

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTERPRISE, PLANNING AND TOURISM STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY, 3 MARCH 2025 AT 2PM IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE AND ONLINE

Present in the Chair:

Councillor Peter Doyle

SPC Members Present:

Cllr. Liam Galvin, Cllr. Stephen Keary, Cllr. Olivia O’Sullivan, Cllr. Joe Pond, Cllr. Kieran O’Hanlon, Cllr. Jerome Scanlan, Cllr. Dan McSweeney, Cllr. John O’Donoghue, Cllr. Maria Donoghue, Cllr. Pádraigh Reale, Cllr. Ursula Gavan, Cllr. Sharon Benson, Mr. John Hannon, Mr. Declan Hehir, Mr. Michael Joyce, Mr. Brian Thompson and Mr. Séan Golden.

Apologies:

Cllr. Bridie Collins, Ms. Michelle Gallagher

Officials Present: Mr. Vincent Murray (DOS), Mr. Matthew White (DOS), Ms. Nuala O’Connell (Senior Planner), Ms. Maria Woods (Senior Planner), Mr. Brendan Troy (Senior Executive Officer), Ms. Carmel Brislane (Senior Executive Planner), Mr. Mike Cantwell (LEO), Ms. Eileen Coleman (Senior Executive Officer), Ms. Patricia Fogarty (Administrative Officer) and Ms. Caroline Chambers (Senior Staff Officer).

In Attendance:

Cllr. Joe Leddin

Meeting

Item 1: Introductions

Meeting began with a welcome to the first SPC meeting from the Chair, Councillor Doyle, followed by introductions from the members present in the Chamber and online.

This SPC cover the functions of a number of Directorates and is being led by the Planning & Place Making Directorate, Mr. Murray, DOS. Mr. White, DOS with responsibility for Economic Development and Enterprise and Mr. Duclot, DOS with responsibility for Tourism will attend as required.

LCCC senior staff gave a brief overview of their roles to members:

- Brendan Troy - Economic Development, Trade & Investment. A new Nighttime Economy Officer has been recently appointed, Craig Power.
- Mike Cantwell - Local Enterprise Office, LEO
- Eileen Coleman – Tourism. Will be presenting at future SPC’s on the WAW Gateway City and Ballyhoura County DEDP and the Tourism Strategy Development.
- Maria Woods – Forward Planning, Public Realm & Heritage
- Nuala O’Connell – Place Making & Development Management

Councillor Keary asked that there be a roll call at the beginning of every SPC. Noted that roll call took place.

Item 2: Roles & Responsibilities of SPC

Mr. Murray gave a presentation on the roles and responsibilities of the SPC key point outlined:

- Membership of the Economic Development, Enterprise, Planning & Tourism SPC 2024-2029.
- Scheme was adopted at the meeting of the Council held on 25th November 2024.

- SPC Standing Orders state meetings will be held 5 times yearly.
- Role of SPC is as a committee to assist Council with the formulation and review of policies. SPC's report their findings and recommendations to full council for consideration and approval. SPC deals with policy matters that are strategic in nature.
- The quorum for this committee is 7 members.
- Decisions are made by consensus, and voting can occur if necessary. The chairperson has the casting vote in the event of a tie.
- Members are expected to adhere to rules of debate. The chairperson has the authority to manage the debate and maintain order.

The presentation will be circulated to members.

Mr. Thompson said a third PPN sectorial representative has been selected so they should be included in the next meeting.

Councillor McSweeney asked how the Mayoral Programme fits into this SPC and requested that policies in Mayoral Programme be brought to SPC.

Mr. Murray responded that the Mayoral Programme is new to Local Government, and it is a learning process. Some of the objectives contained in the Mayoral Programme are policy related.

Item 3: To receive a presentation for discussion on the Proposed Development Contribution Scheme 2025

Ms. Brislane gave members an overview of the proposed Development Scheme 2025 workshop with the main points being:

- Legislative Background
 - The making of a contribution scheme is a reserved function.
 - Primary objective is to offset a portion of the costs for public infrastructure.
- Current Scheme Costs – January 2022
- Proposed rates previously presented at workshop and concerns from workshop.
- Proposed residential rates.
- Proposed Non-Residential rates.
- Comparison between previous schemes in 2013 and 2022 versus proposed 2025 scheme. Inflation figures shown in slide.
- How LCCC current rates compare with other Local Authorities.
- IDA reduction – currently 50% reduction, proposed to be lowered to 25%.
- Projected yield for commercial and residential development is €75.9m between 2025 and 2030. Total required is €168m as per project list.

The members thanked Ms. Brislane for her presentation and a discussion followed:

- Councillor Pond asked if the residential charge per sqm includes the garage area. Ms. Brislane confirmed that the charge is on the house only.
- Mr. Joyce raised the constant rising costs of building houses, soft costs like Uisce Éireann and development contributions are required upfront, and these costs are being passed on to first-time buyers. Can LCCC look at charging the development contributions on a phased basis or for the contribution to be paid at end of the process as it is harsh on developers to pay these costs upfront? A number of members supported Mr. Joyce's proposal to pay the contribution at the end of the development. Ms. O'Connell clarified that LCCC does allow for phased payments, especially in large scale developments. Mr. Murray advised that the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage has paid the development

contributions for residential properties for the last 2 years. The development contributions have paid for essential services such as playgrounds to build strong and sustainable communities which has saved developers having to deliver them.

- Mr. Golden echoed Mr. Joyce's viewpoint and while he took the point of the Government support over the last 2 years, there is no commitment that this will continue.
- Councillor McSweeney asked why do the rural charges have to be more expensive and can the proposed residential €35 per sqm charge be brought down to €25 per sqm in line with City?
- Councillor McSweeney also asked to look at cutting some of the projects on the list as some of these are unrealistic – €30m for Adare? It was noted that some of the projects identified by Elected Members are not included on the list. A number of the SPC members supported Councillor McSweeney's proposal that the projects list should be reviewed. Ms. Woods advised that an updated Project List had been circulated that morning to the Councillors. Councillor Keary said that a number of these projects shouldn't be funded by levies and funding should be sourced elsewhere e.g. TII. Mr. Murray responded that a number of projects on the list require match funding e.g. URDF projects are only 75% funded so match funding is required for the other 25%.
- Councillor Donoghue asked in relation to table presented with the Local Authorities listed if Limerick is currently placed where the yellow band is and where LCCC will place when changes are implemented. Her constituents are looking for very basic maintenance works to be carried out and asked if these were on the projects lists such as footpaths and potholes. Ms. Woods clarified that LCCC will place middle of the list with proposed charges. Councillor Donoghue supported the increase in levies and asked how other LA'S charge more levies and still build houses and surprised that Limerick was not similar to other LA's.
- Councillor Galvin may not be supporting the increase in levies as he does not see benefit to rural areas. He asked the Chair what benefit will one off rural development get from these contributions? Councillor Doyle responded that the benefit is in the nearby towns with the provision of libraries, playgrounds etc.
- Mr. Thompson said that he generally agrees with the strategy and town and city centre development. The housing crisis needs to be addressed in an urban setting where people want to live. He agrees with increases, and they are fully justified.
- Councillor Keary asked where the city centre zoning starts and finishes. A zoned map was shown at the meeting from the Development Plan. Ms. Woods explained that the area shaded in blue is zoned city centre and to change this would require a variation of the current Development Plan or the next Development Plan. The Map shown will be circulated to the members.
- If members want to add projects to the list, they should contact Ms. Woods and Ms. Brislane.

The Chair moved on to the next item and stated that another workshop with Members is required.

Item 4: To receive a presentation for noting on proposed Shop Front Design Guidelines

Ms. Wood updated members on the preparation of Shopfront Design Guidelines which is an objective in the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 – Objective ECON 015 Active Street Frontage – item (c). Presentation outlined:

- Introduction
 - The Importance of Shopfronts
 - Benefits of well-designed shopfront
 - How to use guidance document

- Historic/protected shopfronts and facades
- Statutory requirements
- Scope of guidelines
- Planning Policy
- Historic Importance of Shopfront
- Shopfront Principles
- Shopfront Elements
- Shopfront Checklist

The members welcomed the guidelines and had a number of questions:

- Will there be funding to do up shopfronts? There are a lot of advantages to these guidelines.
- Is this a statutory document and are these options rather than mandatory?
- Do LCCC envisage any enforcement through planning and is there power to enforce this retrospectively?
- Are these guidelines for City & County?

Response from LCCC officials:

- LCCC will try to encourage replacement signage through funding.
- This is a guidance document that shows best practice. It is a non-statutory document.
- The guidelines will assist the Planning Department with development management and enforcement.
- Guidelines are for City and County.
- There are a number of architects in the Place-Making & Public Realm Teams who can provide guidance on this.

Councillor Gavan said that this is an opportunity to coordinate colour and improve the general aesthetic of the city centre in time for Ryder Cup and welcomed the document.

Ms. Woods circulated a copy of the document at the meeting. The presentation will be circulated to members.

The Chair Cllr. Doyle sought an extension to the meeting at 3.50pm to continue with the remaining agenda items. The members agreed and the meeting reconvened.

Item 5: To receive an update on the Local Enterprise Office – Mike Cantwell

Mr Cantwell gave members a presentation on what funding can be accessed through the Local Enterprise Office (LEO). Grants available are:

- Green for Business & Energy Efficiency Grant (EEG)
- Digital for Business – eligible for businesses with up to 50 employees
- €5,000 Grow Digital Voucher
- Market Explore Grant – Limerick LEO were joint 3rd in 2024
- LEAN for Business
- Feasibility Study Grant
- Priming Grant
- Business Expansion Grant

Other Funding Supports

1. Research, Development and Innovation Fund
2. Intellectual Property Strategy Offering
3. GradStart
4. MicroFinance Funding

The 2025 budget for LEO is €2.3m. 178 net new jobs were created in 2024 by LEO supported companies.

The members thanked Mr. Cantwell for his presentation. The presentation with further details on the grants will be circulated to the members.

Item 6: Notice of Motion

Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor J. Leddin (referred from the Meeting of the Metropolitan District held on 20th January 2025 to the Economic Development, Enterprise, Tourism and Planning Strategic Policy Committee)

I will move at the next Meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick that the Council calls on the Government to provide additional financial incentives and supports to encourage the owners of unoccupied properties located in the city centre to redevelop for commercial and or residential purposes.

The Notice of Motion was formally seconded by both Mr. Joyce and Councillor Reale.

In proposing the motion Cllr. Leddin stated that there is a need to incentivise the redevelopment of unoccupied properties in Limerick. The Chair agreed with Cllr. Leddin's Motion.

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.

Mr Murray said that a written response has been done for this Notice of Motion by a colleague and if the reply is supported it can be included in the SPC Chairperson's Report for the full Council.

The Chair thanked Mr. Murray for the response to Cllr. Leddin's Notice of Motion and that the recommendation will be included in the SPC Chairperson's Report.

Item 7: Dates for SPC meetings;

The Chair sought approval on the proposed SPC meeting dates for 2025: Monday 14th April 2025, Monday 23rd, June 2025, Monday 13th October 2025 and Monday, 8th December 2025.

The members agreed the proposed dates. Councillor Pond proposed that meetings start at 2.15 pm going forward. This was agreed by consensus.

Item 8: AOB

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.

The Chair concluded the meeting.

Cllr. P. Doyle, Chairperson