

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Mid West Regional Authority held at 1.30. P.M. on Wednesday 7th October 2009 in the Council Chamber, Limerick City Council, City Hall, Limerick.

Cllr. L. Walsh, Cathaoirleach presided.

Present:

Clare County Council:

Cllrs. G. Flynn, O. Garry, P. Keane, P.J. Kelly, P. McMahon and S. Scanlon.

Limerick City Council:

Cllrs. G. Fahy, M. Hourigan, J. Leddin, K. Leddin, and D. Scully.

Limerick County Council:

Cllrs. R. Butler, M. Donegan, J. Egan, N. Gleeson, S. Keary, W. O'Donnell and L. Walsh.

North Tipperary County Council:

Cllrs. P. Bugler, G. Darcy, S. Hanafin, M. Lowry, and M. Ryan.

Committee of the Regions: Cllr. C. Crowe.

Apologies: Cllrs. B. Meaney V. O'Dowd

Absent: Cllr. D. McCarthy

Also Present.

Mr. L. Conneally, Director.

Mr. T. Mackey, Designated Manager

Mr. S. Treacy, Staff Officer

At the outset of the meeting Cllr. R. Butler raised the issue of the traffic congestion caused around Limerick City by the traffic survey being undertaken as part of the Mid West Area Strategic Plan (MWASP), work being undertaken under the auspices of the Mid West Regional Authority. He also queried why the Elected Members had not been informed in advance of the traffic survey. Other Members also stated that they should be notified in advance of such events. Queries were raised regarding the value of survey and the relevance of some of the questions motorists were being asked in the survey.

It was agreed that the Director would prepare a comprehensive report for the November meeting.

1.Minutes.

The Minutes of the monthly meeting held on the 2nd September 2009 were proposed by Cllr. M. Ryan, seconded by Cllr. P. McMahon and agreed as presented subject to the following amendment: "The road number for the Thurles/Limerick road be amended from R 504 to R 503".

2.Correspondence.

The Members noted the following schedule of correspondence which had been circulated with agenda:

(A) Letter dated 9th September 2009 from North Tipperary County Council re: Planning and Development Act 2000 –Review of County Development Plan.

(B) Letter dated August 2009 from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government re European Communities Environmental Objectives (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) Regulations 2009 (S.I.296 of 2009).

The Members also noted the following correspondence which had been received after the agenda had been sent out:

(A) Letter dated 23rd September 2009 from Clare County Council setting out the following resolution that had been adopted by Clare County Council:

"That the Mid West Regional Authority adopts retail policies friendly to rural Clare".

(B) Circular Letter SP 4/09 dated 1st October 2009 from the DOE & LG re: Regional Planning Guidelines Review-Gateway and Hub Population Targets.

The Director pointed to the importance of this circular on population targets for the Gateway and Hub in the context of the Regional Planning Guidelines Review and asked the Members to note its contents (hard copy of Circular circulated at the meeting).

3. Submission on the 2009 Planning and Development Bill.

(Draft submission circulated with September agenda).

Cllr. P J Kelly queried some of the language used in the Draft submission and proposed that the submission should not be sent to the Department. He was seconded by Cllr. G. Flynn.

In reply to queries from the Members the Director stated that the Bill was presently before the Houses of the Oireachtas and that the Bill proposed giving significant additional powers to Regional Authorities.

Following a discussion it was agreed that the Regional Authority should make a submission and that the Cathaoirleach, Cllr. L. Walsh, and Cllrs. S. Keary, PJ Kelly, D. Scully and M. Ryan would meet with the Director and agree the final submission to be sent to the Department.

4. Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's)/ Regional Economic Strategy (RES).

(A) Introduction by L. Conneally, Director.

The Director outlined the work that had been undertaken to date in the review of the RPG's for the Mid West Region. He stated that this work was being undertaken in conjunction with the RPG's National Steering Committee, which includes the Regional Authority Directors and Designated Managers and representatives from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. He stressed the evidence based approach to the RPGs review and again referred to the importance of Circular Letter SP 4/09 from the DOE & LG re: Regional Planning Guidelines Review-Gateway and Hub Population Targets to the review process (dealt with under correspondence).

(B) Presentation by R. Tobin, RPG Project Manager.

R. Tobin made a power point presentation under the following headings.

- Structure: Vision, Economic, Settlement, Transport, Environmental and Implementation.
- Region Today:
- Zone 1 and the Region-Land Area/People/Jobs
- Raheen Employees
- Population Change-120 DED's declining losing 7,000 persons
- House Building-150,000 houses-25,000 vacant
- Live Register
- Industrial Employment
- Special Protection Areas (SPA's)/Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's)/ Protected Areas/Ground Water/River Catchments
- The Vision for the Region:
- The Economic Driver (2) Urban core (3) Integrated Transport (4) Connections (5) Connected Gateway (6) Service Centres (7) Linking Centres.

- Making it Work: (8) responding to sub regional needs (9) economic Integration (10) New Enterprise Centres (11) Environmental Quality.
- Regional Economic Strategy:

Strategic Enterprise Sectors: Agile Logistics/Biomedical/ICT/Food and Agri Business/Tourism.

Strategic Environmental Assessment:

Required to prepare Environmental Report.

Decision Making:

The Report shall identify, describe and evaluate the likely effect on the Environment

Consider reasonable alternatives

Take account of the objectives in the draft RPGs

The Regional Authority shall take account of the environmental report.

After the Decision:

How the environmental considerations have been integrated into the RPG preparation process

How the Environmental Report has been taken into account during the statutory process

The Measures decided upon to monitor any significant environmental effects of implementation

The following issues were then raised by the Members:

- Implications for rural Ireland of targeting too much of the population increase in the Gateways and Hubs.
- The decline in population in the peripheral parts of the Mid West region.
- The importance of maintaining/upgrading the existing rail infrastructure in the region including the Limerick/Nenagh/Ballybrophy line.
- The lack of Foreign Direct Investment in the peripheral parts of the region resulting in population decline in these areas.
- The need for improved road network to rural areas.
- The decline in villages through lack of waste water facilities.
- The need for new approach to Waterways/Tourism potential of Waterways. Need for comment/input from Waterways Ireland into RPGs process. Need to develop outdoor activities on the River Shannon.
- Need to attract long term sustainable development to the region.

- Need for a strong core in the region and the rest of the region will benefit.
- Region will have to compete not only with regions in other countries but also with other regions within Ireland.
- The impact of the loss of population in rural towns/villages for sporting organisations.
- Need to promote small scale indigenous industry particularly in the peripheral parts of the region.
- The negative impact of the withdrawal of bus/rail services from rural towns/villages in trying to attract small scale business to the smaller towns and villages.
- Queries regarding the % of aspirations included in the last RPG's that were achieved. Nenagh/Thurles (R503) included in last RPG's but not upgraded.
- More emphasis in document on EU designations, i.e. SPA's/SAC's than on creating employment.
- Impact of Limerick Regeneration re-housing on some rural areas.
- Need for rail link to Shannon Airport.
- Need to make better use of existing rail network around Limerick City.
- Need for critical mass in core region and good quality link to major towns.
- Need to promote/assist indigenous industry in rural and urban areas.
- The negative impact of SAC's/SPA's for rural Ireland.
- The need for greater co-operation between Local Authorities- less objections to planning applications in other local authority areas.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the Members for their wide ranging contributions. He also thanked R. Tobin for his presentation and asked him to comment on the queries raised by the Members.

In reply R. Tobin stated he would take on board the views expressed by the Members in the preparation of the Draft Regional Planning Guidelines. However, he pointed out that these were Regional Planning **Guidelines**, not a **Plan** and that it was a matter for the Local Authorities to prepare Development Plans. He also stated that development cannot take place in all parts of the region and that the Regional Authority must abide by the Department Circular on Population Targets.

It was agreed that the Draft Regional Planning Guidelines would be prepared for the next meeting taking into account the views expressed by the Members.

The Director stated that the Members inputs to the Draft Regional Planning Guidelines would also be taken into account in the preparation of

the Environmental Report which is currently being drafted and should be ready to be presented at the November monthly meeting.

5. Conferences.

The attendance of Members at the following Conferences was noted and approved:

Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly conference in Knightsbrook Hotel, Trim, Co. Meath on the 2nd October 2009- Cllr. J. Leddin.

6. A.O.B.

None.