

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTERPRISE, TOURISM AND PLANNING STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 14 APRIL 2025 AT 2:15PM IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE AND ONLINE

Present in the Chair:

Councillor Peter Doyle

SPC Members Present: Cllr. Sharon Benson, Cllr. Michael Collins, Cllr. Maria Donoghue, Cllr. Ursula Gavan, Mr. Séan Golden, Mr. Declan Hehir, Mr. Michael Joyce, Cllr. Stephen Keary, Cllr. Dan McSweeney, Cllr. John O'Donoghue, Cllr. Kieran O'Hanlon, Cllr. Olivia O'Sullivan, Cllr. Joe Pond, Cllr. Jerome Scanlan and Mr. Brian Thompson.

Apologies: Cllr. Bridie Collins, Ms. Michelle Gallagher and Mr. Raj Vadivel.

Officials Present: Ms. Caroline Chambers (Senior Staff Officer), Ms. Eileen Coleman (Senior Executive Officer), Ms Catherine Dollard (Executive Architect), Ms. Patricia Fogarty (Administrative Officer), Mr. Vincent Murray (Director of Services), Ms. Nuala O'Connell (Senior Planner), Mr. Brendan Troy (Senior Executive Officer) and Ms. Maria Woods (Senior Planner).

Meeting

Item 1

Minutes: To adopt the draft minutes of the Meeting of the Economic Development, Enterprise, Tourism and Planning Strategic Policy Committee held on Monday 3rd March 2025.

Mr. Thompson, PPN, requested two amendments to the draft minutes relating to his comments on unoccupied properties agenda Item 6 and item 8. The changes were read out by the Chair. Minutes amended to the following:

Agenda item 6 - Mr. Thompson said that the perception of obstacles placed in front of owners' stems from their lack of understanding of building problems. Therefore, there might be 2 components to incentives - one would be to aid the understanding of the building and what needs to be fixed and the second to assist in the actual capital costs of the works required and that these be independent of each other. He also agreed that zero % VAT rate on such works is a good start.

And

Agenda item 8 - Mr. Thompson mentioned that he attended a seminar on the RIAI 'Irish Cities in Crisis' which he highly recommends to Members to look at and that he has some copies of an Executive Summary of the original if anyone is interested.

Subject to these changes, the minutes were adopted:

- Proposed by: Cllr. Dan McSweeney
- Seconded by: Cllr. Joe Pond

Item 2

Festivals and Events - The benefits to Tourism – Presentation by Ms. Eileen Coleman, Senior Executive Officer.

Ms. Coleman gave members a presentation on the benefits of festivals for tourism with emphasis on the following headings:

- **Cultural benefits** (Festivals contribute to place-making, creating vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive destinations that strengthen visitor connections for Limerick and encourage repeat visits.)
- **Social benefits** (Festivals enhance community engagement, fostering social cohesion and inclusivity through volunteer opportunities and civic participation, while also improving residents' quality of life, making the area more inviting for visitors)
- **Economic benefits** (Festivals drive job creation, supporting roles in street theatre, creative industries, event organisation, hospitality and artistic trade boosting local economy spending in – Accommodation, Dining, Transport and Retail)
- **Future focus for the Tourism Department** (Attracting international bands, Funding of Festivals, Sustainability and Greening Festivals, Supporting existing Festivals, New Food Festival)

Members thanked Ms. Coleman, and discussion followed:

- The members ask is there a Calendar of Events available for Limerick Festivals? Ms. Coleman confirmed that this is available on Limerick.ie.
- The Chair asked if the Food Festival referred to the same festival that is included in the Mayoral Programme, with a €50k prize for best ideas. Ms. Coleman responded in the affirmative.
- Mr. Thompson noted that Thomond Park was not mentioned in the presentation. Is there any strategy to use it for festivals as it is underused during the summer months? Ms. Coleman advised LCCC does not have a role in the running of Thomond Park, however the revenue value to Limerick when Thomond Park has matches/concerts runs to millions of Euro.
- Cllr. McSweeney asked if there is a schedule of events for the Ryder Cup 2027. Ms. Coleman advised that the calendar event guide is at the early stages of development and will be augmented as new events arise.
- Cllr. McSweeney enquired about funding available for food festivals, and reference made to Pigtown which was a very good event for Limerick but had challenges? Ms. Coleman agreed with the comments and said it was a good event that they are looking at elements and learnings from that festival to incorporate into future food festivals.
- Cllr. Mc Sweeney asked if there are plans for an event's schedule like that in the Crescent last year. Mr. Joyce added that he is not in favour of the Crescent being closed in August. The closure last year made construction work in the city difficult. Large lorries found it difficult to navigate the detours provided, and there were health and safety concerns. Ms. Coleman responded that any activities of this kind of events will go through the Mayor's Office.
- Cllr. Benson asked if there is still plans for a Winter Sports Arena for Limerick. Ms. Coleman said that the budget and costings would be high for a Winter Sports Arena, but this proposal is still under consideration.
- Cllr. Donoghue asked if there is a policy around working with companies that are under investigation. Ms Coleman responded that she was not familiar with any company under investigation – further discussion on that can be taken offline.
- Cllr. Donoghue also asked if there is a policy around buskers in the City Centre. Ms. Coleman advised that Environment oversees the Busking Bye Laws, it's in draft. Ms. Coleman said she can look into this for Cllr. Donoghue.
- Mr. Hehir thanked Limerick City and County Council for Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy funding support and noted that funding is always a worry. He asked is there a way that funding can

be applied for month of advance? Ms. Coleman advised that the grant call is advertised on an annually basis.

Cllr. O'Hanlon issued word of caution about discussing any investigations. He also made the following points:

- Some buskers are causing issues; Patrick Street is an area where concerns have been raised and that it would have the draft Busking Bye-Laws progressed.
- Thomond Park – concerned about competition between Limerick & Cork. If Limerick loses hosting a match to Cork, there is an economic cost to the Limerick. The Munster Branch should be encouraged to retain Thomond Park as the main home of Munster Rugby.

Cllr. Keary made the following points:

- Encourage more traditional music festivals into Limerick city. Those who follow tend to stay and spend. Ms. Coleman said she would take this on board as a proposal for the city.
- There was disappointment that there was no turning on of Christmas lights in 2024 and is there any progress or plan for 2025? Ms. Coleman stated that she met with members of the Metropolitan area on 14th April and options are being explored.
- The Ryder Cup Co-ordinator needs to be more to the fore on what is happening regarding the Ryder Cup. It was agreed that the Ryder Cup Coordinator would be invited to a future meeting to update the committee.
- Is there any update on the €20m for Adare Heritage Centre? Ms. Coleman said there is no update on this funding.

Cllr. Gavan asked about the “linger effect” and what would be the best way to keep people in the city after an event e.g. after the bands parade a lot of people went straight home. Look at ways of retaining them by providing entertainment/activities. There isn't enough night-time economy in Limerick City. There are too few late-night coffee shops and music options to attract enough people to the city and limited late-night travel connections between Limerick and other parts of the county. Ms. Coleman responded that there is a new Night-time Economy Officer appointed who is aware of these challenges. Mr. Troy said that he will bring the Night-Time Economy proposals to the next SPC meeting.

Item 3

Market Quarter & Cruises Street Public Realm Upgrades Project – presentation from Ms. Nuala O'Connell.

Ms. O'Connell briefed members on the progress of the Market Quarter & Cruises Street Public Realm Upgrades project. The presentation overview was on:

- Project Area
- Vision & Strategies
- Project Objects
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Scheme Layout & Key Features
- Next Steps

Members thanked Ms. O'Connell for the update, and a number of the members welcomed the project and the importance of it to regenerating that part of the city. The members said that there

was tremendous public engagement by LCCC staff with elected members and traders, which was acknowledged. Discussion and questions followed the presentation:

Cllr. McSweeney said there are concerns with the Active Travel Department progressing with the two-way cycle way between High Street and Munget Street. Cllr. McSweeney looked for confirmation on who is lodging Part 8 for red line around Mother Macs & High Street.

Ms. O'Connell said that the red line illustrated on the presentation was a study area for the project. She indicated that the Place-Making Department were working with Active Travel colleagues in relation to project scope and to align both project sites. She indicated that she was aware that discussions were continuing with the Elected Members in relation to the proposed arrangements for High Street and the outcome of discussions will assist in determining the project area for both.

Cllr. McSweeney said that car parking is still an issue. Multistory car park closed before and no guarantee that it will stay open. Ms. O'Connell advised that this was an area of the city where there was a considerable level of car parking, within a short walking distance. She said the design team has sought to retain a balance of surface spaces, particularly for providing accessibility for all sectors.

Mr. Golden asked for the timelines for delivery? Given that the project is URDF funded is match funding secured? Ms. O'Connell advised that URDF funding for the project was in place, it would be delivery on a phased phase and there will be further decision gates for business cases. Looking at detailed design towards the end of 2025 and to be on site in 2026. DHLGH is very supportive of the project.

Cllr. Donoghue asked about the unoccupied derelict looking developments that are letting down that side town. Is there any plan to deal with these and is there any engagement with developer? Ms. O'Connell said that the sites around the Market area that the Property and Derelict sites that they have been making efforts that sites can be brought forward. She agreed that the activation of sites was a very important objective of the project.

Mr. Thompson was complimentary of general scheme and said that the urban regeneration, quality of the public realm is generally right. One key issue in the area is the badly paved car park at Robert Street/Ellen Street area. LCCC should be proactive in taking over that site even if compulsory order is necessary. Will Part 8 include suggestions/comments made? Cllr. McSweeney agreed and said the unfinished development on Ellen Street needs to be addressed if the overall scheme is to be successful. Ms. O'Connell said she agreed with the comments that it is a pivotal site. As a response to the public consultation, the Place-Making Team will look at the urban design opportunities around it.

Cllr. Gavan said another issue is that there aren't enough people living in the city centre and this needs to be addressed. There is a lack of public transport. Ms. O'Connell agreed with comments about getting residential into the city, she added that there were a number of high-quality developments that received planning approval in the past number of years, and that the activation of these are hugely important. She added that the investment made by the Council in public realm would be a catalyst for such developments.

Cllr. Olivia O'Sullivan thanked Ms. O'Connell and Ms. Dollard for their engagement with the Traders group. This is a priority scheme for the city. She accepted the comments regarding car parking and there is a balance to be struck, like the click & collect system in other parts of the city. The Market Area needs to be connected to O'Connell Street and not pushed further away.

The Chair Cllr. Doyle sought an extension beyond the Standing Order No. 9 at 3.50 pm to continue with the remaining agenda items until 4.30pm. The members agreed and the meeting reconvened. The meeting extension was proposed by Cllr. McSweeney and seconded by Cllr. Keary.

Item 4

Update on THRIVE Kings Island Walled Town Area – presentation from Ms. Maria Woods

Ms. Woods told members that the Forward Planning & Public Realm Department are submitting the THRIVE 2 application for €6.5M project today and gave the presentation on the THRIVE project which covered the following topics:

- THRIVE – Town Centre First Heritage Revival Scheme overview. Strand 2 call for funding closes April 2025 – strategy to be submitted with application.
- Engagement Events and feedback
- Consultation – dedicated website on MyPoint.ie
- Sites and Projects identified for funding
- The Results: Nicholas Street was selected as the preferred Thrive project to apply for funding.
- Slides with overview of all sites considered

The Members thanked Ms. Woods for her presentation and some members welcomed the project for the Nicholas Street area.

Cllr. Gavan welcomed the scheme and asked when they hoped to hear back on the application? Ms. Woods noted that it is a bidding process, and the decision would be announced later in the year.

Cllr. Keary queried how much per sqm the building will cost? Ms. Woods said that estimated costs are significant due to archaeology, there are a number of basements within the building. There is 700 sqm at a cost of €9,200 per sqm. The costs will be 100% funded by THRIVE if the application is successful. Mr. Murray clarified that these costs are estimates only at the moment.

Some members asked about two of the other sites mentioned in the presentation:

- Cllr. McSweeney had a query relating to The Orchard Site (King John's Castle Car Park) – what happened to the Orchard Street Housing development proposed for this site that went to Part 8 and was approved by elected members? Why this site is now proposed as a car park? Ms. Woods responded that consultants working on the masterplan for the Castle recommended that King John's Castle needed a car park.
- Cllr. McSweeney also noted that Section 183 was approved by the Elected Members for the Mary Street Garda Station site to be disposed of. Ms. Woods responded that the LCCC Property Department is in charge of this site and the members will be kept updated on future changes.

Item 5

AOB

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has circulated a date in relation to induction training for SPC Members. The training is online and is scheduled for Thursday 17th April between 10am and 12pm, the details of the training was emailed to the SPC members.

Item 6

Date for next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 23rd June 2025 at 2.15 pm.

The Chair concluded the meeting at 4.30 pm.

Cllr. P. Doyle, Chairperson