

# **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT ONLINE SPECIAL MEETING OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 7<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2021, AT 3PM.**

## **PRESENT IN THE CHAIR:**

Councillor M. Collins, Mayor.

## **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Councillors Benson, Butler, Collins (B), Collins (J), Costelloe, Daly, Donegan, Foley, Galvin, Hartigan, Kiely, Kilcoyne, Leddin, McSweeney, Mitchell, Murphy, Novak Uí Chonchúir, O'Dea, O'Donoghue, O'Hanlon, Ruddle, Ryan (E), Ryan (M), Scanlan, Secas, Sheahan (J), Sheahan (K), Sheahan (M), Sheehan (C), Slattery, Talukder, Teefy.

## **OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Chief Executive (Mr. P. Daly), Deputy Chief Executive and Director, Support Services (Mr. S. Coughlan), Director, National and Regional Shared Services (Ms. C. Curley), A/Director, Capital Investment (Mr. S. Hanrahan), Director, Physical Development (Mr. B. Kennedy), Meetings Administrator (Mr. J. Clune), Administrative Officer, Corporate Services and Governance (Mr. M. Leahy), A/Senior Executive Officer, Economic Development (Mr. P. Fitzgerald), Digital Strategy Programme Manager (Mr. R. O'Driscoll), Assistant Staff Officer, Corporate Services and Governance (Ms. S. Carroll).

The Mayor commenced the Meeting by welcoming the Members and members of the public and press who were present online for the Meeting.

### **1. National and Regional Shared Services Directorate**

#### **National Broadband Ireland**

The Mayor welcomed Mr. Donal Hanrahan, Chief Operating Officer, National Broadband Ireland. Mr. Damien Fitzgibbon, Local Authority Liaison Manager and Mr. Niall Beirne, Head of Strategic Communications and Stakeholder Engagement, National Broadband Ireland were also in attendance.

Mr. Hanrahan provided the Members with an update on the rollout of the National Broadband Programme both in Ireland and locally in Limerick. He stated that nationally 198,000 premises had been surveyed and this would be carried out in all 26 counties by the end of the year. 161,000 premises were progressing through or completed design stage and over 900 premises were ready for connection. The overall ambition of the Programme was to ensure that every premises had access to high speed broadband. The Programme would take seven years to complete.

Mr. Hanrahan outlined the key role that this infrastructure would play in rural Ireland, enabling remote working, e-health initiatives, online education and job creation. He further stated that access to services was vital and would be a key enabler for the sustainment of local businesses and communities.

Mr. Hanrahan gave an update on the Broadband Programme in Limerick confirming that work was underway on the Regional Exchange in Limerick City which was due for completion in mid 2021. Work was also underway on Local Exchanges in Tipperary and Adare. The rollout of the National Broadband Programme in Limerick would see an investment of €84m. Mr. Hanrahan confirmed the rollout of Broadband Connections Points (BCPs) was also ongoing, which would provide free access to high speed internet to Schools, GAA Clubs, Community Centres and other facilities.

Mr. Hanrahan emphasised that public consultation and engagement with the local communities was a key aspect of the National Broadband Plan rollout in Limerick and webinars had been arranged to allow for this.

Members thanked Mr. Hanrahan for his comprehensive presentation and update on the rollout of the National Broadband Plan.

Members welcomed the rollout of the National Broadband Programme in the City and County of Limerick and emphasised the importance of the Plan to ensure connectivity to every household, particularly in rural areas and with increased reliance on home working and e-learning.

In response to queries from Members, Mr. Hanrahan confirmed the following:

- The fibre network being rolled out as part of the NBP was future-proofed and would take into account potential future technological developments.
- Surveys were underway to determine the level of new network infrastructure required and these surveys would be carried out in all counties in 2021. Existing infrastructure would be used, where possible.
- Customers would receive the option of up to 1Gbps with minimum speed of 500mpbs.
- National Broadband Ireland had a facility on their website which would give an indication of the timeline for connectivity.
- Mr. Hanrahan agreed to revert to Members with a list of the Retail Service Providers.
- The Commission for Communications Regulator (ComReg) is the body responsible for regulation of the electronic communications sector.
- Contractors carrying out work on roads and infrastructure were obliged to fully complete the works.

Members requested a timeline for the rollout of broadband in a number of locations in the City and County. Mr. Hanrahan agreed to revert to Members with details.

Mr. Hanrahan noted the comments expressed by Members and emphasised the importance of the National Broadband Plan to ensure connectivity to every household.

## 2. Economic Development Directorate

### Recommendation from Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2021

Limerick City and County Council, recognising the difficulties that many of our SME companies were in as a result of COVID, have held several special Strategic Policy Committee meetings to consider this matter and to make a submission to the SME Taskforce on behalf of Mid-West SMEs who were preparing a report 'The National SME and Entrepreneurship Plan' during 2020 and again in 2021 to review the recommendations in the completed report of the Taskforce.

At our most recent Strategic Policy Committee meeting to consider this matter, the SPC members have approved *that a local SME Committee be established as a sub-committee of Innovate Limerick and that the membership of the committee should include:*

- *The Mayor of the City and County of Limerick.*
- *Representatives of the Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning SPC x 2.*
- *Representatives of the business community x 3.*
- *A member of the Education/Training/Skills community x 1.*

*The committee will have a dual reporting relationship with the Board of Innovate Limerick and the Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning Strategic Policy Committee and will be supported by staff members from Innovate and Economic Development.*

On the proposal of Councillor Sheahan (J), seconded by Councillor O'Hanlon, it was agreed to defer this item to allow for further discussion among the respective political parties.

This concluded the Meeting.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Mayor**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_