



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae **Luimnigh**

**Limerick City
& County Council**

Stiúrthóireacht Forbartha Eacnamaíochta,
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9th May 2022

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 11th April 2022**

A Chomhairleoir, a chara,

A blended meeting of the above Strategic Policy Committee took place on 11th April 2022. The following is a summary of the business transacted at the meeting.

Item 1

Adoption of Minutes from Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning SPC Meeting of 23rd February, 2022.

Cllr. Keary raised an issue regarding the placement of chimneys in new houses and was informed by Nuala O'Connell, Senior Planner that the matter was outside the Planning Act and came under the Building Regulations. Following further discussion on the matter in relation to the climate crisis and spiralling energy costs, the following recommendation was agreed.

On the proposal of Cllr. S. Keary, seconded by Cllr. L. Galvin, it was agreed to write to the Minister of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, requesting that the Building Regulations be amended to ensure that all new houses would include the installation of solid fuel burning chimney.

Item 2

To consider Notice of Motion referred from Metropolitan Meeting of the Council held on 21st March, 2022, submitted by Cllr. S. Novak Uí Chonchúir

"I will move at the next Meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick that Limerick City and County Council prepare a feasibility study on developing a programme of rates reduction and/or other financial compensation for traders based on streets that could be considered for trial or permanent pedestrianisation (in cases where traders would be negatively affected by the new measures)".

Cllr. Novak stated that city-centre retail has been challenged by changing shopping patterns e.g. out of town shopping centres and more recently the rise in online shopping. She stated that the city centre should not only be a place for shopping, but that it needs to be attractive for visitors and residents – comparing Little Catherine Street and Bedford Row with O'Connell Street. She highlighted the resistance of retailers to pedestrianisation in Limerick City and suggested compensation for retailers to succeed in the transition to a new system. She referred to plans implemented in the Netherlands and stated that international research shows that retailers overestimate the importance of car access to their customers.

V. Murray, A/DOS, stated that in his experience, the short-term pain that businesses feel while streets are being pedestrianised is far outweighed by the long-term gain that businesses get afterwards. He stated that income from rates provide necessary services and raised concerns regarding funding sources to compensate businesses. He recommended that Limerick City and County Council do not pursue this Notice of Motion in compensating businesses and let the market take care of itself. He stated that the Council would work with traders to agree an appropriate payment plan and that a report would be prepared on this issue and forwarded to a future meeting of the SPC.

Item 3

Presentation on Community Wealth Building Model by CLES (the National Organisation for Local Economies, UK).

Tom Lloyd Goodwin, Director of Policy & Practice, Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) gave a presentation on the Community Wealth Building (CWB) model. CLES was established in 1986, with its main base in Manchester and has a strong presence in Birmingham and London.

The Community Wealth Building model seeks to change the way our economies function, by aiming to retain more wealth and opportunity for the benefit of local people. The five main components of CWB are inclusive ownership, local financial capacity, fair employment, targeted procurement and productive use of land and property. He highlighted the importance of Anchor Institutions e.g. local authorities, educational institutions and hospitals as they are rooted to their local economy and are significant employers within the region.

He gave an example of Preston City Council which adopted CWB in 2012 and over a 5 year period had increased spend by anchor institutions - €200m in regional economy, created 1,600 jobs, used local pension funds to invest in local areas, 4,000 more people being paid the real living wage and moved out of the bottom 20% deprivation index all of which led to a positive effect on the health and wellbeing of residents.

Members thanked Mr Lloyd Goodwin for the very interesting presentation and queried the availability of funding for companies, how to address procurement schemes and what steps were necessary to proceed with CWB in Limerick.

He recommended that an Action Plan be prepared for Limerick, setting out short, medium and long-term recommendations for a CWB, taking account of the 5 pillars and making them apply to Limerick. As Limerick currently holds 8 out of 10 unemployment blackspots, he stated that employment would be a good place to start and see how opportunities could be harnessed by large employers.

It was agreed that the presentation be circulated to all Elected Members and to explore further what can be done for Limerick.

Item 4

Engine Collaboration Centre and Engine Accelerator – Update

Mike Cantwell, Head of Innovate/LEO gave an update on the following projects:

- Digital Collaboration Centre – Extension to Engine building (€3.5m) – to be completed June/July 22
- OPW Extension (€14m) – Accelerator Unit on site by end of 2024
- Engine Hubs launched at opening of Abbeyfeale eHub - 15 EHubs opened in Midwest - connected to Engine ECO System (plan for 25 No.)
- Film in Limerick: New Film Crew Hub being established to develop Film Crew in MW (€200k Screen Irl)
- Food: R&D Centre established in Bruree – link up with developments in the city
- Tech: Working with businesses with new Technology ideas through Mentoring program
- Engineering: Working with IDA and EI in developing an Engineering Cluster in MW

Item 5

Planning Legislation Updates 2022 - (Strategic Housing Developments/New Large-scale Residential Development (LRD) Arrangements/Other)

Nuala O’Connell, Senior Planner gave a briefing on Planning Legislation Updates.

On 14th December, 2021 the Planning & Development (Amendment)(Large-Scale Residential Development) Act, 2021, which amends the Planning & Development Act 2000-2021 was signed into law and its provisions commenced on 17th December 2021. The LRD Act sets out proposed new arrangements for Large Scale Residential Developments, which will supersede the existing Strategic Housing Development (SHD) process. The SHD process was introduced in 2016, which provided for a “fast-track” planning application process, whereby applications were made directly to An Bord Pleanála (ABP). The Large Scale Residential Development (LRD) includes the following changes:

- (the development of 100 or more houses or student or shared accommodation units with 200 bed spaces), or combination of same. (Up to 30% of the gross floor space allowable for other use - 15% under SHD)
- Focus on Pre-Planning Consultation - a 2 Step Process
- Application made to Planning Authority as opposed to ABP
- Appeal LRD decision to ABP
- Transitional Arrangements for developers who had commenced consultation with ABP – (Two Housing Developments in Limerick: Condell Road and Ballykeeffe)

Ms. O’Connell stated that the introduction of the LRD process was a positive development as it provided an opportunity for third party appeals to ABP. As the LRD reverts to the standard planning application process, elected members will be informed of applications received and can make representations accordingly.

She stated that the threshold for an Environmental Impact Assessment was 500 houses, but that all developments were screened, particularly those with an environmental impact and in a sensitive area.

She also outlined updates and amendments to the following:

- A Review of the Planning & Development Act
- New Guidelines on Strategic Environment Assessment & Nature Based Solutions
- Amendment to S.23 of the PDA to include for mandatory timelines for determination of post decision compliance submissions.

Following lengthy discussion, members expressed concern over the lack of private housing available for first time buyers and queried projected population growth figures. K. Burke stated that figures were prepared by the Department, with support from the ESRI and that significant land had been zoned in Limerick city and county, to cater for population growth during the lifetime of the Development Plan.

Members also highlighted issues regarding affordability of houses for middle income earners and the number of private housing developments ending up as Social Housing throughout the city and county.

Item 6

Draft Development Plan 2022-2028 and Local Area Plans - Update

K. Burke informed members that they were at Stage 3 of the Draft Development Plan process, which included amendments to the Draft Plan.

- Material Alterations to the Draft Plan were placed on public display for 4 weeks (11th March – 11th April, 2022).
- A Chief Executive’s Report will be prepared on amendments and issued to elected members by 6th May

K. Burke stated that the Council are in constant discussion with Irish Water regarding provision of services in rural towns, but the major difficulty is the availability of funding from Irish Water to provide the facilities at various stages.

It was agreed that an update on the Town Centre First Plan Initiative be given at next meeting.

Item 7

Any Other Business

LECP

V. Murray informed members that it is a requirement under Local Government Reform Act of 2014 that Local Authorities make a Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) and the making of the plan is now under the remit of the Economic Development and Enterprise Directorate. He stated that 2 nominees from the SPC were required to sit on a LECP Advisory Steering Group to prepare the Local Economic & Community Plan.

On the proposal of Cllr. E. Ryan, seconded by Cllr. S. Keary, it was unanimously agreed that Cllr. B. Collins would be nominated to sit on the LECP Advisory Steering Group, along with Cllr. E. Ryan, Chairperson, who will be an ex officio member.

The Chairperson extended a vote of sympathy to Maria Woods on the recent death of her father Michael Woods.

Recommendation 1

On the proposal of Cllr. S. Keary, seconded by Cllr. L. Galvin, it was agreed to write to the Minister of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, requesting that the Building Regulations be amended to ensure that all new houses would include the installation of chimney stacks.

Recommendation 2

On the proposal of Cllr. E. Ryan, seconded by Cllr. S. Keary, it was unanimously agreed that Cllr. B. Collins would be nominated to sit on the LECP Advisory Steering Group, along with Cllr. E. Ryan, Chairperson, who will be an ex officio member

Signed: *Cllr Eddie Ryan*
Chairperson