



Northern & Western Regional Assembly

**MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN & WESTERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY MEETING
HELD ON 7TH MARCH 2019 IN THE GUILDHALL CHAMBER, DERRY
AT 12 NOON**

Present:

Cllr Jerry Lundy	Cllr Seamus Coyle	Cllr Dermot Connolly
Cllr Nigel Dineen	Cllr Jimmy McClearn	Cllr Frank McBrearty
Cllr Mary Hoade	Cllr Declan McDonnell	Cllr Sean Smith
Cllr Niall McNelis	Cllr Seamus O'Domhnaill	Cllr Seamus Kilgannon
Cllr Joe Murphy	Cllr Justin Warnock	

Cllr Seamus Coyle **PRESIDED**

Mr. Seamus Neely, Designated Chief Executive
Mr John Kelpie, Chief Executive, Derry City and Strabane District Council
Councillor John Boyle, Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council

Apologies:

Cllr. John Caulfield	Cllr Jack Murray	Cllr Pearce Flannery
Cllr Gerry Murray	Cllr Jackie Crowe	Cllr Keith Henry
Cllr. Patsy O'Brien	Cllr Richard Finn	Cllr Paddy Smith
Cllr Frank Dolan	Cllr Enda Stenson	

Officials: Northern & Western Regional Assembly:

Mr David Minton (Director)
Mr Denis Kelly (Assistant Director & Senior Planner)
Mr Frank Flanagan (Senior Executive Planner)
Mr Conall McGettigan (Senior Executive Planner)
Mr Gerry Lavelle (Programme Executive)
Ms Brenda Finn (Clerical Officer)

Official Welcome

Mayor Cllr Boyle extended a Céad Míle Fáilte in welcoming the members to the city said he was delighted they had chosen to travel to Derry for their meeting and to get an update on the positive work done by both Councils at a regional, national and international level to promote the North West City Region. Cllr John Boyle said it was fitting that on a day that the Northern & Western Regional Assembly were holding such an historic meeting in Derry that

- It is widely accepted that the challenges can only be met, and the opportunities pursued, with a consistent and long-term approach to coordinating the development of the region.
- In developing our Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies the members have always insisted on a shared understanding. Today for us is about gaining more of an insight on the initiative so that we can properly integrate the initiative into the spatial and economic objectives.

Cllr Coyle wished the Mayor the best of luck for the upcoming election and for all his future endeavours. He hopes the relations built today will be of benefit to us all in the future. He said that the meeting was held in the Guildhall in Derry to recognise the cross-border partnership developing in the North West City Region and as a way of celebrating our shared communities. He said that the Members of the Regional Assembly were meeting with the Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council Cllr John Boyle along with the Chief Executives from both Derry City & Strabane and Donegal County Councils to hear about the new and integrated approach to create a prosperous, thriving and sustainable City Region. The Chief Executives were then invited to present to the meeting.

A joint presentation was given by Mr. Seamus Neely Chief Executive, Donegal County Council and Mr. John Kelpie, Chief Executive Derry & Strabane District Council, (See Appendix I).

The Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, the Cathaoirleach of Donegal County Council and the Cathaoirleach of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly agreed that there was a need to sustain and enhance the growth potential of the North West region of the Island of Ireland. It was acknowledged that there was great benefit in working together in partnership and acting in a collaborative way on strategic objectives that create better places and more inclusive communities.

Cllr Coyle then invited Cllr Boyle and Cllr O'Domhnaill to join him in the commemorative signing. The wording of the Commemorative signing was read into the record.

Cllr Coyle commenced the Remainder of business, stating that it was a great honour to partake in the commemorative signing with Cllr Seamus O'Domhnaill and Cllr John Boyle. He hoped that the shared vision would be realised as it was critical to give our people a better future.

Vote of Sympathy

Proposed by: Cllr S Coyle
Seconded by: Cllr J Mc Clearn
Resolved:

“that a vote of sympathy be extended to Cllr Jackie Crowe on the passing of his sister Ann McMahon”.

The Cathaoirleach Cllr Seamus Coyle held a minute’s silence.

Ar dhéis Dé go raibh a h-anam dílis.

1. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of Northern & Western Regional Assembly held 15th February 2019

Proposed by: Cllr Sean Smith
Seconded by: Cllr Mary Hoade
Resolved:

“That the minutes of the meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 15th February 2019 be adopted.”

2. Matters Arising

- Cllr Connolly stated in relation to the reply from the State Examination Commission regarding exam students who experience extenuating circumstances during their State examination, there was no definite commitment and it is still a concern. Cllr Connolly feels that the Commission avoided clarity in their response to the Assembly.

Cllr McClearn voiced his concern regarding our request that the Minister make a commitment to ensure that regional ERDF funds are administered by the Regional Assembly post 2020. Mr. David Minton responded that the Assembly has commissioned a piece of work on this. Mr Minton also agreed to keep this item on the agenda for the next few months following the elections. Cllr Mc Nelis acknowledged the collaborative approach between the 3 Assemblies and voiced his opinion, including the need for the Assembly to ensure the control of funding was retained by the NWRA.

4. Presentation by Mr Derek McCallan – Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Local Government Association

Mr McCallan gave a comprehensive presentation to the Assembly members on the topic of Local Government in Northern Ireland; Mr McCallan congratulated the Assembly on being a functional Regional Assembly (See Appendix III).

Mr McCallan responded to a number of queries and observations by Members.

In conclusion, Cllr Coyle thanked Mr McCallan for his very interesting presentation and for the offer to the Central Policy Forum in Q4 2019. It was agreed that the Assembly would accept the invitation to the Forum.

5. RSES Update

Mr Denis Kelly gave the members an update on the RSES with specific reference to submissions received during the draft consultation phase (See Appendix IV).

Mr Frank Flanagan gave a presentation on the Joint Draft Retail Strategy for Athlone that has been published by Westmeath County Council and separately by Roscommon County Council. He referenced that a previous submission on the Joint Retail Strategy dated 17th July, 2017 in which it commented on the extent of the retail catchment and the recommendation in the Retail Planning Guidelines for a joint approach from Westmeath, Offaly and Roscommon in formulating a retail strategy for the Midlands. He advised that it is considered that this remains relevant to the proposed Variation and the Assembly should support a subsequent joint approach from the three Councils. In relation to the current proposal he advised that there is uncertainty in relation to the population projection being used, with a wide variation between the lower and upper limits. The Assembly recommended that an addendum be attached to the Variation Report which uses the population target emerging from the RSES process currently at an advanced stage. This target should then be used as the basis for the determination of any additional retail floor space. He recommended that the Assembly support the use of existing floor space to fulfil the requirements for additional retail space in the interests of pursuing compact and brownfield development.

Mr. Flanagan also referenced that the NWRA had collaborated with EMRA, Westmeath County Council and Roscommon County Council Directors of Planning and Senior Planners in respect of the Athlone Regional Centre and had circulated a copy of a working draft for consideration. Members were advised that the weak urban structure in the NWRA was recognized in the NPF as a significant issue to be addressed and accordingly the NWRA approach to these centres and its proposed prominence within the Draft differed somewhat from EMRA's approach. This would not be so apparent but for Athlone being a shared settlement. Members were circulated a copy of the NWRA working draft that had been issued to EMRA and the constituent Councils.

Members thanked Mr Flanagan for his presentation and Cllr Murphy stated that he and other Roscommon councilors fear that Athlone may not be given the same status as Sligo & Letterkenny and acknowledged the approach taken in discussions as outlined.

Connaught Rugby

Cllr Niall McNelis raised the issue of Connacht Rugby and stated that it is a leading example of the resilience and potential of the North West region. The plans to redevelop the Sportsground are a beacon for regional development in the West and North West of Ireland and will enhance the competitiveness of the region from both a business and sporting perspective.

The strategic benefits of the project to the entire region are also fully aligned with the Government's National Planning Framework, Project Ireland 2040, the Border Mid-West Operational Programme 2014-2020 as well as the National Sports Policy, all of which highlight the need for a regional spread of capital investment throughout the country.

Further, this project ensures the long term sustainability of Connacht Rugby and will deliver a fit for purpose facility everyone will be extremely proud of.

Proposed by: Cllr Niall McNelis

Seconded by: Cllr Declan McDonnell

Resolved:

"that the Northern & Western Regional Assembly gives it full and unequivocal support for this project and urges the Government, both local and national, to fully back this important regional development and that a copy of this motion be sent to Mr. Shane Ross T.D. Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport"

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing minutes are confirmed.

Signed: 

Cathaoirleach

Date: 12-04-2017