

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT SPECIAL MEETING OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE, LIMERICK, ON WEDNESDAY, 29TH JULY 2015, AT 10.00A.M.

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR:

Councillor G. Mitchell, Deputy Mayor.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Browne, Butler, Collins (J), Crowley, Daly, Donegan, Foley, Gilligan, Gleeson, Hurley, Keary, Keller, Leddin, Loftus, Lynch, McCreesh, Neville, Cmhr. Ó Ceallaigh, O’Dea, O’Donnell, O’Donoghue, Prendiville, Ryan, Secas, Sheahan (J), Sheahan (K), Sheahan (M), Sheehy, Teefy.

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillors Byrne, Hourigan and Quinlivan.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Deputy Chief Executive (Mr. P. Dowling), Director, Economic Development and Planning (Mr. P. Daly), A/Director, Environment and Water (Mr. G. Dillon), Head of Finance, Motor Tax and ICT (Mr. T. Gilligan), A/Director, Travel and Transportation, (Mr. V. Murray), A/Senior Planner (Mr. S. Duclot), Heritage Officer (Mr. T. O’Neill), Senior Engineer, Environment and Water, (Mr. T. Tarpey), Administrative Officer, Corporate Services (Mr. T. O’Callaghan), Meetings Administrator (Mr. C. O’Connor).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Michael Conroy, Roughan & O’Donovan, Consulting Engineers.
Mr. Tony Cawley, Hydro Environmental Ltd.

Former Dell Factory, Castletroy

At the outset, and with the permission of the Deputy Mayor, the Director of Economic Development and Planning informed the Meeting that the Council had signed a ‘heads of agreement’ with Troy Studios, subject to planning permission, for the long-term lease of the former Dell Factory in Castletroy, Limerick. He pointed out that the intention was for Troy Studios to be a fully fledged leading studio facility, catering for Film and TV Productions, by the end of Quarter 2 in 2016.

Members welcomed the announcement which built on the success of Limerick City of Culture and would further benefit the Arts by putting Limerick on the map as the Film Capital of Ireland.

1. Economic Development & Planning

Proposed Variation No. 4 to the Limerick County Development Plan 2010-2016 to incorporate the preferred route corridor for the Limerick Northern Distributor Road (LNDR)

It was noted that this item had been deferred from the July Meeting held on 21st July, 2015, to allow time for it to be examined in greater detail.

Already circulated, report dated 19th June 2015 from the Director of Economic Development and Planning enclosing a copy of the Chief Executive's Report on the Proposed Variation No. 4 to the Limerick County Development Plan 2010-2016, dated 19th June 2015, which was prepared in accordance with Section 13(4)(a) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended;

A further report entitled 'Limerick Northern Distributor Road – Summary of Scheme Development,' dated 23rd July, 2015, had also been circulated following the issue of the agenda.

The A/Director, Travel & Transportation, informed the Members that the proposed variation of the Limerick County Development Plan was intended to protect the route corridor for the proposed Northern Distributor Road. He noted that the Council, in conjunction with Clare County Council and Roughan & O'Donovan, Consulting Engineers, had worked since 2010 to identify the preferred route for the Northern Distributor Road, which was a critical piece of infrastructure without which the City would not grow to its full potential.

Mr. Michael Conroy from Roughan & O'Donovan, Consulting Engineers, gave a presentation to Members on the process that had been undertaken to date and the options considered in selecting the preferred route. He stressed the importance of being in a position to stand over the thoroughness of the selection process when the proposals were brought to An Bord Pleanála for approval.

Mr. Tony Cawley from Hydro Environmental Ltd. informed Members that he had carried out flood risk assessment for the preferred route. The route had been assessed in terms of regular and extreme flooding and, in this regard, the floods in 2009, the worst since 1916, had acted as a good baseline. He pointed out that the road should have no strategic influence on the flood plain and would not worsen the flooding effect. He stressed that the preferred route had passed the justification test set out in the Flood Risk Management Guidelines and noted that the Office of Public Works, in its submission, had agreed with this point.

Varying views were expressed by Members, both in favour of the proposed route for the Northern Relief Road and against, and in response to issues raised by Members, Mr. Conroy clarified the following:-

- The need for the Northern Relief Road had been identified in the Spatial Strategy, the Mid-West Area Strategic Plan and the Limerick and Clare County Development Plans.
- It was accepted that roads elsewhere also needed to be built but it was intended to have the appropriate plans in place for the Northern Relief Road when funding became available.
- Cost benefit analysis in relation to the impact of the proposed Northern Relief Road on the Tunnel had been carried out and taken into consideration. Emissions analysis was also included in the cost benefit analysis.
- A Killaloe By-Pass would not solve traffic issues at the University of Limerick or the National Technology Park, Plassey.
- A single access road to the north campus of the University of Limerick would not solve issues for other road users on that side of the City.
- The National Parks & Wildlife Service had been met with on several occasions during the route selection process and could object to An Bord Pleanála if it had issues with the preferred route.
- A docking point at Vistakon would bring in excess of 30,000 extra vehicles per day to that location, with consequences for traffic flow.
- The road design would not impact on flooding and displacement would be imperceptible. No changes were anticipated in the final CFRAM mapping due in 2016.
- Devastation issues, climate change and no flow at Ardnacrusha had been factored into the analysis and the route selection process would stand up to scrutiny.
- The Habitats Directive proved challenging for many of the route section options. There was an obligation to protect the environment and the scheme would fail if this was not adhered to.
- An Environmental Impact Assessment would be carried out at design stage so that all impacts could be assessed.
- It would be unprecedented to seek approval from An Bord Pleanála for roads projects where the route was not protected in the relevant Local Authority's Development Plan. It was anticipated that the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport and the National Roads Authority would be reluctant to fund any road project under such circumstances.

- A crossing of the headrace associated with the Ardnacrusha power plant, which had been considered as part of a wider study area, had been discounted on advice from the ESB regarding the catastrophic flood risk should the embankment be damaged. The ESB had a statutory responsibility to protect its scheme.
- A docking point at the Mackey Roundabout would bring traffic too far from the City and would exacerbate traffic issues at that location which the preferred route was seeking to resolve.
- The proposed distributor road would have two lanes each way, with provision for bicycles and pedestrians, and would dovetail with any local plans. A motorway in its place would have limited access and allow for limited development adjacent to it, which would be contrary to the objectives of the distributor road.

The A/Director, Travel & Transportation, stressed the need to protect the identified route and informed the Members that, should the scheme be approved by An Bord Pleanála, it would join other schemes awaiting Government approval, based on policy and economics at the time. He clarified that it would take twelve months to consider any new route but a logical join with a route on the Co. Clare side would have to be taken into consideration along with the fact that An Bord Pleanála would consider any new route in comparison to the existing preferred route which had the least impact under all criteria.

On the proposal of the Deputy Mayor and seconded by Councillor Sheahan (J), it was agreed to adjourn the Meeting for fifteen minutes.

On resumption of the Meeting, a vote was taken on the proposed Variation No. 4 to the Limerick County Development Plan, with the following result:-

In Favour

Councillors Daly, Gilligan, Leddin. (3)

Against

Councillors Browne, Butler, Collins (J), Crowley, Donegan, Foley, Gleeson, Hurley, Keary, Keller, Loftus, Lynch, McCreesh, Mitchell, Neville, Cmhlr. Ó Ceallaigh, O'Dea, O'Donoghue, Prendiville, Ryan, Secas, Sheahan (J), Sheahan (K), Sheahan (M), Sheehy, Teefy. (26)

There were no abstentions.

The Deputy Mayor declared the proposed Variation rejected.

2. Environment & Water Services

Eastern and Midlands Region – Proposed Water Supply Project Options Working Paper

Circulated, report from the A/Director, Environment and Water Services, dated 24th July 2015, regarding Eastern and Midlands Region – Proposed Water Supply Project Options Working Paper.

On the proposal of Councillor Sheahan (J), seconded by Councillor Collins (J), it was agreed that this item would be deferred to the next Meeting.

Special Meeting of Council

On the proposal of Councillor Sheahan (J), seconded by Councillor Keary, it was agreed that a Special Meeting of the Council would be held on Wednesday, 5th August, 2015, at 10.00a.m. to discuss the sale of land at Rathkeale.

It was also agreed that the deferred Item No. 2 above would be included on the agenda for the Special Meeting.

Signed:

Mayor

Date:
