

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT SPECIAL MEETING OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE, LIMERICK, AND ONLINE, ON FRIDAY 11TH MARCH, 2022, AT 9.30AM

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR:

Councillor D. Butler, Mayor.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Benson, Carey, Collins (B), Collins (J), Collins (M), Costelloe, Daly, Donegan, Egan, Foley, Galvin, Hartigan, Keary, Kiely, Kilcoyne, Leddin, McSweeney, Murphy, Novak Uí Chonchúir, O'Brien, O'Dea, O'Donoghue, O'Sullivan, Ruddle, Ryan (E), Secas, Sheahan (J), Sheahan (M), Sheehan (C), Slattery, Talukder, Teefy, Teskey.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive (Mr. P. Daly), Director, Support Services (Mr. Sean Coughlan), Director, Housing (Ms. C Curley), Director, Regeneration (Mr. J. Delaney), Director, Planning, Environment & Placr-Making (Ms. N. Gallagher), Director, Transportation and Mobility (Mr. B. Kennedy), Meetings Administrator (Ms. L. Flannery), Senior Staff Officer, Corporate Services and Governance (Ms. A. Foley), Administrative Officer, Planning & Development (Mr. D. McGuigan), Senior Architect, Urban Innovation (Ms. R Webb).

Councillor Butler, Mayor, opened the meeting by welcoming Minister Eamon Ryan to Limerick and thanked him for coming to speak to the Members.

Discussion on Climate Action Plan

Minister Eamon Ryan expressed his appreciation to the members of Limerick City & County Council for inviting him to speak on the Climate Action Plan. He said he came to discuss the role Local Authorities have to play in delivering the action plan. He mentioned the cost of inflation and the current crisis in Ukraine, and in particular, how it has put pressure on everyone to change. The Minister acknowledged that achieving the objectives outlined in the Climate Action Plan is no small task, but the government has key strategies in place to deliver on it, and he stressed the importance of everyone committing to its delivery to ensure a better future for all.

Minister Ryan referenced the Buchanan Report and indicated his concern that cities such as Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford don't have commensurate growth in comparison to Dublin. He spoke about Limerick at present and mentioned that the Government has the funding and the plans to further develop Limerick, in line with a strategic approach to have a better plan and balance across the country.

Minister Ryan announced his intention to create three new task forces bringing together Government Departments, Agencies and outside expertise. It is his intention that these teams would connect with Local Authorities and coordinate to achieve results in the next three years.

He indicated the first area of focus for the interagency team is sustainable mobility. The Minister said one of the biggest challenges is transport, and that as a country we need to manage sustainability better and there is the requirement to do it now to meet 2030 targets. He asked the members of Limerick City & County Council to consider what can be delivered in the next three years and to create plans. He stressed the importance of using the railway infrastructure in Limerick and how it can be utilised better to connect Limerick City to its rural towns and villages. He questioned if these lines can be used to distribute goods more efficiently and pointed out it might be possible to use this infrastructure to connect our main universities and colleges. He also commended the work carried out to date by the Active Travel Department of Limerick City and County Council. He described the importance of creating a sense of place and attractive streets.

Minister Ryan also referred to the importance of retro fitting for buildings as the third area of focus. He stated that the retro fitting of vacant houses will give the potential to provide housing at a lower cost, compared to a new build.

He indicated that the third area of focus is offshore renewables. Minister Ryan described the future of offshore wind farms as the way forward in Ireland for renewable energy. He outlined how Ireland has an upper hand in this area, due to our climate and prevalence of wind. He indicated that these changes are coming fast, and explained that the local authorities need to get behind them. He agreed with the views of the Members that we must bring people along with us to deliver these changes.

Members welcomed Minister Eamon Ryan and thanked him for coming to speak to them in the Council Chamber. They were all in agreement that the rising price of fuel was a major concern and alternative methods of energy were needed. Members agreed with the Government strategy on investing in offshore energy and queried if tidal, small types of nuclear energy, hydrogen and Liquefied Natural Gas should also be considered. Members pointed out that Foynes deep water port would also be a good location for a Liquefied Natural Gas terminal.

The Minister expressed his view that hydrogen and electric power is the focus of the future. He indicated that Ireland is not equipped or experienced to utilise nuclear energy or dispose of nuclear waste.

Members expressed concerns about some issues of the Transport strategy, in particular the progress on the three bypasses planned for Limerick and stated that these were of huge importance to Limerick. They also raised concerns about the progress of the Northern Distributor Road, highlighting the need for this road locally to open up the North side of the city. Members also pointed out that more needs to be done for people living in rural Ireland and in particular our farmers and they raised concerns in relation to the National Transport Authorities decision to remove school bus transport from certain schools in Limerick City. They also queried if there was any update on progress with the legislation for the Directly Elected Mayor for Limerick. Minister Ryan agreed that Ireland is a mosaic and rural farmers need to be incentivised to restore biodiversity and develop clear water where appropriate.

He agreed with the Members views that fuel poverty is a critical issue and it would be important to bring people along with any policies.

Mayor Butler agreed with the Minister and the members that Limerick needs to develop its city and rural towns further. He summarised the Members' discussions and pointed out that Limerick is ambitious to produce renewable energy and asked the Minister and Government to get behind them.

This concluded the Meeting.

Signed: _____
Mayor

Date: _____