

Minutes of the Rural Development Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) held on Tuesday 18th April at 10:00 a.m. in Room 242 and on-line

In attendance:

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

Organisation:

Chair
Elected Member
Elected Member
Elected Member
Elected Member
Elected Member
Agriculture/Farming
Social Inclusion
Director of Service, Rural Development
A/Senior Executive Officer
Assistant Staff Officer

No. 1 Minutes of Meeting held on 21st February 2023:

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st February 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Shane Talty, seconded by Cllr. Joe Killeen and agreed.

No. 2 Matters arising:

The members requested an update on the Burial Ground Bye Laws and Bernie advised that a meeting between the legal advisers and Rural Development staff had taken place and a further update would be provided in due course.

No. 3 Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Biodiversity: Presentation by Morgan Lahiffe, Climate Action Co-ordinator

Cllr. Pat Hayes introduced Morgan Lahiffe to the members and advised that Climate Action is a very challenging issue for both rural communities and the tourism sector.

Morgan introduced himself to the members and presented on the following:-

- Climate Action Section – Clare County Council
- Climate Policy
- Local Authority Climate Action Plan
- Objectives of Climate Action Plan
- Advance Planning and Work Completed to Date
- Baseline Emissions Inventory (BEI)
- Climate Change Risk Assessment
- Phases of Developing Climate Action Plan
- Clare County Council - Opportunities
- Planning for Adaptation

- Opportunities for County Clare

Morgan invited members to comment and he provided the following additional information:-

- It is envisaged that the Community Climate Action Officer will be a non-technical role and will involve an admin role to support and engage with communities, identify projects and carry them through.
- The percentage of emissions is very much in line with the national figures. Different sectors of society are examined and population is looked at. The key is to get approximate percentages and get actions that are deliverable.
- In the event of drought, meetings will take place with planners and sectoral workshops will take place. However, at present drought situations only happen now and again.
- In terms of Social Housing the Council do not report the energy usage as it is out of their control but it will be included in the plan for retrofitting.
- The Climate Action Plan will roll out once the Climate Action Officer is in place.
- In relation to the agriculture sector it has its own ceiling and Clare County Council is not mandated to agriculture. The Council will support the projects and there are funding streams available from Leader and LAPRO.
- The Biodiversity Officer will be appointed in the Planning Section and will meet regularly with the Climate Action team.
- The Climate Action Officer is fully funded for 5 years and is the only role currently funded centrally.
- There is a huge body of work to bring down emissions in the Council's buildings and there is a need to influence external bodies and increase people's awareness and education in relation to mitigation and adaptation. As part of the process they will be doing a survey with TY students.
- They will be speaking with Irish Water in relation to CAP.
- The Transportation Section is working on an Electric Strategy and it will have to be realistic and deliverable. It is early days with destination charging and charging at home. Any plan that Clare County Council puts in place in relation to charging areas has to take on board that the majority will charge their vehicles at home.
- Clare County Council does not regulate the agriculture sector but will be there to support them in any way they can.
- In relation to social housing they do not report on usage but are involved in energy efficiency. There are no chimneys in new houses as they are using heat pumped technology.
- Climate Action will be promoted on social media.

Cllr. P. Hayes thanked Morgan for his presentation. In relation to the mitigation factor he stated that there is a need to look into it. In relation to agriculture he advised that everyone needs to work collaboratively on this and find measures that suit farmers. In consultation with the IFA. He stated that it is a huge body of work and it is really important to engage collectively.

4. Rural Transport and County Initiatives (Presentation by Cillian Griffey, TFI Local Link).

Cllr. Pat Hayes introduced Cillian Griffey and Anne Gaughan to the members. He stated that a lot of discussions had taken place recently at the SPC meetings on public transport. Cillian and Anne thanked the members for the invitation and presented on the following:-

- TFI Local Link staffing, offices, funding and transport operators
- Models of Transport
- Accessibility
- Existing Clare Services
- Technology
- Electric buses for Ennis
- Environmentally Friendly
- Bus stop ambition
- Connecting Ireland
- Relationship with Irish Rail and Bus Éireann
- Marketing – Timetable Visibility

Discussions took place on the various bus stops around the county, bus shelters and time tables and problems encountered with the transport app.

Cillian advised that there is a real opportunity for localised branding and there is an opportunity to collaborate with Visit Clare. He stated that infrastructure is needed to pull in safely in Scariff and Ennistymon and similar issues are being brought up at every NTA meeting. There are town plans being devised and these should include infrastructure for public transport. He agreed that the app users are experiencing difficulties if they do not know their bus number. He advised that the NTA are very strict on branding but will keep following up with them as it will bring the numbers up.

Cllr. P. Hayes requested a breakdown of the C331 route. He stated that they do not have a Transport Strategy for the County and that there is not enough joined up thinking. As a policy group he advised that transport is a key driver and that TFI are a key player. He recommended that a forum of all transport providers be set up to start that debate and there needs to be far greater co-ordination to support Local Link.

Anne advised that she met Leonore O'Neill who advised that she is doing a county plan for transport which will involve extensive consultation.

Jean thanked Cillian and Anne for their presentation and she advised that having consulted with teenagers they are able to connect with friends because of Local Link. She recommended that teenagers be part of the consultation process.

Anne advised that in two weeks' time a new journey planner will be live. The NTA are designing it. The ticket machines will be moving to metrics. She advised that she will take the recommendation on board in relation to teenagers as they really want to hear the views of the younger people. She stated that they have carried out a study with TY students and requested them to design a bus stop.

Denis Tuohy stated that secondary school engagement is important. He advised to start with the youth to change attitudes. He enquired how to enhance passenger experience. He recommended to enhance, exploit and use bus shelters and

recommended that a pilot be carried out in the 3 market towns. He stated that a Town Plan had been developed in Scariff last year but it did not hit on busses. Public transport has increased in Scariff. He enquired if there was a role with the Council's tourism section which could pilot a smart town/village.

Cllr. Mary Howard welcomed enhanced bus services for Ennis. She noted that on the TFI website that there is approximately 30 bus stops in Ennis but she does not know where they are. Lack of bus shelters is an issue and she referred to the fantastic bus shelter in Bunratty. She stated that it is important to involve the youth. Anne advised that they hope to go under the Green Flag for transport and do presentations at schools.

Cllr. J. Killeen referred to Clare Accessible Transport and stated that one of his interests was to link Shannon Airport and the Cliffs of Moher as this is a critical link. A guaranteed timetable would be needed to get international travellers back for their flights. Cillian advised that they have 4 operators under the TFI banner and noted that tourists need guaranteed times. It was noted that a comprehensive strategy is needed to put all the services on the one map. Cllr. Killeen congratulated TFI on a very comprehensive service. Cllr. C. Murphy advised that it is important to note that bus infrastructure can be included in Active Travel funding applications.

Leonard advised that digital bus shelters can be referred to DigiClare.

Cllr. Shane Talty stated that there is an acute issue at the Cliffs of Moher. Bus Eireann busses arrive and they are full and they have been asked to engage with the Council. Cllr. Talty recommended that a meeting be held to discuss this issue. Anne requested that Cllr. Talty send an email to her on this issue.

Denis enquired if there was a Lough Derg ring route and Anne advised that it is not on the TFI route but would look into it and take it up nationally.

5. Any other business:

Hybrid/In Person Meetings

A discussion took place on hybrid/in person meetings and it was agreed that hybrid meetings would continue. It was noted that there are problems in the Boardroom and Room 242. It was suggested that future meetings take place in the Council Chamber using Microsoft Teams.

New Member of the Rural SPC

The Clare PPN has nominated a new member and this nomination will be going before the full Council.

Property Marking/resources

Cllr. Talty commended the Rural Team on the very successful property marking scheme. He enquired about the status of the recruitment of the Rural Development Officers. Leonard advised that a panel has been formed and offers have gone out and within the next month or so they will have the full complement of four. There will be one assigned to each Municipal District. There is also a vacancy for SEO in North Clare and Leonard advised that he is working with HR to get this situation progressed.

Cllr. M. Howard complimented Niamh Wiley who goes above and beyond in her work and enquired if she is staying in Ennis. Leonard advised that they would circulate an

update on their assignments in due course. Cllr. C. Murphy stated that the Tourism season has increased and that it needs to be looked at from a resource point of view which now begins in February.

With no other business Cllr. Pat Hayes drew the meeting to a close and thanked the members for attending.

Signed:

Cllr. P. Hayes
Cathaoirleach

Leonard Cleary
Director of Rural Development and
West Clare Municipal District