

## COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

### **Minutes of the Planning, & Community Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held in Aras an Chontae on *Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2015***

#### ***I LATHAIR***

**Baill:** Cllr. Jim Cuddy (Chair)  
Cllr. Frank Kearney  
Cllr Dermot Connolly  
Cllr. Aidan Donohue  
Cllr. Shaun Cunniffe  
Cllr. Seamus Walsh  
Cllr. Thomas Welby  
Cllr. Sean Canney  
Ms. Marian Brady  
Ms. Patricia Tierney  
Ms. Frances O'Reilly  
Mr. Gus McCarthy

#### **Oifigigh:**

Catherine Mc Connell, A/DOS, Planning & Sustainable Development, Industrial Relations & Community, Enterprise Development

Alan Farrell, SEO, Community & Enterprise.

Mairead O Malley, ASO, Planning & Sustainable Development Unit

#### **1. Agree Schedule of Meetings**

C. Mc Connell thanked the group for attending the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the SPC and outlined to the meeting the proposed work programme and meeting dates for the SPC during 2015 adding that this programme could be amended throughout the year if required.

The Meetings were agreed for the following dates:

June 8<sup>th</sup> at 10.00 am

September 7<sup>th</sup> at 10.00 am

December 7<sup>th</sup> at 10.00 am.

## 2. Agree Draft Schedule of Works:

C. Mc Connell circulated a Draft Schedule of Works to the members present for their approval and requesting if they wanted to add any other items to it.

The schedule consisted of:

- Review of Development Contributions Scheme
- Local Area Plans-Headford, Ballinasloe and Portumna
- Developing a joint Retail Strategy with the City. She stated that it was important for the County to have a retail strategy to take control of the pressures for Retail Development and to serve and service a wider area.
- Unfinished Estates-regular updates. In relation to unfinished estates she stated that regular updated would be given of critical decisions would be given and asked the members for their input
- CSS Grants-Reviews of the criteria for assessment and methodology Community and Social Inclusion supports. Help Tidy Towns with application and roll out of programme of pride of place. We need to review the way we operate and to provide an age friendly imitative. Regarding CSS & Grants review of the criteria for assessment and methodology Community and Social Inclusion supports. Groups need to be made aware of these grants and assistance given to them in the preparation of application to secure funding
- Reviews of Community Supports Tidy Towns and Pride of Place, Social Inclusion activities.
- PPN-Role and roll-out. Plan to replace the Community and Voluntary forum and provide regular updates and show how the community can work with the Local Authority. She stated that there was a need for a half day induction for new members so that their role and input can be captured. C. Mc Connell stated that the above was a big workload and it may not all be completed and welcomed any comments on the above.
- Rural Housing Design Guidelines. Review.

The Chairman stated that a review of the Development Contribution Scheme was long overdue and hoped that at the next meeting a draft report would be available of the new charges. Cllr Cunniffe was interested to see what Development Contributions will bring a link between Planning and Economic Development. The views of the public should be considered and the breakdown of fees would be helpful in relation to business.

Cllr. Welby welcomed the new work plan and highlighted two concerns one in relation to Social Housing there was no plan to provide more accommodation at the moment despite the Council having a land bank of 17 acres since 1998. His second concern was the Retail Strategy. He stated that the Development of the City has damaged the County e.g. number of bed nights in the city has increased and has damaged trade in the County. He highlighted that there was no link between the City and County e.g. Transport and Retail and that we were working in isolation.

C. McConnell responded by circulating a report on the current Development Contribution Charges that are based on 3 sub areas and stated that some of the monies collected would be used to provide infrastructure e.g. Athenry Outer Ring Road. She stated that developments exempt from fees would be exempt from Development Contribution Charges. A report was also circulated to the meeting on the proposed review of the Development Contribution Scheme.

Cllr. Walsh added that in the Moycullen Area Development Contributions could amount to €8000 which was placing a huge burden on people trying to build a house instead of relying on the Local Authority to provide housing for them. In relation to the Rural House Guidelines he felt clarification

was needed as they were not consistent at the moment and that Councillors should have some input into these guidelines.

The Chairman said that the above were valid points and people were resenting paying for something they did not receive e.g. footpaths and public lighting in rural areas.

Cllr. Canney also stated that we needed to look at the Development Contribution Scheme so that it would not cause an obstacle to building a house and see how we could make it more attractive to people.

Cllr Donohue requested that Damien Mitchell give an overview on the operation of the new estimate building regulations to estimate the costs involved, how it operates and how to get value for money.

C. Mc Connell responded to the above remarks stating the Rural Housing Guidelines will be included in the schedule of works. She questioned the figure of €8000 for Development Contributions as the charges payable in Galway County Council were outlined in the document that was circulated at the meeting. She highlighted that there were no Planning Restrictions in a large part of the County and that the GTPS only covered a third of the County. The fees for Building Control apply nationwide and the Local Authority had no role in setting them. The Development Charges in Galway County Council were low in comparison to other areas in the Country. She would ask Damien to do a presentation on Building Control and acknowledged that there were some problems in the early stages but have been resolved since.

Cllr. Connolly outlined that a Chartered Engineer was required to sign off on the new regulations causing costs to rise due to the shortage of same and that the Department needed to revisit the matter.

Mr. Mc Carthy raised the matter of funding for infrastructure by using the Development Contributions he felt the Department should provide the funding and queried what other options could be considered to fund local infrastructure.

C. Mc Connell outlined that she was not aware of any scheme with the Department the Local Authority was tied to providing funding for Roads and Amenity from the Development Contributions.

Cllr. Caney stated the Development Contributions are causing concerns in rural areas as people felt they were getting no return and more clarity needs to be given on the matter. He welcomed the development of the Retail Strategy as some towns e.g. Athenry were damaged by Retail Units located outside the town.

Cllr. Walsh asked for support for Mountain Rescue and Lough Corrib Rescue and requested if this could be reviewed. Cllr. Connolly stated that other organisations might be better placed to fund this organisation.

Cllr. Welby commented on a strategy for remediation on unfinished estates, and the use of funding to remedy same. Underground Services need to be provided before a road is provided.

Cllr. Donohue highlighted the need for information on unfinished estates and bonds and requested a presentation on the current situation.

C. Mc Connell stated that Galway County Council release the bond when all the work is completed however, Galway County Council do not always take the development in charge. If the building is completed to standard and a management company is in place the bond will be released.

Cllr. Canney remarked on Local Area Plans stating that there was a village plan for Corofin in previous years but it did not materialise.

C. Mc Connell stated that there were no plans to do Local Area Plans over and above what is already in place due to cost and time constraints and a plan can cause restrictions.

The Chairman asked what the situation is when a plan has lapsed and no new plan was in place.

C. Mc Connell stated for e.g. Oughterard and Claregalway that there was no water treatment plant in place and no plan would be able to satisfy SEA requirements until the infrastructure was in place.

Cllr. Connolly remarked on the document circulated in relation to water charges, C. Mc Connell responded that water charges only apply if the water comes from a public source and there was no opportunities to make changes in this matter.

Mr. Farrell commented on the new programme of works and welcomed the comments from members and stated that workshops would be provided on some of the areas.

Cllr. Kearney stated in relation to tidy towns that some groups were not set up and information needed to be provided in these areas and would encourage all groups to register with PPN. C. Mc Connell stated that you do not have to be registered with PPN but being registered gives you a say in policy development.

**AOB:**

Cllr. Connolly commented on the briefing sessions held in February and stated that they were very informative. He questioned if we had someone on the SPC Committee to represent the Gaeltacht Area. C. Mc Connell stated the SPC Committee was made up of members and representatives from prescribed bodies and there were strict rules and guidelines and that there was not someone to represent Gaeltacht Areas on the Current SPC Committee.

The chairperson thanked the Members for their contribution and closed the meeting.

The next SPC Meeting will take place on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2015 at 10.00 am.

**CRIOCHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN**