried the status of the Bearna Plan and also pointed out that in relation to this plan, it was a very lengthy debate which took place at the February Council Meeting. He asked if something could be done to avoid this happening in the future. Ms. Loughnane advised that similar to the Tuam Plan there had been an informal meeting and also the Municipal District meeting held in relation to the Bearna Plan and also the Gaeltacht Plan. She explained that the Gaeltacht Plan was currently back on display based on the Material Alterations which were made to it. In relation to the Bearna Plan, she advised that a SEA and SF or an AA had to be carried out by the consultants who are currently working on same, however it will take up to 10 weeks for same to be completed. She highlighted that the Department have already been in contact to discuss the outcome of the council meeting. She explained that it was possible that the Department may come back with a comment in relation to the plan, if they do then same will be brought to the members at the Council meeting.

Cllr. Welby outlined that there were issues raised re flooding with regards to the Bearna Plan, however applicants had submitted documents showing that there were no concerns re flooding in those particular areas. He stated that members had to support the applicants as they were representing them and that it was difficult make a decision when there were contradicting reports. He commented that it was a pity that the consultants which carried out both reports could not be brought together to discuss same. He also pointed out that a detailed planning application for 116 houses in Bearna had been refused this week by An Bord Plenala due to density, not flooding. He said that while he did not agree with everything that happened with regard to the Bearna Plan, the people had to be represented. He stated that there were mitigation measures carried out in the past, some works had been carried out including the main road being raised, therefore things change over time and it's sensible to do what works. He finished up by saying it was unfortunate how the Bearna Plan went.

Cllr. Kearney stated that he supported Cllr. Welby on the above comments. With regard to the conflicting reports among consultants, he said you would wonder who was more qualified. He stated there had been too many conflicting

reports from a single house to a larger development and same needs to be clarified going forward.

Mr. McCarthy stated that the issue re flood risk assessments keeps coming up. He said that in relation to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, there are two types of reports. He explained that one is carried out by taking levels on the site, this is a more detailed report as it is very specific to the site. The second report is taken based on the specific area, therefore the more accurate report would be the study done on the particular site. He said for that reason it is hard compare like with like.

Cllr. Charity asked if there was a process to resolve conflicting evidence in reports. Ms. Ruane advised that matters like this could be discussed at the pre planning stage.

Ms. Loughnane stated that all reports which were submitted were taken into consideration, from professional Flood Risk Assessment to Strategic Environmental Assessment. She confirmed that mitigating measures could not be taken in to account at the plan stage, by its very nature it is suggesting that there are problems on the site if mitigating measures need to be carried out. She explained that all reports which were received were correct as they were stated, if floor levels need to be raised then that is confirming that there are problems.

Item No. 2 - Update on Regional, Spatial & Economic Strategy

Ms. Loughnane advised that the National Planning Framework had been published on the 16th February 2018. She stated that the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy process had commenced at Regional level. She explained that a discussion had taken place with the Regional Assembly Officials and a meeting with Irish Water was planned for the coming Thursday. She said there would be a large body of work required by the Planning Section to feed in to the plan. She stated that same would be brought to the SPC & Council meeting to keep everyone updated once there is any further information available. She explained that the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) would be a chapter within the RSES.

Cllr. Kearney asked if the Metropolitan area would be Claregalway, Oranmore, Ballinasloe & Tuam. Ms. Loughnane explained that they are currently coming up with a strategy on same, something that would complement the city but have a good plan for the county also.

Cllr. Cunniffe asked in relation to the National Planning Framework and funding document, are the Council bidding for money and if a plan was put together is there money available. Ms. Loughnane explained that this was the first time that the documents were published together, the National Planning Framework and funding document. She stated that although projects were identified in the NPF, they may not necessary be included in the funding document (next 10 year), for example, the east Galway main drainage was included in the document but not listed in the spending document for the next 10 years. She advised that larger projects would need to put plans in place. Cllr. Welby commented that finances would be an issue for Galway County Council. He stated that other Local Authorities are progressing ahead as they have the finances available and hopefully this would change in the future for Galway County Council also.

Item No. 3 - Waste Water Treatment Plants and Residential Developments Update

Ms. Loughnane advised that it was agreed at the previous SPC meeting to set up a working group which has had one meeting together already which went very well. She stated that there had been input from other departments also at the meeting. She said that they were making progress in relation to same and are currently looking at putting a framework together which will then be brought before the SPC. She advised that the next meeting was scheduled for the 24th April 2018 so she would revert back at the next SPC meeting and would hope that they would have further information on same at that stage. She highlighted that there was new management company legislation and they were currently looking at options in relation to same.

Mr. McCarthy stated that there had been significant changes in the past and a lot of work had been done on this already. He highlighted that the guidelines were very stringiest in relation to design, building control and signing off on different matters. He also advised that there was new legislation in relation to management companies, previously treatment plants were not subject to these conditions. He highlighted that there was new provisions for developments of less than 5 units and different then when more than 5 units. He also explained that there was legislation to be set up regarding a sinking fund.

Cllr. Donohue asked if there was a timeframe envisaged in relation to the framework being ready to bring before the SPC. Ms. Loughnane advised that it was hoped that a Draft framework would be prepared and same then could be presented at the next SPC meeting.

Cllr. Charity asked if there were minutes being recorded at the working group meeting and if so could same be brought to the SPC meeting also. Ms. Loughnane advised that there were notes kept of the meeting and same could be provided as an update at the SPC meeting.

Item No. 4 - Town and Village Renewal 2017

Mr. Coyne gave a presentation on the list of projects which were being worked on under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2017. He advised that there was a mix of council led projects and community led projects. He advised that funding given out since 2006 had been largely on transport work, a total of €308,000 between 10 locations was first given in 2006 and in 2017 a total of €1,004,231 between 13 locations. He said that the only project which was not approved in Ballinasloe was the flag ship project. He explained that there are projects now ready for future funding. He commented that there was huge expertise within the council and that there had been good working relationships developed with other departments in order to take all aspects of the projects on board. He advised that discussions had taken place already about putting an internal team in place to make the best use of resources. He said that they are currently in a good position now and looking at fast tracking the process in the near

future. He outlined that a community workshop was held last year and some projects have already been discussed with engineers etc. at same, therefore when the call comes in early May there are projects ready to go immediately. He advised that there are some projects not ready at present but would be in future calls. He explained that they have an engineer looking at current outcome and another engineer looking at future outcome and requirements, therefore explaining why there would possibly be a different outcome of recommendations.

Cllr. Cunniffe queried if the process for applying had changed as there were some items in Tuam which need to be done, e.g. Street lighting, outdoor recreation etc. Mr. Coyne advised that there had been some slight changes made recently. He stated that the Department previously took a strict call in relation to the Tuam application and only approved €13,000. He advised that it was up to the community to put proposals forward if they wish to apply for works. He stated that the closing date for Clar was the 20th April 2018 and the closing date for the Town & Village Renewal Scheme would be early May.

Cllr. Charity referred to the 40 projects currently in place and ready to go, he asked when the application process opens in 2018, are there 15 applications ready to go straight away or will new applications be considered. Mr. Coyne advised that all applications that are submitted will be looked at but they will really have to consider the applications which are already being worked on. He advised that it does take a lot of time to get everything ready but there would be a middle ground. He stated that when the notice is published it would bring in a lot of queries and new applications, this will use up a lot of time having to reply and access applications, and this would all affect timeframes of completing works.

Item No. 5 - Rural Economic Development Zone (REDS) Update

Mr. Coyne gave a presentation on the update re the Rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ). He explained that REDZ are functional areas that utilize synergies and interdependencies between rural towns and their townlands to generate economic activity in their local area. He advised that the functioning areas are defined by service catchment areas, in Galway there are 10 zones

designed for us by An Taisce. He outlined that REDZ are being integrated into town zones. He stated that it was not possible to micro support communities, have applied for funding to put a service in 5 towns. He explained that money was allocated for contracted works to be carried out in order to develop the communities so they could develop schemes themselves by using local professionals. He said that 3 of the 5 areas have a list of projects ready which will feed in to other schemes. He explained that there are a lot of things going on and it all takes time. He advised that they are currently trying to develop a process within the Council for same. He said with all the works carried out to date he would hope that a lot of the communities would be in a good position for when the grant application process becomes available.

Cllr. Welby asked that councilors would be notified of the outcome of the grant applications. He stated that the councilors are not being informed of the outcome of the grants but hearing same from a third party.

Cllr. Charity stated that it was difficult to get consensus for particular projects as the locations are so dispersed. He asked how the funding works for this. Mr. Coyne advised that there is €100,000 available for the 5 years for non-capital works only. He said there is a process to apply for funding for larger projects once all regulations are complied with. He advised that this was the reason consultants are involved in the process as they would be the most familiar with all aspects of the relevant legislation.

Item No. 6 - Any Other Business

Cllr. Welby referred to the Bearna Plan the potential development of estates in relation to Phase 2, as this is restricted to only future development or family members, so for example a person coming from Spiddal in to Phase 2 lands would be refused planning. Ms. Loughnane advised that there was a policy in place in the Core Strategy to keep the R2 zoned lands in order and not over zone an area. She explained there was overzoning on lands previously and that's why R2 were introduced and the restriction was put on them.

Cllr. Welby also asked for clarification on the “vibrant” Gaeltacht area. He said there are six districts and he would like to have some certainty on same as he did not want people going to the expense of applying for planning permission if they can’t get permission. Ms. Loughnane stated she appreciated where Cllr. Welby was coming from re this matter and she advised that same would be resolved. She said it would be incorporated into the County Development Plan commencing in 2019.

Cllr. Cunniffe referred to the Tuam Draft Local Area Plan and particularly to the lack of cycling facilities in Tuam town. He stated that the town requires cycle lanes as a matter of urgency. He asked, in relation to the land zoned R1, if there was a mechanism that could be used when these housing developments start that provision for cycle lanes would also be included with the development or that a financial contribution would be included in the grant of planning permission. Ms. Loughnane advised that in relation to the contribution, the Planning Authority can only put a contribution on certain works. She said that if money was to be allocated for additional amenity then it would need to be done through the contribution scheme if there were policies and objectives in place to facilitate these changes. She advised that if members wished to put forward land particularly for amenity then the Planning Authority would have no issue with same once it was within policies. She also highlighted that in the European model, open space is central to the urban structure and available to all.

Cllr. Kearney commented that there was no signage on the M17 for Baile Chlair or Roscommon at Junction 19. He stated that it was previously agreed that these place names would be added to the notice. He highlighted that local businesses are now wondering if they could put up notices on the M17 showing the locations as some villages are not getting a mention. He also commented that the shortest route to Headford from the M17 motorway was to exit at Junction 19, however the only sign for Headford was at the end of the junction. Ms. Loughnane advised that this was a matter for the Roads Department, she highlighted that TII have policies in place re same.

Cllr. Welby referred to the landscape sensitivity work to be carried out. Ms. Loughnane advised that there was currently a huge work load on hand. She confirmed that this work was listed on the work programme but the work load needs to be prioritised due to the lack of resources at present.

Cllr. Charity referred to roads not taken in charge. He stated that applicants have paid substantial development contributions, in some cases 3-4 houses per road would have all paid their contribution but when they try to get the road taken in charge they are told there is no funding available for same. Ms. Loughnane stated that in the past if you wanted a particular issue dealt with then you would ring fence money for that particular issue, there would be an additional development charge applied for same through the development contribution. She advised that if members wanted to make changes to the development contribution scheme then they could do same. She highlighted that the current development contribution charge for roads is only for public roads and currently a small amount of money.

Date for next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on the 11th June 2018 in Room GO1, County Hall.