

13th March, 2023

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 13th February, 2023

A Chomhairleoir, a chara,

A blended meeting of the above Strategic Policy Committee took place on 13th February, 2023. 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 12 December 2022.

The draft minutes were adopted on the proposal of Cllr. Olivia O'Sullivan, seconded by Cllr. Sasa Novak Uí Chonchúir and unanimously agreed

Cecilia Larkin read correspondence.

Arising from correspondence, Brian Thompson, PPN asked for further clarity on a question relating to the effective monitoring of this SPC's policy submissions. Vincent Murray, Director of Economic Development and Enterprise, agreed to review previous SPC chairperson's reports, list recommendations forwarded by this SPC and issue a reply.

Item 2

To consider Notice of Motion referred from Metropolitan District Meeting of the Council held on 24 October 2022, submitted by Councillor E. O'Donovan

"I will move at the next Meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick that Limerick Council engage with businesses and residents on Nicholas Street to implement revitalisation plans for the Medieval Quarter".

In the absence of Cllr E. O'Donovan the motion was not taken. As this was the 2nd time the motion was listed, under standing orders the motion cannot be deferred and will need to be resubmitted.

Item 3:

To consider Notice of Motion referred from Metropolitan District Meeting of the Council held on 12 December 2022, submitted by Councillor S. Kiely

"I will move at the next Meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick that the feasibility of a Business interruption Scheme for the city centre traders/ retailers be progressed as a way of compensation when building works impact on revenue."

While the motion was broadly welcomed, Councillors urged caution on the introduction of additional development levies in the future to fund a compensation scheme.

Councillor Kiely reworded the proposal:

“I will move at the next Meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick that the feasibility of a Business interruption Scheme for city and county traders/ retailers be progressed as a way of compensation, by rates reduction, when building works impact on revenue.”

The motion was proposed by Cllr Sasa Novak Uí Chonchúir and seconded by Cllr Olivia O’Sullivan

As there is not approved programme or budget in 2023 in place for the scheme proposed in the notice of motion, Vincent Murray agreed to discuss the feasibility of the proposal with the Head of Finance.

Members also raised concerns about the management of the overall contract for the O’Connell Street project and the delays which ensued.

Councillor S. Keary proposed that:

“Limerick City and County Council hold a full meeting of this authority, which will include the relevant people who have direct responsibility for the works on O’Connell Street, to get clarification on the time delays and to assess the loss of income to the traders.”

Seconded by Councillor J. O’Donoghue.

Under standing orders for Council Meetings:

A special meeting of the council may be convened at any time by the Mayor or if the office of the Mayor is vacant or the Mayor is unable to act, by the Deputy Mayor or by the Mayor on foot of a request in writing presented to him or her by any 5 members.

Item 4

Update on Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) by Eileen Humphreys, Administrative Officer Urban & Rural Community Development

Ms Humphreys gave a presentation and stated that the purpose of the LECP, as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, is to set out a six-year plan detailing the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant Local Authority area.

Ms Humphreys stated that the LECP process is currently at the beginning of stage 1, “Preparation by Advisory Group”, at which stage sign off by SPC and LCDC members is required.

On the proposal of Councillor S. Keary, seconded by Councillor J. Pond, it was unanimously agreed that the draft LECP framework proceed to the next stage - “Public Consultation”.

Item 5

Presentation from Simply Blue Group on Renewable Energy by Marie Gleeson, External Affairs & Stakeholder Liaison and Brian Fitzgerald, Director of External Affairs.

Simply Blue are a Cork headquartered company focused on replacing fossil fuels with clean ocean energy and developing sustainable sources of energy. Their business is focused on four key markets; Floating wind, e-Fuels, Wave Energy and Aquaculture

The company currently have projects operating in Ireland, Spain, Norway, the UK and the US

Ms Gleeson explained to members that they are in the early stages of developing the “Western Star” project off the west coast of Co Clare, which will consist of a floating windfarm.

The proposed Western Star Project will be located at least 35km from the shoreline. The innovative floating technology proposed for this project will allow the turbines to be located far from shore and in waters over 100m deep, where traditional fixed bottom turbine foundations would be uneconomical.

Ms Gleeson outlined the economic opportunity, which this project presents, and the job and supply chain potential, which will come with it. She concluded that if the region wants to maximise the opportunity which this project presents, then we have to be able to unlock it.

Members queried the costs associated with this project and which government department deals with licencing applications. Mr Fitzgerald explained that a new authority has been formed called MARA (Maritime Area Regulatory Authority), however it is under resourced, predominantly because of a lack of skilled resource in this field. He said a “crisis response” to the resourcing of MARA is what is required from government.

Members thanked Ms Gleeson for her presentation and offered to help with the unlocking of the opportunity and to give their support where possible. They requested that Simply Blue Group write a letter to the members of this SPC to outline what they could do in that regard.

On the proposal of Cllr. Galvin, seconded by Cllr. O’Sullivan, it was unanimously agreed to suspend Standing Orders in order to allow the completion of the meeting and members of the full council attend the section dealing with ‘taking in charge of private residential estates’.

Item 6

Briefing on Protocol for Taking in Charge of Private Residential Estates. Presented by Nuala O’Connell, Planning Environment & Place-Making

Ms O’Connell’s presentation outlined Limerick City and County Council’s new protocol in relation to Taking in Charge (TIC) of private housing developments for the noting and discussion with the Members. All Elected Members of the Council were invited to attend for this item.

Ms O’Connell informed the members that this was a new protocol that was being put in place to streamline the process by putting in place an inspection programme for each phase of development. She advised that this will apply for new permission going forward. The Members broadly welcomed the initiative and the approach to implementation.

In response to questions, Ms. O’Connell advised that legal advice would be sought in relation to the drafting of certificate of construction. She also advised the Members that Planning are in the process of compiling a multi annual programme for taking in charge. Once the work programme is in place it is intended to brief the Members on a bi-annual basis.

A number of Members raised the matter of taking in charge of public lights where a developer is gone. The Members were advised the Council this is an operational issue which will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Item 7

Any Other Business

No other issues were raised.

CLLR. BRIDIE COLLINS,

CHAIRPERSON