

**Minutes of the Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held in  
Áras Contae an Chláir on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2019 at 11.00am**

**Present:** Cllr Richard Nagle, Chairperson  
Cllr P.J. Ryan  
Cllr Pat McMahon  
Cllr Johnny Flynn  
Cllr Ian Lynch  
Cllr Gabriel Keating  
Cllr Clare Colleran Molloy  
Mr Pat Morris  
Ms Dympna O'Callaghan  
Mr William Hanrahan  
Ms Theresa O'Donohoe  
Liam Conneally, Director of Service  
Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise  
Helen Quinn, Senior Executive Planner  
Valerie Fleming, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies: Brian McCarthy, Senior Planner.  
Ms Carmel Greene, Senior Executive Officer.

**1. Minutes of meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2018.**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2018 were proposed by Cllr Ian Lynch, seconded by Cllr P.J. Ryan and agreed.

**2. Matters Arising.**

There were no matters arising.

**3. South Clare/UL Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) update.**

Liam Conneally outlined that in April 2018 Clare County Council proposed an application for a Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) to facilitate the expansion of the UL campus further into Co. Clare. A number of engagements with stakeholders, including UL, were held and Deloitte were commissioned to complete an economic report to supply an evidence basis for the SDZ application. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government have requested further work be carried out regarding the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Clare County Council intend to make this SDZ application in May 2019 or asap

thereafter. Following designation two years will be allotted for the making of the SDZ Planning Scheme which will require approval from An Bord Pleanála before any planning applications within the designation can be fast-tracked.

Theresa O'Donohoe enquired if public consultation would be part of the SEA and Liam confirmed that the consultation in line with SEA guidelines will be followed.

Cllrs Pat McMahon and Richard Nagle thanked Liam and his team for the huge amount of work on this project to date.

Pat Morris highlighted the importance of the proposed SDZ being included in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and Liam complemented Cllrs Pat McMahon and Bill Slattery for ensuring its inclusion in the draft rses.

#### **4. Update on Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).**

Helen Quinn outlined the background to the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), summarised the draft RSES contents and the effect of this strategy on County Clare.

Cllr Gabriel Keating referred to the negative impact of the current national legislation governing one-off housing in rural areas. He expressed frustration in West Clare regarding difficulty to get planning permission for homes on family lands resulting in the population moving closer to Ennis. The resultant impact is the closure of rural schools and community life in West Clare. He added that planners are doing their best within the constraints of the existing legislation.

Cllr P.J. Ryan thanked Helen for her comprehensive presentation and said it was obvious that Clare through Cllrs McMahon and Slattery had made a significant input to the draft regional strategy. He took on board Cllr Keating's remarks and added that in addition to west Clare there are many parts of the county that are not densely populated.

William Hanrahan seconded Cllr Keating's remarks.

Cllr Pat McMahon thanked Helen for her presentation and agreed with Cllr Keating that villages throughout Clare are dying. He emphasised that it is important to make submissions on the draft RSES and encouraged all SPC members to do so through all organizations/committees that they are members of.

Cllr Johnny Flynn declared a commercial interest in the promotion of renewable energy in Co. Clare. He then highlighted that no reference is made to the huge maritime potential of Clare in the draft strategy. He made reference to the many pylons situated in Clare for which no revenue from rates is received and added that the Silvermines in Co. Tipperary is the only location listed for energy storage in the document. Cllr Flynn is concerned at the loss of income from rates which will result from the closure of Moneypoint. He also stated that the members of Clare County Council recently resolved not to allow fracked gas to be sourced in Clare and that this resolution should be referenced in the strategy.

Liam Conneally advised that RSES is a strategic regional document and rural housing is a matter properly dealt with in the County Development Plan. He referenced the *Flemish Decree* which stipulates that bloodlines should not favour any housing applicant and Ireland has been requested to revise rural housing guidelines to reflect this. He said that the national planning framework states that “issues of social and economic benefit to an area” can now be taken into account and that new national rural housing guidelines are now required. There is currently a national working group of Senior Planners dealing with this matter. The provision of Water and waste water services in rural towns and villages is a priority.

Cllr Richard Nagle supported Cllr Keating and the other speakers and added that whole tracts of West and North Clare are soon going to be devoid of people.

Cllr Gabriel Keating made reference to the fact that there are 51 villages in Clare without a sewerage scheme and something must be done to ensure survival of rural towns and villages throughout Clare.

Cllr Johnny Flynn said that the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) commissioned a behaviour and attitudes survey which the Council should use to inform their submission on RSES.

Liam Conneally encouraged all members to make written submissions in bullet point format on the draft RSES by 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019.

## **5. Data Centre Variation Update.**

Helen Quinn outlined that there are 17 submissions on the proposed Variation No 1 to the County Development Plan 2017 – 2023. A Chief Executive's report is being prepared for the elected members and will be available to them no later than 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019. It is intended to discuss this proposed variation at the March Council meeting.

Liam Conneally advised that it is proposed to hold a workshop for elected members to discuss (a) Data Centre variation and (b) RSES after 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

Cllr Clare Colleran Molloy enquired what type of electricity is proposed to supply the Data Centre and if it will be from a 'clean' source.

Cllr Johnny Flynn advised that he has concerns around inadequate infrastructure.

Helen Quinn responded that this proposal is currently at plan level i.e. dealing with the zoning of the site. The detail of the proposal will be dealt with at project level if the Plan Variation is agreed by the members.

Liam Conneally replied that the Ennis electricity grid infrastructure has more than sufficient capacity to supply electricity to the proposed Data Centre and it is also possible to tap into gas infrastructure which provides a much cleaner energy. He added that energy supply will be part of any application to An Bord Pleanála under the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application process.

Cllr Clare Colleran Molloy said that it is important this message is communicated to the public.

Cllr Richard Nagle thanked Helen and the planning department for all their work and said he hopes it comes to a successful conclusion.

## **6. AOB.**

Cllr Johnny Flynn said that he has asked Clare County Council to consider the rebranding of the Gort Road Industrial Estate.

Cllr Gabriel Keating issued his apology for the next SPC meeting scheduled for 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019 as he is attending business meetings in Dublin that day.

The meeting then concluded.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Cllr Richard Nagle**  
**Chairperson**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Liam Conneally,**  
**Director of Economic Development.**