

**Minutes of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly Meeting held on 17th of September 2021 in
Roscommon County Council Chamber at 11am**

Present:

Cllr. Declan Bree	Cllr. Frank McBrearty	Cllr. Justin Warnock
Cllr. Donal Lyons	Cllr. Donal Gilroy	Cllr. John Caulfield
Cllr. Tim Broderick	Cllr. Enda Stenson	Cllr. Joe Sheridan
Cllr. John Naughten	Cllr. Jimmy McClearn	Cllr. Enda McGloin
Cllr. David Maxwell	Cllr. Declan McDonnell	

Cllr. Christy Hyland **PRESIDED**

Apologies: Cllr. David Collins, Cllr. Michael Crowe, Cllr. Orla Leyden, Cllr. Craig Lovett, Cllr. Patrick McGowan, Cllr. Brian McKenna, Cllr. Niall McNelis, Cllr. Jarlath Munnely, Cllr. Jack Murray, Cllr. Sean Smith.

Mr Brendan McGrath, Chief Executive Galway City Council

Officials: Northern & Western Regional Assembly:

Mr David Minton (Director)
Mr Denis Kelly (Assistant Director & Senior Planner)
Mr Gerry Doyle (Assistant Director)
Mr Conall McGettigan (Senior Executive Planner)
Mr Frank Flanagan (Senior Executive Planner)
Mr John Daly (Economic and Sustainable Development Officer)
Ms Catriona Meehan (Clerical Officer)

1) Adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on the 16th of July 2021 (circulated):

Proposed by: Cllr. Donal Lyons

Seconded by: Cllr. Declan Maxwell

Resolved:

“That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 16th July 2021 be adopted”.

2) Adoption of the Minutes of Special Meeting of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly - Defective Blocks Scheme, Mica held on the 29th of July 2021 (circulated)

Proposed by: Cllr. Donal Lyons

Seconded by: Cllr. Declan Maxwell

Resolved:

“That the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 29th July 2021 be adopted”.

3) Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

4) Planning and Economic Development

a) **Presentation by Anne McHugh, CEO of Donegal ETB on the Regional Further Education and Training sector (Remotely)**

Mr David Minton introduced Ms Anne McHugh to the members. He stated that the ETB network was invaluable to achieving the goals set out in the RSES and to the economic development of the region in general.

Ms Anne McHugh thanked the NWRA for the opportunity to speak to the Assembly and advised that in preparing the presentation she had liaised with the other ETBs for the region. She provided a detailed presentation, in which she highlighted the value of the ETB network in relation to the NDP and the economic recovery plan. Ms McHugh outlined the aims and objectives of the Donegal ETB, as an example. She stated that the primary aim of the ETB was to deliver focussed courses relevant to what is needed in society and industry and to provide a smooth pathway to employment for participants. Ms McHugh highlighted the importance of the ETB network when filling the skills gap in industry. She informed members that the ETB network deals with courses from FETAC Level 1 to Level 6, however she emphasised the ETB also provides assistance to people who have qualifications but want to hone specific skills. Ms McHugh outlined the plan of the ETB to increase the level of apprenticeships and highlighted the importance of creating a centralised apprenticeship network. Ms McHugh stressed the importance of recognising on the job learning and peer learning which may not always result in a qualification but is still very important in industry. She also highlighted the importance of the ETB network to improve the issue of adult literacy. Ms McHugh outlined a number of programmes that are being rolled out and in ending the presentation she thanked the members for their attention and welcomed any questions or comments.

Cllr. Frank McBrearty thanked Ms McHugh and acknowledged the very important role of the ETB network has in the region. He highlighted the importance of keeping our youth in the region adding that the ETB's were key to this. Cllr. McBrearty stated that he hoped the government would improve funding for training initiatives in light of the region's categorization as a lagging and transition region. Cllr. McBrearty asked Ms McHugh whether there was a possibility of the Donegal ETB and LYIT partnering up to complete a study on the Mica issue in the region and also asked whether there had been a study into the extent of the Mica issue in the ETB's own buildings.

Cathaoirleach Christy Hyland complimented Ms McHugh on her presentation and acknowledged the importance of the ETB especially during the economic crash.

Cllr. Declan McDonnell asked Ms McHugh whether she had noticed any reduction in enrolment in courses recently and he referred to the shortage of workers in areas such as hospitality.

Responses

Ms McHugh stated that some of the ETB buildings had been affected by the Mica issue and that they were in contact with their parent Department regarding the issue. She added that the idea of a research exercise around Mica could be looked at. Ms McHugh stated that there has been no drop off in relation to people enrolling in courses. She stated that the recruitment issue in certain areas may have more to do with people changing their profession to try something new. She also stated that people who choose to enrol in a course will lose any social welfare they are receiving which can be a disincentive to enrolment. Ms McHugh thanked the members for their questions and comments and added that the presentation would be circulated to them if they wished.

b) Pre-Draft Public Consultation – Preparation of Sligo County Development Plan 2023-2029

Mr Denis Kelly advised Members that a draft report had been circulated with the Agenda and advised that Conall McGettigan would provide a brief presentation on the report for Members. Mr McGettigan provided a presentation outlining that the plan was at a very early stage and there were no major issues arising at this stage. He highlighted that the new draft planning guidelines had come into effect since the publication of this Issues Paper and that there may be some inconsistencies which Sligo CC could not have envisioned. Mr McGettigan highlighted that the core strategy aligns with the RSES, however he added that the housing supply should significantly increase between 2020 and 2031. Mr McGettigan emphasized

the importance of a Local Transport Plan and a Building heights study. He also stated that there needed to be a long-term plan for large land banks within the Sligo area. Mr McGettigan commented on the high level of consultation with the Assembly in respect of the Variation to the Sligo County Development Plan that was intended to make the County Development Plan consistent with the RSES and the outstanding issues therein.

Cllr. Donal Gilroy acknowledged the work that went into the report even at this early stage. He highlighted that there must be consistency with the Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan, emphasizing that plans must complement each other. Cllr. Gilroy said that it was important to note that there was an imbalance between the daytime and night-time population of Sligo - due to numbers of people commuting into Sligo for work and services versus the number of permanent residents. Cllr. Gilroy stressed that there needs to be a travel plan for the whole county which should include strategic links such as the N15 and N16.

Cllr. Declan Bree thanked the Assembly for the submission, he stated that the key issues had been identified and that the document couldn't be faulted in this early stage.

Cllr. Declan McDonnell highlighted the recommendation to complete a building heights study, he questioned whether there was specific guidance on completing a building heights study in the RSES.

Mr Frank Flanagan confirmed there was no county specific guidance on building height studies but there are specific policy objectives in the RSES providing some parameters.

Proposed: Cllr. Declan Bree

Seconded: Cllr. Donal Gilroy

Resolved

'That the Northern and Western and Regional Assembly agree to the circulated submission, to the Pre-draft Public Consultation – Preparation of Sligo Co. Development Plan 2023-2029.'

c) Public Consultation- Draft Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities Submissions

Denis Kelly advised that a report had been circulated with the Agenda and that Mr Frank Flanagan would provide a brief outline in respect of same. Mr Frank Flanagan then provided an outline of the report on the proposed new guidelines for Planning Authorities. He stated that the guidelines are very specific and detailed. Mr Flanagan specified that the development plan process would become an almost continuous process. There would be a focus on a whole of Council approach. Mr Flanagan highlighted the key changes that the guidelines would bring in.

- The preparation of a plan would increase from 2 to 3 years.
- Issues Papers will be mandatory.
- There should be a Core Draft Strategy.
- Decisions for all areas in the county should be included in the County Development Plans.
- Plans should be developed from regional growth centres out.

Mr Flanagan stated that the Zoning document was very good and easy to follow, which would be a useful tool in the development of plans. He stated that these guidelines would make plans more precise and more accessible with the encouragement of the use of plain English.

Cllr. Donal Gilroy questioned whether the guidelines in respect of the teams were being followed now or is there a date for their adoption. He highlighted the issue with implementing these guidelines if a council was in the middle of their planning process.

Mr Flanagan stated that he was not fully sure if they were but stated that it was good practice to follow them for all plans going forward.

Proposed: Cllr. Declan McDonnell

Seconded: Cllr. Donal Gilroy

Resolved:

“That the Northern and Western and Regional Assembly agree the circulated report and decide to make a submission in accordance with the recommendations/ observations contained therein.”

d) Other Public Body Consultations

i) Pre Budget-Submission on behalf of NWRA

Mr Denis Kelly welcomed and introduced Mr John Daly, he stated that John was a recent recruit but had work extensively with the three regional assemblies previously as the Economist. Mr Kelly said that his expertise will be of great benefit to the region.

Mr John Daly summarized the Pre Budget-Submission, he stated that the submission aimed to highlight 3 key areas.

- **Encapsulate the economic challenges facing the Northern and Western Region.** Mr Daly outlined the Key Economic Challenges facing the region. He discussed the categorization of the region as a ‘Moderate Innovator’ ‘Lagging Region’ and a ‘Region in Transition’. Mr Daly stated that this is due to the below average Public Investment in the Region. He stated that this lack of investment can be seen in the lack of investment in roads, healthcare, education and research in the Region.
- **Outline the regions high level priorities for Budget 2022.** Mr Daly stated that the budget needed to provide a stimulus package to counter the economic impact of Brexit and Covid-19. The budget should support the strategic priorities of the Northern and Western Region. Mr Daly emphasized that the Budget should positively discriminate in favour of the Northern and Western Region due to the categorization as a ‘Lagging Region’ He also stated that the Budget needs to adopt a fully integrated approach to deliver balanced regional development.
- **Highlight the specific regional investment priorities.** Mr Daly broke down the Assemblies priorities under the following headings: Urban Region, Smart Region, Specialised Region, Green Region, Connected Region and People Places.

Mr Daly also highlighted and summarised three other NWRA recent publications. NWRA’s publication titled ‘National Research and Innovation Strategy’ outlines how the Government needs to improve the region’s research and innovation capacity. The ‘Smart Specialisation Strategy’ submission highlights the need for a regional approach that involves regional stakeholders and allows their input into policy and prioritisation which capitalises on the sectoral and sub-sectoral strengths of the region. The final publication that Mr Daly highlighted was ‘The Sustainable Development Goals National Implement Plan 2018-2020’. This submission advocates for participation on the Sustainable Development Goals forum with the view of providing a regional perspective. It also highlighted the issues with delivering the Sustainable Development Goals in the region.

Cllr. Enda McGloin questioned whether the lack of private investment could be improved by offering a tax incentive or tax deductions.

Mr Daly stated that tax did have an effect on investment, but he did not believe it was as important as place making and human capital. He added that there should be a holistic approach to investment.

Proposed: Cllr. Declan Maxwell

Seconded: Cllr. Joe Sheridan

Resolved:

“That the Northern and Western Regional Assembly agree the Pre Budget-Submission, as circulated, on behalf of NWRA”

5) Correspondence

Mr David Minton drew members attention to the response to the Motion that was raised at the Special Meeting of the Assembly in July. The Motion and the Response had been circulated to Members.

6) Any other Business

Mr David Minton informed members that the programme to assist Council’s in applying for EU funds is at an advanced stage of development. He added that an email will be sent to all Elected Members and he hoped they would communicate with their respective Councils in relation of this programme. Mr Minton stated that a contact point within the Assembly would be provided to any Council’s who wanted to avail of the programme.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____

Cathaoirleach

Date: _____