

**Minutes of the Rural Development Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) held on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022 in the Council Chamber and via Zoom at 10:00am**

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**In attendance:**

Cllr. Pat Hayes  
Cllr. Shane Talty  
Cllr. Cillian Murphy  
Cllr. Mary Howard  
Cllr. Pat Burke  
Cllr. Joe Killeen  
Ms. Jean Tierney O’Keeffe  
Mr. Denis Tuohy  
Ms. Bernadette Haugh  
Ms. Helen Moloney

**Organisation:**

Chair  
Elected Member  
Elected Member  
Elected Member  
Elected Member  
Elected Member  
Social Inclusion  
Agriculture/Farming  
A/Senior Executive Officer  
Assistant Staff Officer

**Apologies**

Ms. Niamh O’Callaghan

**No. 1 Clare County Development Plan**

On behalf of the Rural SPC, Cllr. P. Hayes expressed a vote of sympathy to the Director Leonard Cleary on the very sudden passing of his father-in-law.

Cllr. P. Hayes welcomed everyone to the meeting. The meeting was organised to solely discuss the Draft County Development Plan and Pat stated that he was delighted to have Helen Quinn, A/Senior Planner to present the plan. He advised that it is an opportunity now to look at where they are and requested Helen to promote it amongst the communities.

Helen Quinn addressed the members and advised as A/Senior Planner she is responsible for delivering the new County Development Plan which will span from 2023 to 2029. She provided a power point presentation to highlight some of the new main elements in the plan with an opportunity for questions and answers at the end as follows:-

- What is a Development Plan?
- Plan Preparation Timeline (this was extended by up to 7 months and is now in public consultation stage)
- Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 Volume 1:
  - Key themes
  - Core strategy (which included details on the Housing Supply Target of 4,500 housing units and the need to have enough land for this target)
  - Core strategy table; a summary of where the housing units will be located based on settlement hierarchy
  - Map and chart on housing units

- Residential Development
- South Clare/University of Limerick Economic Strategic Development Zone
- Economic Development
- Volume 3: Settlement Plans
  - Village Growth Area Designations
  - Sample of Settlement Map shown
- Volume 4: Record of Protected Structures
- Volumes 5-9. (List of volumes shown to the members and these can be viewed in all the Area Offices, public offices and online).
- Volume 10: Environmental Assessments
- Rural Housing: Social and Economic
- Developer Provided/led Infrastructure
- Residential Zoned Land Tax (introduced on 22/12/21 through Section 80 of the Finance Act 2021)
  - Purpose of the Residential Zoned Land Tax
  - Implementation of the Tax
  - Timeline
  - Next Steps
- Submissions/observations: To be submitted by 4pm on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

Helen advised that submissions/observations can be forwarded in writing, by email or on-line. She advised that public consultation events are taking place up until 10<sup>th</sup> February with the first one completed on 25<sup>th</sup> January in Lisdoonvarna. A webinar video will be made available to the public shortly and it is hoped that the plan will be adopted in March 2023.

Cllr. P. Hayes thanked Helen for her very comprehensive presentation and stressed the importance that people understand the legislation. He opened the discussion to the members.

#### **Submission by Cllr. P. Burke:**

Cllr. P. Burke thanked Helen for a very informative presentation. He enquired if the proposed tax was on residential zoned land only or on strategic reserved land.

Cllr. Burke stated that the demise of rural villages needs to be looked at as they do not have the infrastructure and this needs to be highlighted to the people making submissions. There is a lack of investment by Irish Water. Cllr. Burke recommended that a list of unserved areas be highlighted. He also enquired if the tax will apply to undeveloped land in clusters.

Helen advised that tax on residential zoned land is unclear and further guidelines are awaited which might expand more on the issue and how it is to be applied to include further clarification on strategic reserved land that is not immediately available for development. She advised that a lot of local authorities have strategic reserved lands identified and the guidelines should address this issue.

Helen stated that they have grouped small villages together in relation to population growth. She advised that she does not expect undeveloped land in clusters to be subjected to the tax, only lands that can be serviced. The guidelines should clarify this further.

**Submission by Cllr. S. Talty:**

Cllr. S. Talty thanked Helen and the team on the road show that took place in Lisdoonvarna, which was very informative. He stated that Spanish Point has a lot of tourism potential but in some areas in the absence of Irish Water there is a lot of challenges. the change in work patterns and remote working and the increased demand to live in coastal areas.

Helen advised that the Planning Authority have acknowledged that there are changes to work patterns. She referred to the roll out of hubs, how adaptable homes are and what type of houses are being built. There has been great investment in leisure facilities to attract people to live and work in Clare.

**Submission by D. Tuohy:-**

D. Tuohy thanked Helen for the presentation and stated that he and the IFA will look forward to engaging with the Planning Authority. In relation to the allocation of houses, he stated that it would be interesting to see the figures for sales of houses this year as there was a lot of development outside of built-up areas. He stated that rural Ireland is an attractive place to live and work and it would be worth carrying out a validation of figures to see if the allocated figures should be altered for urban areas. He advised that another census will be carried out this year and there is a need to ensure that the most reliable figures are available. He recommends allocation of more houses to rural Ireland to ensure the survival of communities. The IFA are very aware of the residential zoned land tax and are awaiting direction from headquarters on how to go forward. Farmers have the opportunity to examine this and the IFA are engaging with all members. The executive are going through the documents on the tax. Denis stated that it was interesting to see the definition of full-time farmers being mentioned. Clare is a County with part-time farmers with 78% that are beef producers and are part-time and they do not want negative effects on them because they are part time.

Helen recommended that the I.F.A. make a submission as landowners are affected by the tax. The Planning Authority are very conscious of the housing demand exceeding supply in all locations and are looking at completion figures for each year. Helen advised that although the census is outdated, every year so many policy documents have conducted their own research e.g. the Tourism Strategy which is a very recent document, fed into the County Development Plan and the Planning Authority take on board new research. Helen stated that part-time farmers are given the same consideration as full-time farmers and there is a lot of support for agri tourism and agri retail and they are very conscious of the number of farmers falling off. The local authority is trying to keep people in the rural community.

**Submission by Cllr. C. Murphy:**

Cllr. C. Murphy referred to the zoning matrix and a particular type of development. He enquired what tourism will be facilitating in relation to settlement plans and zoning matrix and stated that it should be a bit more specific and tourism should not be under residential. In relation to the 3,500 population allocation for SDZ he enquired if this was extra or if it is taking away a chunk of population. He referred to the inclusion of different types of wastewater that are unique and enquired if this merits its own objective.

Helen advised that she is not opposed to changing the matrix in the plan and stated that it relates to all the different zoning objectives and that is the reason it is put at the end; it should reflect what was dealt with in proceeding chapters. Helen advised that in relation to the SDZ the population aspiration is 3,500 and the number of units to be delivered during the lifetime of the plan is 123. She stated that 123 units is a realistic number of units over the six-year period. This needs Oireachtas approval and will go through a procurement/tendering process and this can delay delivery. Any remaining units not delivered can be done during the next County Development cycle. It is not taking away from the allocation it is spread around the County. In relation to alternative wastewater treatments Helen advised that a submission should be made around that and can be brought before the members.

**Submission by Cllr. J. Killeen:**

Cllr. Killeen thanked the staff for the workshop that took place in Lisdoonvarna. He stated that he was amazed and disappointed about the population into large towns. He advised that 29% of the population live in rural Clare and they will be getting 19% of housing units. He stated that this will be an issue in schools in trying to keep teachers. As the threshold is low this will further compound the insistence of moving people into more populated dense areas. People will move into built up areas and rural areas will not enjoy population increase. Cllr. Killeen would like to ensure continued rural life. Cllr. Killeen referred to the tax on land and advised that clarity is needed and that people should be notified that land is zoned. He stated that Revenue will not send out letter and enquired what is the legal position and who is responsible for telling the landowners that the land is being zoned and that consultation is going on at present.

Helen advised that one of the biggest changes on foot of the national and regional policy documents is how land uses are moving forward in the future. The documents detail growth and what percentage of growth the Planning Authority allocate to different settlements. There is a level of expectation that the Planning Authority deliver on these policies and it is necessary to reflect these policies in the County Development Plan, albeit there is capacity for growth in the rural areas and Helen recommended that a submission be made on this. In relation to notifying landowners, clarification on the Section 28 guidelines is needed on this. At present landowners are not notified and there is only legislation for notifying people regarding protected structures and does not have the same requirement regarding zoning of land for various uses. Helen

advised that a lot of lands are not registered with Land Registry and this would cause time and resource implications.

**Submission by Cllr. P. Hayes:**

Cllr. Hayes advised that the public need to engage in relation to the land tax and is seeking clarification on what is presently zoned. He enquired about the major changes from the present plan to the new plan. He advised that the planning regulations are dictating the changes and the land tax acknowledging that while the Planning Authority has control, they are still required to operate under new guidelines.

**Submission by Cllr. P. Burke:**

In relation to land tax Cllr. Burke enquired about tax on land for sale and what stage would Revenue advise that you do not owe any more; is it when land is sold or when planning permission is granted.

Helen advised that this issue would be a consideration under the Section 28 guidelines. As lands are being actively farmed, cases can be made. Helen advised that a lot of issues will need to be looked at in the guidelines e.g. whether the new tax is based on the current plan or the new plan.

**Submission by D. Tuohy:**

D. Tuohy expressed concern about the tax and the timelines and stated that the members may have to be asked to examine land zoning. He referred to one of the maps which is mapped by landscape designation, working and heritage. He enquired where this map came from and who decided is it working or heritage. He stated that it is important that agriculture is recognised as it is of huge importance in the County.

Helen advised that the landscape character was completed for Clare on the basis of the map and stated that the document is available for viewing. She stated that agriculture is an important employment sector which is referenced in the plan.

**Submission by Cllr. C. Murphy:**

In relation to SDZ's Cllr. Murphy enquired if the population growth figures includes strategic development zones or is the rest of the County being sacrificed.

Helen advised that the number of housing units only includes 123 for SDZ in this plan cycle and is aligned to housing policy. She stated that people need to come back and look at the 4,500 houses as these need to be divvied out.

**Submission by Cllr. P. Hayes:**

Cllr. P. Hayes advised that clarity is needed about the changes in the 12.5 hectares and referred to a rush on lodging planning applications under the current Development Plan. He expressed concern that there may be misinformation out there.

Helen advised that all policies have changed to reflect up to date data so there is a significant difference to the current plan in many respects. She advised that she can look at picking out key areas from some chapters. In relation to building houses for sons/daughters the position has not changed.

Cllr. Hayes referred to trying to align new policies with the existing one and encouraged people to read it and make submissions. He stated that clarity is needed on the guidelines regarding land tax.

Helen referred to the significant amount of work that the Council will need to do once the guidelines are issued from central government. They have no input into it at this time.

Cllr. S. Talty enquired if members can still make submissions at this stage as the members have adopted the plan. Helen advised that there is nothing in legislation to preclude it and the submissions can be dealt with in the same way that submissions come in from the public.

Cllr. P. Hayes thanked Helen for her presentation and stated that it is imperative that the information is out there and individuals should engage in the process and make their views known. He referred to the outside interference from Revenue and stated that all the different policies at national level affects the local authority at local level.

With no other business the meeting concluded.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Cllr. P. Hayes**  
**Cathaoirleach**

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**Leonard Cleary**  
**Director of Rural Development and**  
**West Clare Municipal District**