

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT MEETING OF METROPOLITAN DISTRICT OF LIMERICK HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, MERCHANT'S QUAY, LIMERICK, ON MONDAY, 16TH MARCH, 2015, AT 9.45 A.M.

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR: Councillor Michael Sheahan, Mayor

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Butler, Byrne, Clifford, Collins, Crowley, Daly, Gilligan, Hourigan, Hurley, Keller, Loftus, Lynch, McCreesh, Ó Ceallaigh, O'Dea, Prendiville, Quinlivan and Secas.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Deputy Chief Executive (Mr. P. Dowling), Meetings Administrator (Mr. E. Griffin), Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Services (Mr. C. O'Connor), Senior Executive Officer, Home and Social Development (Ms. P. Liddy), Senior Engineer (Mr. V. Murray), Administrative Officer, Home and Social Development (Ms. A. Duke), Financial Accountant (Mr. S. Coughlan), Assistant Planner (Mr. D. O'Donoghue), Administrative Officer, Corporate Services (Mr. T. O'Callaghan).

Apologies for his inability to attend had been received from Councillor Joe Leddin.

At the outset the Mayor welcomed the Journalist Students from University of Limerick to the meeting.

1. Adoption of Minutes

Circulated, copy of draft Minutes of Meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick held on 16th February, 2015.

Proposed by Councillor Hourigan
Seconded by Councillor Gilligan
And Resolved:

"That the draft Minutes, as circulated, be taken as read and adopted and signed".

2. Economic Development and Planning

(a) Proposed Patrickswell Local Area Plan 2015 – 2021

Circulated, Report of the Chief Executive dated 11th March 2015, on the proposed Patrickswell Local Area Plan 2015 – 2021.

The Chief Executive's Report presented the submissions made following publication of the Proposed Patrickswell Local Area Plan Alterations and set out the Chief Executive's response to the written submissions received within the statutory timeframe and recommended that the Patrickswell Local Area Plan be made in accordance with Section

20 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Members welcomed the proposed plan and a query was raised in relation to an urban renewal project for Patrickswell and when the design and plans for same might be delivered. The Senior Engineer indicated that proposals in relation to this scheme were being submitted as part of a number of capital schemes for consideration.

Proposed by Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor Lynch, and resolved;

“That the Patrickswell Local Area Plan 2015 – 2021 be made in accordance with the Chief Executive’s recommendations dated 11th March, 2015 under Section 20(3)(n) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

(b) Taking in Charge of Estates – Declaration of Roads to be Public Roads

Members welcomed the taking in charge of the estates outlined and sought information in relation to what other estates were due to be taken in charge and what was delaying same. Members made specific reference to Meadowbrook Estate and the condition of its roads and reference was also made to the poor standard of some estates that had been taken in charge and the need to carry out works on the footpaths in some of the older estates.

The Senior Engineer made the following points in response to issues raised by Members:

- The Council was engaged in a legal process in relation to Meadowbrook and at present had no authority to carry out works on the estate. The Council had written to the developer in relation to the poor quality of the roads and was seeking payout from the bond in relation to same. Any issues relating to sewers would be a matter for Irish Water.
- Taking in charge of estates can be a lengthy process with various departments required to report on the condition of the estate and the bond then accessed to fund any required works.
- Any footpath repairs were being prioritised from current budgets which were reducing each year.
- In excess of 100 estates were still to be taken in charge, not all of which would have requested to be taken in charge.
- There was no formal procedure for informing residents that an estate had been taken in charge and this would be reviewed.

The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted the challenges faced by the Council in keeping pace with demand in this area and stressed that the issue could only be dealt with incrementally. He suggested that a report addressing the queries raised by Members be brought to a future meeting of the District.

Proposed by Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor O’Dea and resolved;

“That the following housing estates be taken in charge in accordance with S.180 of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2014 and S.11 of the Roads Act 1993;

1. Caisleann na hAbhann (part of)
2. Castlecourt, Courtbrack Avenue

3. Castlewell Close, Courtbrack Avenue
4. Castlewell, Courtbrack Avenue
5. Dooradoyle Park, Dooradoyle
6. Fitzhaven, Courtbrack Avenue
7. Kylemore, Castletroy
8. Newtown Park, Annacotty

3. Home and Social Development

Sean Coughlan (Financial Accountant) circulated and presented an update on Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) which included the following:

- An overview of HAP eligibility and how the system operates.
- Details of Local Authorities already included in the pilot with a general roll out planned during 2015 / 2016.
- Conditions under which HAP is paid.
- An overview of HAP from the perspective of the landlord.
- Details and advantages of the Limerick Transactional Shared Service Hub.
- Analysis of HAP tenancies.

Members thanked the Financial Accountant for his presentation and the following points were raised by Members in relation to same.

- It is wrong to consider that a family's housing need is met through receipt of HAP as there is no security of tenure. Social housing should be provided in place of HAP.
- Rent caps are too low and with many landlords not interested in accommodating tenants in receipt of rent supplement or HAP it is very difficult for tenants to source affordable private accommodation. A form of rent control should be introduced.
- HAP was now replacing rent supplement which had been intended as a short term solution but had been turned into a long term solution. The Council's involvement in HAP amounted to the administration of a payment rather than acting as a housing authority.
- The HAP scheme encouraged labour activation and did not promote poverty traps. The fact that rent was paid directly to the landlord would encourage more landlords to engage with the scheme.
- A good level of tenancy support had been provided for RAS tenants and the same should be provided for HAP tenants.
- The absence of a contract with the landlord was seen as a negative aspect of the scheme and it was perceived that there was inadequate enforcement in relation to the condition of the property, both inside and out.
- HAP represented payments to private landlords in the absence of social housing. Cuts in rent supplement was leading to homelessness, with a hidden homeless sector staying with friends and relatives.

The Deputy Chief Executive stressed that there was no single solution in the area of housing supports and that the policy around HAP would evolve over time.

In response to issues raised by Members, the Financial Accountant clarified the following:

- The Department of Social Protection has paid deposits on behalf of tenants in exceptional circumstances.
- Rents paid under HAP are only up to the rent supplement caps and efforts are underway to establish from landlords if tenants are paying a portion of rent in excess of these caps.
- In relation to alleged anti-social behaviour, the Council investigates, in conjunction with the Garda, and suspends the payment to the landlord where anti-social behaviour is found to have occurred.
- Payment to the landlord is also suspended where the landlord does not have tax clearance, where the property is not up to standard or where the tenant does not pay their rent to the Council.
- Movement from RAS to HAP is not provided for at present.
- While properties must be inspected within eight months, specific complaints will be acted on.
- The rent payable by the tenant is in accordance with the differential rent for the Local Authority area.
- The homeless unit continued to work with the most vulnerable citizens and the Council also operated a range of social housing options.
- It was anticipated that operation of the Limerick Transactional Shared Service Hub would contribute in the region of €200,000 to the Council and this had been factored into the 2015 budget.

NOTICES OF MOTION ADJOURNED FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

4. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Joe Leddin

I will move at the next meeting that Limerick Metropolitan District arrange to meet With the management of Shannon Foynes Port Company with a view to addressing the current unsightly build up of scrap metal in Limerick Docks which is a total eyesore for the local community, especially visitors staying in the local hotel, and agree a new strategy for dealing with this type of material.

As there was no proposer for this motion, it was not dealt with.

5. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Jerry O'Dea

I will move at the next meeting of the Metropolitan District that Limerick City and County Council address the need for enhanced traffic calming measures at Roxboro and Donoughmore National Schools.

It was agreed that this motion should be referred to the Metropolitan Area Forum.

QUESTIONS

6. Question submitted by Councillor Sean Lynch

I will ask at the next meeting for an update in relation to putting a pedestrian crossing to assist people crossing from the Mungret Football clubhouse to the pitches.

REPLY: A commitment was given in the recent Mungret Part VIII to provide an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing at this location. This uncontrolled crossing has been provided with dropped footpaths and hard-standing area adjacent to the soccer field entrance.

A public light has also been installed directly at the crossing area.

It should be noted that this crossing is only used at soccer events and a warrant for a controlled crossing does not exist at this location.

7. Question submitted by Councillor Sean Lynch

I will ask at the next meeting is there any update or progress in relation to the Horse Project in Limerick City.

REPLY: Limerick City and County Council continues to evaluate and consider a horse project.

NOTICES OF MOTION

8. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Daniel Butler

I will move at the next meeting that Limerick City and County Council work closely with the Skateboard Park Limerick Committee to examine the possibility of small alterations in design to the skate park to create opportunities for users to complete a broader range of skateboard tricks and support its ambitions that it become a prime location for national competitions.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Butler and seconded by Councillor Hourigan.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Butler noted that the skateboard park already attracts participants at a very high standard and with small modifications the skateboard park could be the location for more national competitions.

REPLY: Limerick City and County Council continues to monitor the use of the skateboard park and it has achieved its original objectives. The Council welcomes any suggestions for improvements that will make the skateboard park more attractive to users and will engage with the user groups.

9. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Daniel Butler

I will move at the next meeting that Limerick City and County Council compile a report on the level of usage of our cycle lanes and develop a strategic plan as to

how we encourage cyclists to use them through public consultation.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Butler and seconded by Councillor Byrne.

In proposing the motion Councillor Butler stressed the need to engage with the public to establish how we can encourage more people to use the cycling infrastructure provided and promote the health benefits of this activity.

REPLY: In 2012 the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport announced that a joint submission by Limerick City Council & Limerick County Council in partnership with the University of Limerick was ranked first, out of 39 applications, in what was described as an “Excellent Proposal” to promote Smarter Travel in the greater Limerick City area.

The Limerick City Area is Ireland’s Smarter Travel Demonstration City Area during the period 2012-2016. It will be a pioneering city for sustainable transport in Ireland and will be among the most innovative leaders in Ireland in terms of transport policy and investment which will see a €9 million investment over the period to 2016. The demonstration area consist of four hubs within Limerick City and environs, the UL/Castletroy hub, the Southside regeneration hub, the Corbally hub and the City Centre hub. The aim of the scheme is to transform people’s travel behaviour, through a programme of behavioural change and infrastructural works which will provide good quality shared surface walking and cycling paths. The infrastructural works programme commenced in 2013 and is ongoing, as part of this work pedestrian / cyclist traffic counters were installed in February 2015 and tracking has commenced. Details of cycle usage will be available in the coming months.

Limerick Smarter Travel team is currently engaged in developing The Limerick Metropolitan Cycle Network Plan. The aim is to provide a framework to facilitate the use of cycling as a mode of transport within the Limerick Metropolitan Area in both the short term and long term. Once the Draft Plan is complete it will go out to public consultation in May 2015 and people will be welcome to comment and put forward suggestions.

All details of the Limerick Smarter Travel programme are available on the Limerick Smarter Travel website.

10. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor John Gilligan

I will move at the next meeting that this Council erect a suitable monument to mark the resting place of those who were formerly buried in the Abbey Area and then reinterred in Mount St. Oliver.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Gilligan and seconded by Councillor Daly

In proposing the motion, Councillor Gilligan spoke of the extent of the remains that had been uncovered in the Abbey Area during road construction and subsequently reinterred in Mount St. Oliver and how it would be appropriate to mark same with the erection of a suitable monument in Mount St. Oliver.

REPLY: The Council will arrange a suitable monument to mark those formerly buried in the Abbey area and now reinterred in Mt. St. Oliver Cemetery.

11. Notice of Motion submitted by Cmhr. Séighin Ó Ceallaigh

I will move at the next meeting that this Council calls for a review of the quality, quantity and location of CCTV cameras in Limerick City Centre. This is to determine the efficiency of CCTV in the city, and if it is effective enough to record crimes, and identify criminals.

The motion was proposed by Cmhr. Ó Ceallaigh and seconded by Councillor McCreesh.

In proposing the motion Cmhr. Ó Ceallaigh stressed that CCTV cameras played an important role in crime prevention and detection in the city, were a crucial tool in the justice system and as such it was important that the network of CCTV cameras was adequate and effective.

The following points were raised by Members during discussion of the motion:

- That garda and traffic cameras were very efficient and no evidence had been provided to the contrary and consideration should be given to forwarding the motion to the Joint Policing Committee for review.
- That CCTV coverage should be extended beyond the present areas and that consideration be given to providing CCTV cameras in Gerald Griffin Street where there were no cameras.
- That the Members should visit the Garda CCTV control centre to appraise themselves on the effectiveness of the system.
- That CCTV should be installed in local communities and the Minister should be written to requesting funding for same.

The Deputy Chief Executive pointed out that, while the Council operated CCTV cameras in relation to traffic and community issues, the points raised by the motion were a matter for the Garda Síochána who could be requested to provide information in this regard or the matter could be pursued further by the Joint Policing Committee. He indicated that a visit to the Garda control centre could be organised if required.

12. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Paul Keller

I will move at the next meeting that the Metropolitan District write to the Minister for the Environment enquiring how much motor tax money collected in our District was handed over to Irish Water, and requesting the return of that money to the Council to be spent on the local roads rather than on imposing another austerity charge.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Keller noted the shortfall in government funding for the Council resulting in reduced services while a considerable investment was being made in Irish Water and stressed the need for the Members to protect funding for the Council.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Prendiville pointed out that €400m of road tax

receipts had been given to Irish Water and the Members should fight to retain this funding.

Members expressed the view that this was a legitimate issue in light of the amount of funds that had been paid to unsecured bond holders and also that this was a national issue.

13. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor John Loftus

I will move at the next meeting that the Metropolitan District registers its full support for the 3,440 one parent families in Limerick City by writing to the Minister for Social Protection urging her to ensure no family is disadvantaged or has their income cut by the changes to the One Parent Family Payment due in July.

In proposing the motion Councillor Loftus stressed the importance of protecting the most vulnerable in society and highlighted the challenges of raising a child as a lone parent. He noted that increasing rents, combined with cuts to fuel allowance and back to school supports, were putting more people into poverty.

In seconding the motion Councillor Gilligan cited the example of individuals having to give up work to keep their social welfare benefits.

Members supported the motion and made the following observations in relation to same:

- A considerable percentage of the tenants that had signed up for HAP were representative of one parent families and, with rent caps already set at too low a point, it was now proposed to reduce payments to this category.
- There was no childcare scheme in place to assist people get back to work.
- In accordance with recent CSO figures the number of one parent families in Limerick was 20% higher than the national average and the high cost of raising children must be acknowledged.
- That the Members come forward with constructive proposals on how to support childcare and how to help people to support themselves.

On the proposal of Councillor Butler and seconded by Councillor Hourigan, it was agreed to suspend standing orders to facilitate the completion of the agenda.

14. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Cian Prendiville

I will move at the next meeting that the Council begin to prepare for the possibility that the Parkway Valley/Horizon Mall planning permission will be rejected by An Bord Pleanala, and put in place plans for alternative social and community uses of that area should that happen.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Prendiville and seconded by Councillor Keller.

In proposing the motion Councillor Prendiville noted that a decision from An Bord Pleanala was due in respect of this site which was now in a derelict condition.

Cmhlr. Ó Ceallaigh noted that, in its present condition, the site was unsightly and presented health and safety issues.

REPLY: The Council understands that An Bord Pleanála decision on the Horizon Mall Appeal is due by 19th March 2015. The Planning Authority has previously committed to review the retail and commercial zoning in the Castletroy Local Area Plan at the earliest opportunity. However a review of the site in question would be premature until such time a decision is made on the appeal application, and the current planning permissions on the site expire in August 2016.

Councillor Prendiville suggested that the Council take immediate action in relation to the site and it was pointed out that, as there is an existing permission on the site, the Council would have to be prepared to purchase the site to gain control of it before any suggested works could be carried out.

15. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Paul Keller, John Loftus and Cian Prendiville

I will move at the next meeting that the Metropolitan District of Limerick condemns the recent homophobic assault on Roisin Prendergast and Ciara Murphy in Limerick, and sends a letter to them expressing the Metropolitan District's sympathies and solidarity with them, and the Metropolitan District's strong belief that homophobia has no place in our city.

The Deputy Chief Executive urged the Members to proceed with caution in relation to any matter that was under investigation by An Garda Síochána and stressed that there should be public debate on an issue only where the facts were accurate and clear.

On the proposal of Councillor Gilligan and seconded by Councillor Daly it was agreed that the motion should be amended to read as follows :

“That the Metropolitan District of Limerick condemns homophobia in all its forms”

16. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Sean Lynch

I will move at the next meeting that the Council investigate the possibility of putting a railing or some preventable measure on the footpath from Mungret Football Club to the village to deter cars and buses from parking on the footpaths.

It was agreed that this motion should be referred to the Metropolitan Area Forum.

17. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Maria Byrne

I will move at the next Metropolitan meeting that Limerick City and County Council will provide traffic calming measures at Maigue Avenue, Raheen, Limerick.

It was agreed that this motion should be referred to the Metropolitan Area Forum.

18. Correspondence

This concluded the Meeting.

Signed: _____
MAYOR

Dated : _____