



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae **Luimnigh**

**Limerick City
& County Council**

Stiúrthóireacht Forbartha Eacnamaíochta,
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17th November 2020

To the Mayor and Each Member of Limerick City and County Council

**Chairperson's Report for the Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning
Strategic Policy Committee Meeting of 14th October 2020**

A Chomhairleoir, a chara,

A virtual meeting of the SPC on 14th October 2020. The following is an account of the principal items that were considered at the meeting.

Item 1 -To consider Notice of Motion referred from Council meeting held on 28th

September 2020. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors B. Collins and E Ryan.

We will move at the next meeting that Limerick City and County Council immediately set up an SME Task Force to support and plan for the future of all SME's throughout Limerick City and County and that this Task Force should also feed into the Economic Forum

Mr. John Moran, Chair of SME Recovery welcomed the NoM to set up a Task Force to support SME's and stated that it would provide a single agency to pull all supports together.

He stated SME's had suffered an estimated €10 - €11 billion damage due to Covid-19 restrictions, after taking into account the various schemes offered by the Government. He also stated that there were 800,000 employees working in SME's who are currently not supported by a single government agency.

He felt that it would be great opportunity for Limerick to take the lead in setting up this Task Force for SME's and that a proper infrastructure and supports were required to be put in place to progress this initiative.

The Task Force would also be able to make submissions to feed into the National Recovery Plan.

Mr. Moran stated that €3.5bn had been allocated to the National Recovery Plan, which will provide for the setting up of co-working centres across the country, mentoring for SME's and assessing viability for grants.

V. Murray informed the meeting that further examination would have to take place on how to approach the setting up of this Task Force, whether it will be a sub-committee of the Strategic Policy Committee or by a working group established through Innovate Limerick.

A number of members expressed interest in sitting on this group and looked forward to working together in supporting SME's. It was felt that a submission be sent on behalf of the SPC to the National SME Task Force in support of the SME sector.

Item 2 - Update of Proposed Limerick Development Plan

M. Woods, A/Senior Planner updated members on the first consolidated Limerick Development Plan that will shape the future growth of Limerick for the period 2022-2028 and beyond. It is a blueprint/roadmap for Physical, Economic and Social Development for Limerick. It will set out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Limerick City and County. The various stages of the Development Plan process from pre-draft stage to adoption of the Plan in May 2022 were outlined. The following works have been completed to date:

- Public Consultation on 1st issues paper ran from 15th Aug - 12th Oct 2020, and approximately 235 submissions were received
- Virtual Room was set up to allow public to access a virtual consultation
- Online Portal set up to allow public make submissions
- Webinar on proposed Development Plan was held on 17th Sept.
- Interactive Schools Programme for both primary and secondary schools – 170 packages distributed throughout city and county
- Public Meetings were held by appointment in each Municipal District
- In excess of 30 Stakeholder Meetings were held.

Maria also outlined the schedule of works for the next number of months, which include issuing CE reports on consultation submissions, holding workshops with elected members and preparation of the Draft Development Plan.

Further Plans, which are being progressed by Forward Planning, include:

- Southern Environs Local Area Plan – public consultation 10th Oct - 23rd Nov, 2020
- Supplementary Contribution Scheme – CE report being prepared for consideration at November Council meeting.

In reply to members, Maria stated that no update had been received on Rural Housing Guidelines and that the NPF and RSES sets out the main guidelines in relation to rural housing. She stated that a workshop would be organised for elected members to discuss this matter further.

She also confirmed that the current Development Plan will remain in place until the new Development Plan is adopted and that all planning permissions will be subject to compliance with the Development Plan along with the objectives of both the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).

Item 3 - Update of Living City Initiative (LCI)

Mr. Kieran Reeves, Senior Executive Planner, Urban Innovation, presented an overview of the Living City Initiative, which is a scheme of property tax incentives designed to regenerate both historic buildings (pre 1915) and other buildings in city centres.

The Living Cities Initiative has two components, residential and commercial:

- Residential offers income tax deduction over 10 years for qualifying expenditure on the refurbishment or conversion of a building for use as a dwelling to owner/occupier.
- Commercial relief is given in the form of an accelerated capital allowance for qualifying expenditure on refurbishment or conversion of rented residential and certain commercial premises at the rate of 15% for 6 years and 10% in year 7.

The Urban Innovation Department hold monthly One-Stop Shops in Engine, Upper Cecil Street giving multi-disciplinary advice to property owners, potential property owners and landlords who want to avail of the tax incentive for qualifying renovation works.

Mr. Reeves informed members that the LCI Scheme expires at end of December 2022. He stated that in Limerick, 31 applications had been received to date, 7 of which have been certified and 3 have commenced development.

He also outlined the following initiatives, which support the Living City Scheme:

- Positive City Exchange Project – examining ways of making historic buildings more energy efficient and ways of financing them.
- URDF – Living Georgian City Initiative – 2 demonstrations projects at 58 O’Connell Street and 33-34 Thomas Street.
- SBIR (Small Business Innovation Research) – Fire Safety in historic buildings
Mentoring a small company to develop a new product to address compliance issues in historic buildings.

While members queried the low level of take-up of the scheme, the timescale involved and if conservation restraints were slowing down the process.

Kieran stated that the lack of access to finance for retrofitting schemes is the main factor in the low level of take up of the scheme; he also stated that the availability of other grants might make the scheme less attractive and they were looking at the viability of it. He stated that there has been a recent increase in applications as more investors are purchasing properties with a view to refurbishing them. Developments, which required planning permission were more prolonged, but that advice given at One Stop Shops helped to speed up the application process.

He informed members that they are currently working with colleagues in other Irish cities in cataloguing techniques and best practices in the restoration of old buildings.

Item 4 - To consider Notice of Motion referred from Metropolitan District Meeting, held on 21st September 2020, submitted by Cllr. D. Butler;

I call Limerick City and County Council to look at developing a policy on how to enforce a minimum standard of shop front signage to ensure the attractiveness of our city.

On the proposal of Cllr. Butler, seconded by Cllr. O’Sullivan it was unanimously agreed to develop a policy on how to enforce a minimum standard of shop front signage to ensure the attractiveness of Limerick City.

Members highlighted the lack of standardisation for shop fronts/signage, which was having a detrimental effect on the overall appearance of Limerick City. They suggested that the scheme should also be extended to the county and be part of the planning process, including enforcement. Members also suggested the provision of a grant scheme for shop fronts / signage and guidance for independent businesses to comply with the guidelines of the policy.

B. Thompson pointed out that Kerry County Council have a very good shopfront design policy.

V. Murray informed members that under the Development Management Guidelines, recommendations for shop front facades and signage are currently being reviewed and updated and will be incorporated into the proposed Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028, which will go on public display next year.

He also stated that the Business and Retail Incentive Grant for fit-out costs for shop fronts would be re-advertised by the Limerick Enterprise Office.

Replying to members, V. Murray stated that the delay in issuing of hoarding/scaffolding licences would be investigated and that the licence fees incurred by commercial ratepayers would be reviewed at budget time.

Item 6 - To consider Notice of Motion referred from adjourned Council meeting held on 3rd July, 2020, submitted by Cllr. E. O'Brien;

I will move at the next meeting that the Chief Executive deliver the report and findings of the Riverway Design Enabling Review, commissioned in June 2017 and undertaken by Senior Architect, Rosie Webb.

This Notice of Motion was deferred to the next meeting of the committee to be held on 14th December 2020.

Item 7 - To consider Notice of Motion referred from Council meeting held on 28th September, 2020. Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr. L. Galvin;

I will move at the next meeting that the Council de-list all Protected Structures that fall under the Derelict Sites Act for obvious reasons.

Members expressed concern at the number of protected structures, which have fallen into dereliction in towns and villages in Limerick, as the costs associated with refurbishing them are enormous. They requested a review of the list of protected structures in Limerick.

S. Duclot informed members that there was currently 2,000 protected structures in Limerick, only 12 of which were listed on the Derelict Sites Register (5 owned by Limerick City and County Council and 7 privately owned with active engagement with the Council on 6 of the 7 properties).

As part of the review of the Development Plan, M. Woods stated that they will be preparing a full list of protected structures per Municipal District area and members will have an opportunity to make submissions on protected structures in their areas and have them reviewed.

Members requested that sufficient resources be made available for research work to be carried out on Protected Structures and assistance be provided to owners of protected buildings, whether to invest or not. They also suggested that the criteria for placing properties on the register needs to be reviewed and should be consistent with Departmental Guidelines.

V. Murray proposed that this Notice of Motion be deferred until the review has taken place and suggested that it be placed as an item on agenda at a further meeting.

M. Lyes requested that members of the Environment Linkage Group be given an opportunity to feed into this discussion.

Item 8 - Any Other Business

Members congratulated Limerick City and County Council, which had been shortlisted for 10 Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards for 2020.

The 'Atlantic Edge European Embrace' brand, which was launched earlier this year, has also been nominated as a finalist in three categories in the City Nation Place awards. Limerick is the only Irish entrant to make the shortlist in this competition.

Best Wishes were extended to all entrants.

Signed: *Eddie Ryan*

**Councillor Eddie Ryan,
Chairperson**