



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae **Luimnigh**

Limerick City
& County Council

Draft Minutes of the Meeting of Limerick City & County Council's Travel and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee held on Tuesday 15th December, 2020 at 3:30 p.m. by Webex Video Conference.

Members Present:

Cllrs. Leddin (Chair), Butler, Foley, Kilcoyne, McSweeney, Mitchell, Novak Uí Chonchúir, O'Donovan, Ryan, Secas, Sheahan (M), Sheahan (J), Teefy, Ms. M Browne, Dr. C. Cahill, Ms. A Drake, Mr. B Harper, Mr. T. O'Brien, Mr. P. McCarthy.

Officials Present:

Mr. B. Kennedy, Mr. D. McGuigan, Mr. R. Gallagher, Ms. M. Corrigan, Ms. K. McDonnell, Ms. B. Quinn, Ms. A. Leahy, Ms. M. Fitzgerald.

In Attendance:

Mr. Hugh Mc Grath, S.E. Service Operations and Maintenance.

+CityxChange – Ms. Sinead Hourigan, S.S.O.

Space Engagers – Ms. Madeleine Lyes.

Climathon Schoolgates Group – Mr. Aidan Hogan, Ms. Anne Cronin, Ms. Aine Farrell, Mr. Eoin Buckley.

The Chair, Cllr. Leddin opened the Meeting. At the outset he wished to acknowledge the situation in Wickham Street regarding the issues of the wands. He acknowledged the frustration from the traders and cyclist groups, but assured the meeting that Limerick City and County Council is in discussions to come to an amicable solution.

Item 1: Adopt Minutes of Travel and Transportation SPC Meeting of the 20th October 2020

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Travel and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee held on the 20th October 2020 were proposed by Cllr. Foley, seconded by Cllr. Ryan and adopted.

Item 2: Director's Report.

Mr. Kennedy updated the Committee on items arising from the last meeting:

Response to Mr. Bruce Harper's question if it was known how much the LSMATS will increase carbon emissions, and whether the Council had put a process in place where carbon proofing will be included in the evaluation of major decisions and projects, in accordance with the local authority Climate Charter.

1. The draft Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy forecasts an annual reduction in vehicular emissions of 37,572 tonnes per annum over a 30-year strategy period. Following the recent public consultation on the LSMATS, the NTA has indicated that it will review the climate change considerations contained in the document.

2. Action 147 of the Climate Action Plan 2019 includes for, inter alia, the introduction of a local authority Climate Charter. Section 3 of the Charter provides that local authorities, with the support of Central Government, will undertake a wide range of climate action activities including a commitment to reduce CO₂ emissions by 30% and increase energy efficiency to 50% of the baseline year (2009) by 2030.

A sub-committee of the Local Government Management Agency is currently in the process of establishing Key Performance Indicators for the commitments contained in the Climate Action Charter. Once finalised all local authorities will have to report on their performance against the indicators.

3. At a national level a process is underway to develop the methodology by which public bodies will calculate their emissions reductions. We await the outcome of this process. It is likely that each local authority will have to account for its emissions and energy reduction targets as part of the climate action plans proposed under Section 12 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon (Amendment) Bill, when enacted.

4. Action 4 of the Climate Action Plan provides for the publication of legislation – the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2020, published in early October 2020 and currently progressing through the Oireachtas – which will give legal standing to the Climate Action Plan 2019.

Section 3 of the Bill – as it is currently constituted – states that “The State shall pursue the transition to a climate resilient and climate neutral economy by the end of the year 2050.”

Section 12 of the Bill - *Role of Local Authority* – provides for the insertion, after Section 14 of the parent Act, of Section 14A which provides that the Minister shall request local authorities to make a 5-year local authority climate action plan which will specify mitigation and adaptation measures to be adopted by the local authority, within 18 months of the commencement of the Section. It is anticipated that included in the climate action plan will be the mechanisms by which the local authority intends to meet the emissions and energy efficiency targets contained in the Climate Action Plan 2019. Ministerial guidance on the content and preparation of the local authority climate action plan is also provided for under Section 14A of the Bill.

5. Forthcoming guidelines from the Environmental Protection Agency relating to Green Procurement, which are due to issue in Quarter 1 2021, are likely to include for the mandatory inclusion of green criteria in all procurement using public funds, within 36 months.

Mr. Harper queried what baseline year did the NTA use in calculating the emissions reductions contained in the LSMATS. Mr. Kennedy confirmed that he will enquire from the NTA as to its methodology.

In response to a further question from Mr. Harper, Mr. McGuigan confirmed that Limerick City and County Council signed the Climate Action Charter in November 2019 and is awaiting national methodologies to be developed for the targets.

Item 3: Presentation on proposal for School Streets Initiative (+CityxChange – Climathon Schoolgates Group).

Ms. Sinead Hourigan from Urban Innovation department gave a brief introduction to the Climathon process as part of the +CityXChange project and introduced the representatives from the Climathon School Gates Group. She invited Mr. Aidan Hogan, Ms. Anne Cronin, Ms. Aine Farrell and Mr. Eoin Buckley to begin the presentation.

The presentation highlighted the need to ensure safe and fun environments for children at school gates. The proposal is based on pilots in other Irish cities. The presentation set out the situation of the school, the traffic congestion experienced at peak times, the safety issues associated with this congestion and the air quality implications of same.

The presentation outlined a number of possible responses including school zones and school streets approaches.

Cllr. Leddin thanked the Group for their interesting presentation. He added that cyclist's safety is important and if the infrastructure is in place, people will use it. He referred to the success of the segregated cycle lane on Shannon Bridge. He also added that consultation is key and opened the floor to questions.

Cllr. Secas welcomes and supports the proposal. She added that such a pilot project is very timely as the Limerick Development plan is currently being developed, and sees the opportunity to include the learnings of a school zones or school streets pilot in the first phase of the plan. She noted that consultation would play a very important role in the success of any initiative.

Cllr. Butler stated the presentation gave a good understanding of the issues facing schools and is pleased to see progress at St. Paul's school. He supports the pilot but would also like to see more focus on pedestrians as part of the Council's strategy. He stated that the gridlock is a particular problem for residents and added that the importance of having students and parents drive this will give the best results.

Cllr. O'Donovan fully supports the initiative and the pilot is very welcome. She advised that the school zone in Laurel Hill is reverting back to old habits and suggested that some of the NTA funding be used to paint the street to slow motorists down, and to restrict cars going down the avenue.

Dr. Catriona Cahill, on behalf of Limerick Chamber expressed her support of school zones and school streets and added that the pilot ticks all the boxes in relation to attracting new FDI to the area.

Cllr. Novak wished to remind the Committee that this issue has been discussed before at a previous SPC meeting. She would now like to get a commitment from the Council to deliver and progress the pilot to other schools, and focus on primary schools.

Cllr. McSweeney acknowledged that there has been huge investment in the area of Active Travel in recent months. He asked if this pilot scheme is part of the safe route to school funding and who will lead the consultation process. He added that it is important to consult with all the stakeholders.

Cllr. Michael Sheehan expressed his support of a great initiative and wished the group well in the next stage of the pilot. Mrs. Maureen Browne also wished to express her support of the initiative.

Cllr. Leddin thanked the group individually for the presentation. He concluded the discussion by saying this is a very positive initiative and it deserves due diligence.

In response to a question in relation to leading the consultation process, Mr. Kennedy added that the impact of closing streets will need to be examined in detail as there are multiple logistical issues that need to be addressed. It will require discussion with school principals and other stakeholder groups, in particular external funding stakeholders, to come up with solutions. It is in everyone's interests to reduce the impact of school transport and he is keen to look at all possibilities.

Mr. Gallagher added that the Council is actively promoting walking and cycling active modes and it is very good to start with young children. He added that the executive is fully supportive of a pilot and added that good consultation will be key.

Cllr. Butler asked if the Council would take the leadership on the consultation process if required. Cllr. Leddin stated that the local authority could lead the initiative on this for appropriate locations.

Item 4: Presentation on Local Improvement Scheme – Service Operations (Mr. Hugh McGrath).

Mr. Hugh McGrath delivered a presentation on amendments to the Local Improvement Scheme. The purpose of the presentation is primarily to inform the members and also to make a proposal in relation to how the schemes should be ranked and prioritised going forward.

The Chair opened up the floor to comments / questions.

Cllr. Michael Sheahan stated that a lot of rural members are very dissatisfied with the ineligibility criteria being proposed and find them difficult to accept. He referred to a recent Council meeting at which Cllr. John Sheahan proposed that the members write to the City and County Manager's Association and ask to consider withdrawing the proposal it had agreed to, so that the Minister could make the necessary amendments to the proposed scheme.

Cllr. Teefy advised that there is a big issue in relation to the ineligibility of gates in passageways, which are there for security. She added that it is very unfair to disqualify applicants who were already qualified.

Cllr. John Sheahan gave an outline of the background of the local authority taking avenues into public ownership, to be done under a local improvement scheme. He expressed his disappointment at the changes and the lack of consultation with elected members. He also felt that prioritising roads was not a good proposal, as the present process of chronological ranking is fair and transparent. He argued that this has put Councillors in a difficult position.

Cllr. Martin Ryan echoed the concerns of previous speakers in regard to the gates issue and people not feeling safe in their own homes. He called for the issue regarding gates be revisited, and suggested that eligibility should be on a first-come-first-served basis.

Mr. McGrath stated that the the main purpose of the presentation was to propose a review of the scheme and he was highlighting the issues that were coming from the Department. He understands the member's frustration and is hoping that the SPC would review the prioritization strategy.

Cllr. Mitchell added his dissatisfaction to the prioritization and stated gates should not be a reason for exclusion from the scheme.

Cllr. Teefy asked what criteria is being used for people applying now.

Mr. McGrath advised that applicants should continue to apply and they will be added to the list however, there is an obligation to implement the criteria set out in the 2020 outline document. He stated that a workshop for members would be held with a view to putting a number of options before the SPC for discussion and agreement.

Cllr. Leddin requested a workshop for clarity in the New Year. Mr. McGrath agreed and is hopeful of holding a workshop before end of January.

Cllr. Ryan asked if there could be workshops for the separate electoral areas and Mr. McGrath agreed that he would be happy to facilitate.

Mr. Kennedy undertook to ask that Corporate Services write to the Department outlining the concerns that the Members have raised.

Item 5: Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor F. Kilcoyne (referred from the Metropolitan District).

“I will move at the next Metropolitan Meeting, to request free car parking for Limerick city to be enacted for one year, when Limerick is ready for reopening (which is now) after this Covid-19 pandemic. I believe that to bring footfall back into our city, shoppers should be given 3 hours free car parking at any time of the day to help retailers”.

In proposing the Notice of Motion, Cllr. Kilcoyne added that he was very pleased to see last week that Councillors had taken the initiative to give free parking in carparks around the city and also the Council’s own carpark.

In a written response Mr. Kennedy stated that Limerick City and County Council provides approximately 3,500 parking spaces in the city centre, with one of the lowest parking fees in the country. The Council’s budget for 2021 provides for income of €1.926m for parking fines and charges. To reduce the amount of revenue generated by removing parking charges would result in an unbalanced budget.

In order to support businesses during the Covid-19 emergency, the Council waived car parking charges for an extended period over the summer months and has agreed to provide free parking at weekends. In addition, the annual free Park and Stride service is being provided for the extended festive season, with car parking available to the public at the Cleeves’ Car Park and at the Irish Rail Depot on Roxboro Road.

Cllr. Kilcoyne added that the Council is not doing enough for retailers in the city, a lot of whom are struggling. He proposed that even one hour of free parking would help businesses in the city.

Cllr. Leddin stated that all members will share Cllr. Kilcoyne’s sentiments in encouraging footfall into the city. He added that the solution is most likely striking a balance between the revenue aspect of it, the management of parking in the city and at the same time facilitate the increase in footfall. He concluded that it merits further discussion and he is happy to facilitate that for Cllr. Kilcoyne.

Item 6: Any Other Business:

With the Chair’s agreement, Ms. Drake asked if the Wichkam St. Cycle lane was constructed accordance with S.I. No. 332/2012 - Road Traffic (Traffic and Parking) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2012?

In reply Mr. Gallagher stated that the cycleway was constructed in accordance with the regulations. He added that it is illegal to park on a cycle lane and LCCC is currently trying to resolve issues around the bollards by discussions with stakeholders.

Ms. Drake stated that you can only have a cycle lane or a loading bay, you can’t have both. She accepted the response and looked forward to the resolution.

Mr. McGrath replied that bollards were installed owing to concerns regarding public liability issues, and that this decision was now being reviewed. He stressed the need to come up with a solution that meets the needs of all concerned parties.

Mr. Harper advised that it was reported in the Limerick Leader that a commitment was given to retailers that no bollards would be placed between Thomas St. and Wickham St. and wished to know on what authority was this given.

In response Mr. Gallagher replied that consultation is progressing to resolve the issue. The Chair asked for forbearance whilst consultation is ongoing.

The Chair closed the meeting by wishing all a safe, peaceful and happy Christmas.