

REPORT

Meeting of Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning SPC

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

Monday, 12th June 2017

Brian Thompson - PPN Representative for Community and Voluntary Sector

1. **Minutes** adopted of the last meeting.

2. **Matters Arising:**

- **Social Enterprise:** Following on from last meeting, a joint working group on Social Enterprise was set up by the LCDC to review this area. Eileen Humphries of UL, a member of the WG, gave a short verbal report on work so far to the committee.
 - 3 social enterprises from each of the Partnership areas is to be selected for support and study – West Limerick Resources, Ballyhoura, and PAUL will select one each.
 - Issues mentioned were
 - Rural Isolation – issues around improving the public transport network to improve accessibility
 - Sustainability – it is hard to sustain such essential social services as Post Offices, Garda Stations, GPs etc without some supports for same from the Local Authorities/State.
 - Partnerships are working with programmes to give supports but don't have resources to address all issues.
 - Getting people to live in Towns/Villages is vital in sustaining services in rural areas.
- **Comments:**
 - Some communities do not have resources / capacity to sustain enterprises
 - Coop model should be looked at for enterprise.
 - Bringing people in from the rural areas to sheltered/supervised housing in towns/villages offers security. It would not affect sustainability of farms or rural activities.

3. **Motions:**

- **Cllr J Scanlon (FG):** Planning Grants to require fully cash backed bonding where multiple housing development is proposed, and a fee be introduced to cover cost of processing invalid planning applications.
 - This was considered impractical by the Planning official as it would slow down development of housing as cash was harder to raise. "Appropriate" bonds were allowed under the legislation and it would be hard to enforce cash only bonding given the amounts concerned (normally bond is for 25% of development cost).

- The proposer felt a fee should be charged for invalid applications because a resubmitted application would not be noticed when submitted after the original. I commented that invalid applications must be advertised fully again, so the logic of the argument fell down. He accepted this and withdrew this part of the motion.
- Planner advised that the invalidation rate was well below national average anyway and would not be a big issue.
- Discussion ensued on how best to enforce completion on developers. Bond for completion is to ensure estates get completed if developer goes bust, but many insurance companies also went bust in the Crash and there was ultimately no cover. Developers are IN THEORY obliged to renew policies annually or in the event of the insurance co going bust to reinsure with another company, and cover the cost, AND advise the Planning Authority of this renewal/change. In PRACTICE, this rarely happened and Council had few resources to chase this detail and ensure cover was held. Ultimately, however, it is the developers's obligation to maintain cover at all times.
- I suggested that any sale of houses be finalised only when the phase of the estate in which the house sat was at least handed over to the council. Some councillors felt this would be resisted by developers as many funding models relied upon sale before completion (off plans) and we don't want to discourage development of housing at this critical time.
- It was also suggested that a condition be put on the final sale of houses that the LCCC issue a certificate of completion to finalise the sales and that this would be practical.
- Another issue was developers not completing later phases and residents having to access their house through unfinished areas, which were dangerous and unkempt. Any phase of a housing scheme will have to be accessible through finished areas only. This is a planning principle that the LCCC will adhere to.
- Planning official advised that the Dept. of Housing is aware that the Bonding issue is problematic and has indicated it will be issuing guidelines to LAs shortly on this.
- It was agreed that Planners would re-advise the committee when the guidelines emerge and that the matter will be re-discussed then, before being brought to full Council.
- **Cllr C Prendiville (Solidarity):** Development Plan be amended to ban incineration, gasification, fracking, and other environmentally damaging practices.
 - The proposer was not present and the motion was not discussed
 - Chair would have facilitated a debate but members agreed that in fairness to other members who had motions not debated under similar circumstances, the motion should be deferred.

4. **Great Southern Greenway.**

- Presentation given updating the committee on progress on this project.

- This development, similar to the Mayo Greenway, is envisaged to contribute hugely to tourism in the county and similar projects will attract significant funding nationally because of the large contribution of Walking/Hiking to tourism generally. It seems to contribute more to the economy than Golf tourism!!
- Licence granted to LCCC from CIE to develop the route as a greenway.
- LCCC has carried out many projects to improve access, such as repairs, signage, paths etc.
- LCCC will be extending the route back into Limerick City eventually and is considering a branch to Foynes.
- It is hoped this will have a very beneficial environmental effect in encouraging sustainable modes of transport in the areas near the city as people switch to cycling/walking when commuting from areas along the route.
- Barnagh Tunnel will be a major feature eventually when fully developed.
- A Branding/Marketing launch is planned as the Great Southern Greenway on a par with the Western Greenway in Mayo.
- There was general approval all round for the project and much agreement that it was a great story for Limerick and reflected great credit on all concerned. The original proposers of the project were singled out for mention especially for their vision and tenacity in bringing it forward.

5. AOB:

- I raised the issue of inadequate notice period for agendas for meetings which did not enable me and other PPN sectoral reps enough time to properly discuss the agenda with the member groups in the PPN and was hampering the carrying out of the role by PPN reps.
- I pointed out that other councils were able to do this – citing Waterford, Tipperary and Cork City as exemplars.
- Officials in the Council indicated that they would not have an issue with doing this and changing standing orders accordingly. It was agreed they would consult with their colleagues in other councils and come back on this with a report at the next meeting.
- I also wrote to the Chair requesting that a presentation be given to the committee by the City Architect on the Riverway Engage and Living City Engage consultation processes and that these processes were successful and informative and should be encouraged. I await a response on this.

Next Meeting is yet to be arranged but groups are welcome to submit any policy concerns to me for bringing forward/placing on the agenda (or raised at AOB).