

Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Mid West Regional Authority held at 1.30 P. M. on Tuesday 6th January 2009 in the Council Chamber, Limerick City Council, City Hall, Limerick.

Cllr. B. Hanrahan, Cathaoirleach presided.

In attendance:

Clare Co. Co.

Cllrs. P. Considine, J. Crowe, B. Hanrahan, M. Kelly, P. McMahon and M. Taylor-Quinn.

Limerick City Co.

Cllr. M. Byrne, J. Cronin, G. Fahy, J. Houlihan, P. Kennedy, and L. Wallace.

Limerick Co. Co.

Cllrs. R. Brennan, E. Creighton, L. Enright, J. Houlihan, C. Hurley, E. Wade and L. Walsh.

North Tipperary Co. Co.

Cllrs. W. Kennedy, M. Ryan, J. Sheehy and M. Smith.

Committee of the Regions.

Cllr. C. Crowe.

Absent: T. Berkery, M. Lafferty and J. Ryan,

Also Present.

Mr. L. Conneally, Director.

Mr. T. Mackey, Designated Manager.

Mr. S. Treacy, Staff Officer

At the outset of the meeting the Cathaoirleach welcomed Mr. Tom Mackey, to his first meeting as Designated Manager, he thanked Cllr. M. Ryan who deputised for him at the December monthly meeting and he wished everybody a Happy New Year.

Mr. T. Mackey thanked the Cathaoirleach for his welcome and stated that he was looking forward to working with the Regional Authority over the next two years.

Cllr. M. Ryan proposed a vote of sympathy to Cllr. M. Smith on the recent death of his grandmother.

1. Minutes.

The Minutes of the monthly meeting held on 2nd December 2008 were proposed by Cllr. M. Ryan, seconded by Cllr. J. Cronin and agreed as presented.

2. Correspondence.

The Members noted the following correspondence copy of which had been circulated with the agenda.

(A) Letter dated 27th November 2008 from Tralee Town Council re: Tralee Town Draft Development Plan 2009-2015.

(B) Letter dated 1st December 2008 from Limerick City Council re: Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016.

3. Aer Lingus-Update report on developments at Shannon Airport.

The Members welcomed the recent announcement by Aer Lingus that the Shannon/Heathrow service will resume in March 2009. Many Members referred to the unity of purpose of the Regional Authority, Local Authorities, Public Bodies, the business community and the general public in their efforts in campaigning for the return of this service.

Management and Staff of Aer Lingus at Shannon were also complimented for their input in reducing the cost base at Shannon.

The need for businesses and the public in the region to support the Shannon/Heathrow service when it resumes was highlighted.

The Director informed the Members that it is anticipated that the US Customs and Border Protection Facility will be provided on schedule in July 2009 at Shannon Airport.

The Director read the statement issued by the Minister for Transport, Mr. Noel Dempsey T. D. to defer the decision to separate the three airports (under the State Airports Act) until 2011 because of the current very difficult aviation market and based on the Business Plans submitted by the three airports of Cork, Dublin and Shannon.

The Members welcomed this decision but pointed out that local management are best equipped to deal with local needs. Concern was expressed at the level of control exercised by the Dublin Airport Authority over the Shannon Airport Authority. Members also pointed out that the large Capital Investment required at Shannon Airport should be carried out in advance of the separation of the three State Airports.

The need for the urgent completion of the N18 road improvement scheme between the Limerick/Shannon and Galway Gateways in particular to extend the catchment area of Shannon Airport was highlighted.

4. Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's) preparation- Update Report, L. Conneally, Director.

The Director stated that the Commencement Order for the preparation of Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG) is expected to be issued in the near future by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

He welcomed Mr. Richard Tobin, Senior Planner, Limerick City Council, who will act as the RPG Review Project Leader, to the meeting. He stated the Ms. Gráinne O'Keeffe, Executive Planner, Limerick Co. Co. will also work on the project for a number of months and that engineering expertise will be provided by Clare Co. Co. particularly in relation to Transportation, Energy and Flood Risk Assessment. He stated that Shannon Development and Forfás will provide assistance in relation to the regional economic strategy aspect of the project.

The Director acknowledged the assistance provided by the Local Authorities in the region by the provision of Staff to prepare the RPG's.

An indicative timeframe for the preparation process of the RPG's as follows was circulated at the meeting.

Statutory Function	Period	Elected Members Consideration
Finalise Draft Issues for Review	February 2009	Draft Issues to Members February 2009 meeting
Advertise Issues for Public Consultation	February/April 2009	
Directors Report on Submissions received	May 2009	Report to be considered by Members at May 2009 meeting
Preparation of Draft Guidelines	May to August 2009	
Draft Guidelines Considered by Members	September 2009	Draft Guidelines to be considered by Members at September 2009 Meeting
Draft Guidelines on Public Display	October to December 2009	
Directors Report on Issues raised from Public Display	January-February 2010	Report to be considered by Members and Formal Adoption of the New Guidelines at March 2010 meeting

There was a discussion on the RPG process and the following issues were raised by the Members and the Director replied as follows:

- The level of input from the Elected Representatives in formalising the Issues Paper.

The Director stated that a Draft Issues Paper will be prepared and circulated to the Members in advance of the February Meeting. The Members considerations will then be included in the Issues Paper for Public Consultation.

- Targets for population growth in view of recent economic trends.

The Director stated that new National/Regional Population Targets had been issued by the D.O.E.H. & L.G. on 5th January 2009 and that these will be circulated to the Members. He stated that the regional population breakdown per local authority area will be done by the Regional Authority in the coming weeks.

- Level of influence of National Policy and the need to address issues affecting the periphery of the region.

The Director stated that the new Guidelines must take account of National Policy and in particular he referred to the Limerick/Shannon Gateway and the Hub Town of Ennis. He stated that these will be significant to the process in relation to their capacity to provide employment, services and good quality of life for all people in the region. He stressed how important a vibrant and successful gateway and hub will be to service the surrounding rural areas of the region and that this positive urban/rural relationship will be focus to the review process.

- Impact of probable change of membership of Regional Authority following Local Elections on the RPG process.

The Director stated that there will be ongoing consultation with the Members before and after the local elections and that any new Members of the Regional Authority will be updated on progress as quickly as possible.

- Will the RPG's supersede County/City Development Plans

The Director stated that at present County/City Development Plans must have regard to the Regional Planning Guidelines. However, the new Planning Bill presently before the Oireachtas is expected to place greater emphasis on compliance with RPG's by Local Authorities.

The Director also clarified that the funding required for the preparation of the Mid West Area Strategic Plan (MWASP) is separate from the RPG process.

5. Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion- turning territorial diversity into strength- L. Conneally, Director.

A Draft submission to the E.U. Commission on the "Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion-turning territorial adversity into strength" prepared by the Director was circulated at the meeting. It was agreed to defer discussion to the next meeting to allow the Members the opportunity to review the Draft submission. It was noted that the closing date for submissions is 28th February 2009.

6. Conferences:

(A) Annual Conference 19/20 February 2009.

The Director requested the Members to promote the Conference again this year as they had in last year to ensure a good attendance.

It was agreed that the Conference Sub Committee meeting scheduled for 11.00 A.M. on Monday 12th January 2009 will now be held at 9.30 A.M.

(B) Attendance at Conferences.

The attendance of Members at the following conferences was noted:

Kadenza Consultancies Ltd. conference on the 16/18 January 2009 in Day's Hotel, 1 Merchants Quay, Waterford-Cllr. J. Houlihan (City).

7. A.O.B. –None.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Cathaoirleach

Director

Date