

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTERPRISE, TOURISM AND PLANNING STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 9<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2026 AT 2:15PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE AND ONLINE**

**Present in the Chair:**

Cllr Peter Doyle

**SPC Members Present:** Cllr. Bridie Collins, Cllr. Michael Collins, Cllr. Maria Donoghue, Cllr. Ursula Gavan, 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, Mr Vadivel Raj, Cllr. Pdraigh Reale, Cllr. Jerome Scanlan, Mr. Brian Thompson.

**Officials Present:** Mike Cantwell (Head of Enterprise-LEO), Stephane Duclot (Director of Services), David Ryan (Administrative Officer), Carmel Brislane (Senior Executive Planner), Barry Henn (A/Senior Planner), Brendan Troy (Senior Executive Officer), Sean Lenihan (Director of Services), Maria Woods (Senior Planner)

**Meeting**

Prior to **Item 1** on agenda being addressed Mr Brian Thompson advised the SPC members that there is currently a delay in ratifying Mr. Brian Leddin for the vacant post on this SPC but that he will advise once Mr Leddin has been ratified.

**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 13th October 2025.**

The draft minutes were adopted.

- Proposed by: Cllr. Michael Collins
- Seconded by: Cllr. Maria Donoghue

**Item 2**

**Vacant Business Premises Rates Incentive Scheme 2026 - Brendan Troy, Senior Executive Officer**

Brendan Troy gave members a presentation on the recently launched Vacant Business Premises Rates Incentive Scheme 2026. Limerick City & County Council has launched this scheme which is one of the most attractive and ambitious rates schemes in the country to aid regeneration of towns and villages and support job creation by viable businesses. This grant is intended to incentivise and encourage reoccupation of vacant retail/commercial properties to combat vacancy in the core retail area of Limerick City Centre and some county towns.

The Chair thanked Mr Troy for the presentation and invited questions from members:

- Cllr Donoghue asked if rates are first payable before grant can be paid and noted that tattoo parlours are excluded from the scheme and could they be included?. Mr Troy responded that rates are payable first before grant can be claimed and confirmed tattoo shops are not included on the scheme but accepted can be worthy establishments and advised that the Council has some discretion around what it includes on the scheme.

- Cllr Keary asked what is the definition of an adult shop? Mr Troy advised that an adult shop would be described as a sex shop. Cllr Keary then suggested that while the Council had a list of businesses that were excluded from applying for the incentive scheme, those eligible were not outlined. Mr Troy responded by saying that any retail use not on the excluded list were all eligible to apply, subject to agreement with the Council, and the Council would assess an application individually.
- Cllr Collins asked if the scheme can be opened up/widened to Level 4 settlements? Mr Troy advised that at present the scheme is only open to Level 2 and Level 3 towns as per scheme.
- Cllr Scanlon asked if barber shops are included in the scheme? Mr Troy advised that barber shops are not on the list of exclusions.
- Cllr McSweeney asked why Patrickswell is not included on the scheme and commented that if the scheme is not successful then other towns should be brought into this scheme. Mr Troy advised that at present the scheme is open to Level 2 and Level 3 towns as per scheme guidelines and criteria and the progress of the scheme will be closely monitored.
- Cllr Gavan asked if building/property owners could be approached about the scheme? Mr Troy advised that significant PR/Media has been completed around advertising the scheme.
- Mr Michael Joyce welcomed this excellent initiative and commented that letting agents need to be advised of the new rates scheme so they can advise potential tenants/clients. Mr Troy advised that letting agents are being advised about the scheme.
- Mr Brian Thompson commented that he fully supports the scheme and agrees that it should be confined to the city centre and the county towns as outlined on scheme guidelines and criteria but also said it should be extended to Level 4 settlement towns.

Director of Services Sean Lenihan advised members that this pilot scheme has a budget of €200,000 assigned for 2026, and the scheme needs to take it's course as it is only a few weeks in existence. LCCC would fully support a review of the scheme if there is not an adequate uptake on the scheme. The progress of the scheme would be monitored over the next number of months.

### **Item 3**

**Presentation from Carmel Brislane – Senior Executive Planner following on from Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr. B. Collins from Meeting of the Plenary Council held on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2025 for consideration:**

“I will move at the next Meeting of Limerick City and County Council immediately starts the process to make a material alteration to Limerick's County Development Plan to reflect the High Court Decision that over-ruled both a local authority and An Coimisiún Pleanála decision and ruled that permission for a one off rural house should be granted to a resident of a level 4 settlement. The reason for the high court decision was based on the judge's opinion: - that lack of affordability within the settlement was a valid reason to grant permission when a clear housing need was demonstrated.”

Maria Woods, Senior Planner opened the discussion and gave an outline on the case at which point Carmel Brislane then gave a detailed presentation on the facts surrounding the case.

The Chair thanked Ms Brislane for her excellent and detailed presentation on the case and invited questions from members.

- Cllr B. Collins commented that having read the judgement, in her opinion the commission didn't give a full reason. Hairdresser is a local/economic need. Economic need must be clearly defined. Lack of affordability in Tier 4 settlements is a major setback. Affordability is the main issue here. Land values have doubled in recent years. Ms Woods advised that the issue of economic need was not dealt with. Ms Woods outlined and defined what an economic and social need was and is clearly set out in the LCCC Development Plan.
- Mr Brian Thompson agreed that there was no need to amend the CDP as the situation that the Court decision related to was dealt with in the CDP and permission would probably be granted in any such circumstances. In considering the Court decision clear and unequivocal Mr. Thompson also made the point that it did not confer any right to permission universally without examining the circumstances surrounding the application, which LCCC would have to do before making its decision.
- Cllr McSweeney commented that variations of the Development Plan should be dealt with at Full Council and not this SPC.
- Cllr Donoghue commented that affordability is an issue across all areas/settlements
- Cllr Keary commented that this case in his opinion should never have gone legal as a clear housing need had been demonstrated. Rural depopulation is also an issue. Cllr Keary asked if there are figures available for sewer capacity? Ms Woods advised that this information on sewer capacity can be obtained from Uisce Eireann.
- Cllr O'Donoghue advised that schools and the GAA club in Banogue are struggling because of rural depopulation.
- Ms. Woods advised that the areas that are experiencing rural depopulation are mainly areas identified as structurally weak in the Limerick Development Plan and therefore the issue of social or economic need is not a consideration.
- Cllr McSweeney requested that the forward planning team carry out a comparative assessment of other Planning Authority Development Plans and identify the settlement level that allows residents to apply for rural housing. Ms. Woods agreed to revert with comparative analysis as requested.
- Ms Woods advised that 512 units have planning permission in the open countryside and Level 5/6/ 7 villages, demonstrating that the planning policy allows rural housing. She further indicated that the submitted motion did not accurately reflect the judgement and that the Development Plan policy already allows for Social and Economic need to be considered in accordance with National and Regional Policy.

Ms Brislane advised she will make presentation available to all members.

#### **Item 4**

##### **Taken in Charge Protocol – Barry Henn a/Senior Planner**

Barry Henn gave members an update on the Taken in Charge Protocol. Mr. Henn advised that LCCC are consulting with the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI) and Engineers Ireland. The RIAI has asked to meet to review the wording in the protocol. Mr. Henn advised that he has a further meeting this week with RIAI/EI and he will update further after this meeting.

- Mr. Brian Thompson while welcoming the Protocol in principle, commented that the Developer, and not the Consultants, has responsibility for ensuring compliance of the development with the Planning Permission, and that the Protocol must provide a form for the Developer to state that the development complies with the Permission. He also commented that this committee was not approached before it was adopted in 2024 and it had changed substantially since its first introduction as a draft to this committee in 2022. Mr. Thompson stated that it was unlikely that the RIAI would allow Architects to sign the forms required in their present form, and he thought it unlikely that ACEI would allow Engineers do the same.
- Mr. Michael Joyce commented on the compliance in planning around the assigned certifier in compliance with building.
- Cllr McSweeney asked how many estates have been taken in charge in 2025? Mr. Henn advised that he would obtain the numbers for Cllr McSweeney.
- Cllr Donohue commented that a Certificate of Compliance is required and that a copy of the Taken in Charge protocol/policy needs to be sent out.
- Cllr B. Collins requested dates as to when estates were taken in charge. Mr. Henn responded that he would collate and provide these details to Cllr. B. Collins.

#### **Item 5**

##### **Date of next SPC meeting.**

The next blended SPC meeting will be held Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> April at 2.15 pm.

The Chairperson, Cllr. P. Doyle thanked everyone present for attending the SPC meeting.

The business of the meeting concluded at 4.15pm.



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**Signed: Cllr. P. Doyle, Chairperson**