

# LIMERICK PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

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## REPORT

### Meeting of Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning SPC

Council Chamber, City Hall, Merchant's Quay, Limerick

Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Brian Thompson - PPN Representative for Community and Voluntary Sector

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1. Minutes adopted of last meeting.
2. **Motions** submitted were discussed.
  - Motion 1: Proposer not in attendance. Not discussed.
  - Motion 2: **Gas pipeline** to Kerry Co-op (Listowel) from Foynes to be tapped to serve needs of towns and areas it passes through. Infrastructural work needs planning over long term but Council in favour and will be contacting Gas Networks Ireland to see what can be done in this instance.
  - Motion 3: **Development levies** proposed to be reduced by 90% to incentivise Construction Industry. It was pointed out that revised (and reduced) levies were only passed in January! The levies cannot come up for discussion again now as the Planning Act does not allow for review of contribution schemes without extensive public consultation process, which had just been gone through. I spoke and voted against the motion on the basis that any shortfall in revenues that might accrue would negatively impact on Council services to marginal and disadvantaged communities. Monies accruing from such levies are ringfenced. Comments from councillors included an attack on the provision of Social Housing by the Council as provision for those who would not "get off their backsides" and provide their own housing and an attack on Building Regulations as "holding up the industry" and "costing a fortune" and "a health hazard".
  - Motion 4: **Planning contribution rate** for residential be applied to towns and villages that do not have zoned lands, and that a boundary line be drawn around towns for this purpose only. Again, it was pointed out that the contribution rates cannot be up for discussion again as per Motion 3 above. I spoke on the motion and supported the notion of incentivising development within small villages and towns and discouraging one-off housing in the countryside except for people with bona fide agricultural reasons for developing new houses. It made sense for tier 4, 5 and 6 settlements as it did for larger settlements. Design guidance from the Planning Dept. should be clear on this but often wasn't. My comments were attacked by some councillors who patently did not understand what I was saying, alleging that I was supporting the forced moving of people from the countryside to the city, and was opposed to the welfare of rural Ireland. I defended my views on this subject.

- Motion 5: **Wild Atlantic Way (WAW)** be officially extended along the Shannon Estuary to Limerick City. This would be good for tourism and Limerick City has missed out on the benefits of the WAW. It was advised that a joint approach - The Estuary Way - is being prepared with Clare Co. Co. to be presented to the Minister for Tourism.
3. **Forward Planning Work Programme:** A presentation was made to the Committee on this.
- Variations to the City and County Development Plans are being proposed:
    - Regeneration Implementation Plan is to be incorporated so that the Plan objectives are formally extended into the future activity of the Council after the Implementation Plan is formally over.
    - Amendments to the Vacant Sites Levy to be incorporated.(see below)
    - New Northern Distributor Road to be incorporated.
  - Draft Heritage Plan 2017-2030 will be on display to April 10<sup>th</sup>.
  - Examination of the City Centre being undertaken – Occupancy/Vacancy, footfall rates, competitiveness, commercial yields, quality of living environment are all factors in the Centre's overall health. This is being done with Limerick Chamber and Tidy Towns.
  - Local Area Plans are being extended for Bruff, Hospital, Kilfinane, Rathkeale, and Caherconlish and will be proposed to Local Area Council meetings in April (Bruff/Hospital), July (Kilfinane/Rathkeale) and October (Caherconlish).
  - National Planning Framework (NPF) has been published (1st Feb) and is the document that guides Local Authorities in preparing County Development Plans. It covers particularly the policy areas of Housing, Jobs, Transport, Health, Education, Environment, Energy, and Communications. Submissions to be made by 16<sup>th</sup> March.
  - New Urban Regeneration and Housing Act requires incentives to utilise underdeveloped land for housing and regeneration purposes. If land qualifies as development land under certain criteria in the Act and is not being developed, it should be declared vacant and put on a register. Qualifying Sites will be entered on the Register and the owners charged a levy if unused based on the value of the land as determined by an independent evaluation.
  - Discussion ensued on the presentation:
    - Updates on current projects should be given before events overtake the time the committee have to deal with them.
    - I commented that it was entirely unrealistic (but typical) that a very important document (the NPF) which is very large and complex could be effectively read and a submission prepared within a 6 week period. I also commented that the Framework was not a Plan in itself but a structure within which Plans were made.
    - Horizon Mall Shopping Centre is now "excess retail zoning" meaning it will not be used for shopping centre use and options for another use are being looked at apparently.
    - Development Plans are being kept up to date until the Regional Guidelines are adopted and the NPF introduced after which the Plans will be reviewed in this light.
4. **Local Enterprise Office** – Eamon Ryan of LEO gave presentation.
- What the Office does and what incentives are available outlined

- Types of business supported are mainly small and micro enterprises in the manufacturing area
- Key results for 2016 outlined
- Priorities for 2017 including Brexit related programmes.
- Childcare issues in developing enterprises are addressed.
- Copy of presentation available.

5. **AOB**

- I raised the lack of response from the Council to the submission of the Hospital Disability Group. Council official took details and will respond to the Group.
- Short debate on Sustainable Development and call for supports for people and groups trying to do something in this area. I supported this initiative.

**Next Meeting is Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017** and groups are welcome to submit any policy concerns to me for bringing forward.