

**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 24th April, 2023**

A Chomhairleoir, a chara,

A blended meeting of the above Strategic Policy Committee took place on 24th April, 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 13 February 2023.

The draft minutes were adopted on the proposal of Cllr. Liam Galvin, seconded by Cllr. Jerome Scanlan.

Matters arising from the minutes:

- Brian Thompson, PPN asked for his contribution on Taking in Charge to be recorded in the minutes; Mr Thompson recommended that a transfer agreement be signed between a consultant and the developer to transfer liability from the developer to the consultant. Ms Nuala O'Connell, Planning Environment & Place Making, confirmed that Mr Thompson's contribution had been received and that an update on the taking in charge process would be circulated soon.
- Cllr Stephen Keary raised an issue with Item 3 from the minutes, specifically a proposal to hold a special meeting of the full council to discuss issues relating to the O'Connell Street project. Cllr Keary believes the council executive should direct the Mayor to call this meeting and the requirement for a written request by 5 members should not be necessary. V. Murray, Economic Development Director responded – “the O'Connell Street project team are working with the contractor to get the works completed as quickly as possible”. Mr Murray advised that “There are a number of contractual issues to be resolved and it may not be appropriate to hold a public meeting at this time while the contract could be going through a separate process of conciliation”.
- Cllr Jerome Scanlan raised an issue about “Daar River View” estate in Newcastle West. Cllr Scanlan wants it noted that he expressed concerns about this estate not being taken in charge and that the council has “a duty to ensure these estates are properly lit, if nothing else”. Nuala O'Connell responded; “Each estate is dealt with in a case by case basis”.

Item 2

Update on the Local Area Plan Programme from Maria Woods, Senior Planner, Forward Planning

The presentation on Local Area Plans by Maria Woods included a status update on the plans for Rathkeale, Castleconnell, Caherconlish, Abbeyfeale, Newcastle West, Adare, Patrickswell and Kilmallock.

Ms Woods also updated members on Variation No.1 to the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Residential Zoned Land Tax. The Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT), calculated at 3% of the market value of land within its scope, will apply from 2024 onwards. The key updates are:

- *Supplementary map public display 1st May to 1st June*
- *Response to submissions by 1st August*
- *Final Map 1st December 2023*

Members thanked Ms Woods for her presentation and raised the following queries;

- An issue was raised in relation to variations in the county development plan for substandard roads– Cllr Liam Galvin proposed a meeting should be held to discuss this issue before the May meeting of the council. Cllr Eddie Ryan seconded this motion. Maria Woods said the CE report on this issue would be issued as quickly as possible and circulated to elected members. Ms Woods proposed holding a workshop prior to the May council meeting to discuss these variations.
- In relation to the Newcastle West and Abbeyfeale Local Area Plans, members expressed a need for a ring road to form part of these plans. Maria Woods responded that draft LAPs for both areas will be available soon and there will be a public display period in which submissions can be made
- An issue was raised in relation to rezoning of lands in the Newcastle West area and a requirement for land owners to make submissions in regard to the Residential Zoned Land Tax. Members enquired as to how much land was to be rezoned. Ms Woods said LAPs need to be brought in line with core strategy and as such there will be a need for rezoning. There is in excess of 100 hectares zoned in Newcastle West. Submissions can be made by landowners to enquire why their land is in scope for RZLT, or they can request for certain lands be rezoned and taken out of scope for the tax. Ms Woods said the council was taking a compact growth approach to LAPs to allow for sustainable development.
- Responding to concerns raised about Irish Water’s assessments of certain sites resulting in them being subject to the RZLT, Ms Woods responded; Irish Water is the authority with responsibility for water and their assessments have to be taken into consideration.
- Members asked if public representatives could propose the rezoning of certain lands, with the landowners permission. Ms Woods explained that members of the public could make submissions proposing lands be rezoned during the consultation period. Ms Woods cautioned that there must be sufficient lands made available in the area for residential development.
- Members asked if the Town Centre First Plan for Abbeyfeale has commenced and how it will relate to the LAP. Ms Woods said survey works have commenced in relation to the Town Centre First Plan and that it will be an objective of the LAP to implement the Town Centre First plan.

Item 3:

Presentation from the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) by Mike Cantwell, Head of LEO

Mr Cantwell updated members on recent changes to eligibility criteria for companies seeking supports through their Local Enterprise Office. LEO financial supports are to be extended to measure one businesses employing more than 10 and less than 50 employees with international ambition. Previously, businesses employing more than 10 employees would be referred directly to Enterprise Ireland and not be served by their LEO.

Mr Cantwell also provided members with information on two Ukraine Enterprise Crisis Support Schemes;

1. Liquidity Support based on EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization) drop as a result of the Ukraine crisis
2. Support for energy intensive companies based on increased energy costs for gas and electricity

Members thanked Mr Cantwell for his presentation and welcomed the additional Ukrainian Crisis supports.

Members expressed concerns about;

- How applicants would demonstrate they have suffered a loss directly as a result of the conflict in Ukraine

- The challenges faced by the construction and farming sectors as an indirect consequence of the situation in Ukraine.

Mr Cantwell reiterated that applicants must be from a manufacturing business or an internationally trading services enterprise in order to qualify for LEO support, therefore building contractors and farmers would not be eligible. Mr Cantwell said that farmers are considered “primary producers and not a manufacturing business”

In relation to evidencing a loss suffered directly because of the conflict in Ukraine, Mr Cantwell said “applicants will be asked to provide evidence to demonstrate a 15% drop in EBITDA as a result of the war in Ukraine. This evidence will then be considered by the Evaluation and Approvals Committee of LEO in the normal way”

Item 4

Presentation on the Master Planning for the Cleeves Strategic Site by Enda Power, LTT Programme Manager and Michael O’Malley, Senior Project Manager Cleeves

Mr Power gave an overview of Limerick Twenty Thirty DAC and its Portfolio of developments.

Mr O’Malley then gave a detailed overview of the master planning process for the Cleeves Riverside Quarter. This included the vision for the site, the opportunities and constraints and the public realm and landscaping strategy.

Members thanked Mr Power and Mr O’Malley for their presentation and asked the following questions:

- When could we expect to see development on the site? - Mr O’Malley responded – When the master planning is complete we will go to market to seek expressions of interest from development partners and progress from there
- Members asked which areas of the site would be developed first; Mr Power said that priority would be given to residential development on the site
- Members raised concerns about traffic management and public transport around the site – Mr O’Malley said they were engaging with Transport Infrastructure Ireland and Limerick City and County Council to see how traffic can be best managed. The development will adhere to national policy and proper planning principles will be followed
- Concerns were raised about building on a flood plain – Mr O’Malley confirmed that no residential development would take place on the flood risk area. The site is designated a “City Centre” area so justification is given for other uses
- When asked about the excessive commercial component of the site, Mr O’Malley responded that the site is designated a strategic employment zone so it cannot be 100% residential.
- Members asked if the proposed footbridge over the river Shannon close to the Cleeves site is part of the masterplan; to which Vincent Murray responded - The proposed footbridge was part of a separate project being undertaken by the council and the National Transport Authority. Funding for this project has been secured under URDF. Working with the National Transport Authority, the council hopes to produce outline designs for this project within the next few months and move the project onto the planning phase.
- Members commented that the trends are shifting towards people working from home, and the practicalities of moving people from around the county into the city centre for work seem at odds. Mr O’Malley said the project would follow best practice to create a sustainable development. He said a tourism element to the site would also be welcomed

When asked about a commitment made by Limerick Twenty Thirty to balance its investments evenly between the city centre and the county, Mr Power responded; Limerick Twenty Thirty are looking to identify suitable projects in the county. He also commented that they are now involved with the project at Askeaton Swimming Pool.

Members asked about the occupancy of Gardens International building, to which Mr Power responded - “A new tenant was secured for some space in Gardens last year, however some space is still available on the top two floors”

Item 5

Any Other Business

Cllr Eddie Ryan proposed to invite the Construction Industry Federation to the next sitting of this SPC to present their views on the Limerick Development Plan, Local Area Plans and the Residential Zoned Land Tax. Cllr Stephen Keary seconded this proposal.

Cllr Stephen Keary raised an issue about a motion he put forward to discuss “Tier 4 Developments” at recent council meeting. The motion was not discussed because the meeting had to be abandoned. Maria Woods, Senior Planner, said this issue could be discussed during a workshop and proposed holding a workshop before the May sitting of the full council.

Members also asked if there was any update on the Directly Elected Mayor, to which the chairperson responded that no official update had been received from the government.

No other business was raised.

Cllr. B. Collins,

Chairperson