

Minutes of monthly meeting of the Mid West Regional Authority held at 1.30P.M. on Tuesday 3rd February 2009 in the Council Chamber, North Tipperary County Council.

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. T. Berkery, W. Kennedy, M. Ryan, J. Sheehy and M. Smith.

Apologies: Cllrs. C. Crowe and M. Lafferty.

Absent: Cllr. 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 Members noted the unavailability of Cllr. M. Lafferty to attend the meeting through illness and confinement in hospital and wished him a speedy recovery.

1. Minutes.

The Minutes of the monthly meeting held on 6th January 2009 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 8th January 2009 from Waterford City Council re variation to Waterford City Development Plan.

(B) Letter dated 8th January 2009 from Clare County Council re Ennis and Environs Development Plan 2008-2014.

(C) Letter dated 20th January 2009 from Cork County Council re proposed Cork Airport Special Local Area Plan.

The Members also noted:

(A) Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 16th January 2009 from Mr. Dan Dangher, Clare Champion, seeking details of expenses paid to Clare Co. Co. Members of the Regional Authority for 2004,2005,2006,2007 and 2008.

(B) Letter dated 27th January 2009 and the accompanying maps from Halcrow Barry regarding Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed motorway service area adjacent to the N7/M7 dual carriageway (currently under construction) situated to the east of Nenagh, Co. Tipperary. It was agreed that the letter/maps would be made available to any member who wished to make a submission/observation. Cllr. T. Berkery referred to the potential impact the provision of this service area will have on small businesses in the commercial centres in the adjacent villages of Toomevara and Moneygall. He requested that the Authority write to the NRA advising that the provision of this service area would seriously impact on the viability of existing businesses to the detriment of the local rural community particularly in a time of economic downturn. He also referred to the need for the NRA to compulsory purchase additional lands to provide the service area.

(C) Letter dated 27th January 2009 from Limerick County Council re: Variation to Limerick County Development Plan 2005-2011.

3. Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's)

(A) RPG's Issues Paper- Draft Issues Paper attached-R. Tobin.

(B) RPG's Regional Population Targets- copy attached-R. Tobin.

(C) RPG's preparation- Update Report-L. Conneally.

R. Tobin, RPG's Project Manager, made a power point presentation on the RPG's Issues Paper under the following headings:

- Economic Development-Industrial Employment.
- Shannon Airport-advantage to region.
- Enterprise

- Rural Population decline/parts of urban areas.
- Antisocial behaviour.
- Infrastructure-Roads/Rail.
- Energy.
- Communications Broadband.
- Rural Heritage.
- Flood Risk.
- Rural Tourism.
- Co-ordinated Actions between Local Authorities

He then outlined the indicative timeframe for the preparation process for the RPG's.

A discussion followed on the Draft Issues Paper and the following issues, in particular, were raised by the Members:

- Rural depopulation-sports clubs affected by emigration.
- No mention of rural areas in key actions required for collaborative approach.
- Deficiencies in Rail/Road/ Broadband facilities in rural areas.
- Population targets unrealistic-population is in decline due to economic downturn.
- Difficulty in planning for the next 20 years particularly given the vast economic changes that have occurred in recent months.
- Urban areas require separate policy treatment in RPG's.
- Guidelines not mandatory-need for common sense approach to RPG's implementation.
- Overregulation by EU particularly in relation to environmental protection.
- Need to encourage people to live in rural villages.
- 2004 Guidelines were geared towards City/Towns- not sufficient capacity in schools- Housing Estates not completed.
- Need for Boundary Extension in Limerick-Thriving City essential for region to thrive.
- Need for more balanced regional development.

- Essential that region is ready to avail of upturn in economy. The new RPG's will have an important policy role in this regard.

In reply R. Tobin pointed out that the Issues Paper was an initial document to start the RPG's review discussion. He stated that the views of the Members and the general public, following the public consultation phase, will form the basis of the new Draft Guidelines.

He stated that the population figures are targets set by the D.O.E.H. & L.G. and are those that the region should aspire to achieve. He pointed out that with these population targets included in the Guidelines, it would strengthen the region's demand on Government to provide funding for schools, water and sewerage and other facilities.

It was proposed by Cllr. P. McMahon, seconded by Cllr. P. Considine and agreed that the population targets outlined by the D.O.E.H. & L.G. should be included in the Guidelines.

It was also agreed that the RPG's should be included as an agenda item for each monthly meeting.

L. Conneally, Director, informed the meeting that Minister had signed the Order on 19th December 2008 to commence the RPGs Review process. The Minister had also signed the Planning and Development Regulations and these are now before the Houses of the Oireachtas. Following this process a Circular Letter will be issued by the D.O.E.H. & L.G. setting out the process and timescale for the Review of the RPG's.

4. Green paper on Territorial Cohesion-turning territorial diversity into strength.

It was agreed that the Draft submission to the EU commission on the "Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion-turning territorial diversity into strength" prepared by the Director and circulated at the January 2009 monthly meeting would be forwarded to the Commission.

5. Conferences:

(A) Annual Conference 19/20 February 2009.

The Director informed the meeting that the number of delegates registered to date to attend the Conference was low and requested all Members to contact their colleagues in other counties seeking their support for the conference.

(B) The attendance of Members at the following conferences was noted and approved:

Superior Training Conference, Granville Hotel, Waterford on 23-25 January 2009-Cllr. L. Walsh.

Information and Communications Technology Conference, Carlton Millrace Hotel, Bunclody on 21-23 November 2008-Cllr. J. Crowe.

6. A.O.B.

Cllr. P. McMahon referred to recent media reports that Ryanair were proposing to withdraw some of their aircraft from Shannon Airport and reduce flight services to and from Shannon. Many Members expressed concern at the potential negative effect such actions by Ryanair would have for Shannon and the West of Ireland. They also referred to the favourable charges enjoyed by Ryanair at Shannon Airport and their commitment to bring 2 million passengers to the Airport by 2010. They expressed support for the efforts being made by the Shannon Airport Authority to retain and expand flight services at Shannon Airport and requested that their concerns and support be brought to the attention of the Shannon Airport Authority. Cllr. P. Considine requested that the Shannon Airport Marketing Consultative Committee meeting scheduled for 23rd February 2009 be brought forward to deal with this issue.

Cathaoirleach

Director

Date