



Northern & Western Regional Assembly

Minutes of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly Meeting
held on 17th of November 2023 at 11am in Roscommon Chamber.

Present:

Cllr. Enda McGloin
Cllr. Brian McKenna
Cllr. Orla Leyden
Cllr. Donal Gilroy
Cllr. Áine Smith

Cllr Patrick McGowan
Cllr. Declan Bree
Cllr. David Collins
Cllr. David Maxwell
Cllr. Donal Lyons

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn
Cllr. Joe Sheridan
Cllr. Christy Hyland
Cllr. Declan McDonnell

Presided: Cllr. John Naughten (Cathaoirleach)

Apologies: Cllr. Tim Broderick, Cllr. Michael Crowe, Cllr. Clifford Kelly, Cllr. Frank McBrearty, Cllr. Jack Murray, Cllr. Enda Stenson, Cllr. John Caulfield, Cllr. Niall McNelis, Cllr. Jarlath Munnelly, Cllr. Justin Warnock, Mr Denis Kelly Director

Officials: Northern & Western Regional Assembly:

Mr. Gerry Doyle (Assistant Director)
Ms. Teresa Hooks (Programme Executive)
Mr. Conall McGettigan (Senior Executive Planner)
Mr. John Daly (Policy Research Officer)
Ms. Catriona Meehan (Staff Officer)

1) **Adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 20th October 2023 (Circulated):**

Proposed by: Cllr. Jimmy McClearn
Seconded by: Cllr. Orla Leyden

And unanimously resolved that:

"That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 20th October be adopted".

2) **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3) **Adoption of the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 27th October 2023 (Circulated):**

Proposed by: Cllr. Patrick McGowan
Seconded by: Cllr. Orla Leyden

And unanimously resolved that:

"That the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 27th October be adopted".

4) **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

5) **Draft Budget 2024 (Appendix 1)**

Mr Gerry Doyle Assistant Director gave a detailed summary of what was included in the Draft Budget for 2024. He drew the attention of Members to a number of items, including:

- While there had been a small increase in staffing numbers this has been offset by increases in funding for EU programmes and projects which covered the cost of these increases in staff numbers.



- There had been 3 retirements in 2023 and the Assembly would be required to fund pensions arising.
- The New National Pay Agreement had not been agreed to date and that this may have an impact on salaries and pensions to be paid in 2024.
- There is a proposed increase the budget for Travel and Training which, given the increase in inflation relating to fuel and accommodation, was warranted.
- The Assembly proposed to redesign its website and the cost of same is included for in the Budget.
- The 3 Assembly's were jointly holding an AIR Training event for Councillors in February and that a NWRA specific event was proposed to be held also next year.
- Provision is made for the cost of technical and other advice regarding options to provide long term accommodation for the Assembly.

Finally, he stated that a 5% increase in the statutory demand was proposed which is lower than the current rate of inflation.

Questions and Comments

Cathaoirleach John Naughten noted the importance of the work done by the Assembly especially in the context of the increasing evidence of the lack of investment in our Region. He added that the Assemblies guidance is key when applying for EU funds.

Cllr. Brian McKenna questioned the increase in staff costing for the coming year.

Mr Gerry Doyle explained that roles created in the ERDF Programme Team would be covered by increases in Technical Assistance budgets recoupable from the EU through the Programme.

Proposed: Cllr. Jimmy McClearn

Seconded: Cllr. David Collins and

Unanimously resolved that:

" The Draft Budget for 2024 circulated to the Meeting is adopted."

6) Planning and Economic Development

a) Proposed Material Contravention of the Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 (Residential Development at Second Sea Road) (circulated) (Slides at Appendix 2)

Mr Connall McGettigan advised that the report had been circulated and gave Members a brief presentation. The Assembly acknowledged Sligo County Council had an ongoing issue with a lack of housing supply in Sligo Town. The Development concerned in this instance was in lands designated as Residential Reserve, however, the lands were adjacent to a number of existing housing developments. He advised that it was being recommended that the Council fully consider the flood risk and environmental impact to ensure it was appropriately aligned with the RSES.

Members noted that the increase in housing will also increase traffic in the area.

Proposed: Cllr Donal Gilroy

Seconded: Cllr Declan Bree and

Unanimously agreed that:

'Members endorse the report and agree that a submission be made relating to the Proposed Material Contravention of the Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 in accordance with the report circulated.'

b) Proposed Material Contravention of Roscommon LAP 2014-2020 (Dermot Early Centre – Roscommon GAA, Ballybaughan, Roscommon Town) (Slides at Appendix 2)

Mr Conall McGettigan advised that the report had been circulated and that there was no major issue with the principle of the development within the context of the RSES. Although in its report, the Assembly had raised several matters, including the need to assess active travel measures to

and from the site as it relates to Roscommon Town centre, as well as the fact the process sought to Materially Contravene a Plan which was significantly out of date (expiry 2020).

Questions and Comments

- Cllr. Orla Leyden raised the question of whether an expired plan could be contravened. She questioned whether there was a planner's report, she stated that she had not been able to get access to the report if there was one. Cllr. Leyden stated that the lack of a Planners report meant there would be a lack of public consultation. She added that she was surprised that the Assembly did not have issues with the Contravention of an expired plan. Cllr. Leyden also questioned the environmental impact of the contravention as it is located near a Turlough. She also added that the development would be part on Council lands which is also an issue. She stated that no consultation had been carried out and that this contravention was bad planning.
- Members strongly supported Cllr Leyden stating that the questions needed to be answered regarding the availability of a Planners report.
- It was stated that the powers of the Councillors were being diminished since the reform of local Government in 2014.
- Members questioned whether the Assembly had seen the Planners Report, adding that the procedures used in this case seemed to be very poor.
- Members questioned the motivation behind the contravention questioning whether this contravention would be passed if it related to a different organisation.
- It was stated that the contravention might not go against the RSES but it is still an issue that needs addressing.
- Members expressed frustration with the OPR, stating that the organisation objects to certain projects without seeing them or proper consideration however other projects are accepted. Other Members stated that the problem was with the Minister of State for Local Government and Planning.

Mr Conall McGettigan confirmed that the Assembly had not seen the Planners Report, and under the Planning Act there was no process which compelled the Local Authority to make the same available for viewing ahead of the decision on the Application.

Proposed: Cllr Orla Leyden

Seconded: Cathaoirleach John Naughten and

Unanimously agreed that:

'Members endorse the report and agree that a submission be made to the Proposed Material Contravention of the Roscommon LAP 2014-2020 in accordance with the report circulated, subject to additional emphasis being given to question the rationale for the council determining this proposal pursuant to the provisions of Section 34(6) of the Planning and Development Act, as the Local Area Plan has expired, and had the planners report been available for inspection the rationale may have been clearer'

c) **Consideration of Draft Roscommon LECP 2023-2029 (Slides at Appendix 2)**

Mr Conall McGettigan advised that a report had been circulated and gave a brief presentation in respect of the plan, advising that the plan was very well presented with very informative graphics. Mr McGettigan said that the LECP followed the guidelines and that the plan was very comprehensive.

Cllr. Orla Leyden complimented the public consultation for the plan stating that she was very impressed with the engagement at community level.

Proposed: Cllr. Orla Leyden

Seconded: Cathaoirleach John Naughten and

Unanimously agreed that:

'Members agreed the submission and statement to be made in respect of the Draft Roscommon LECP 2023-2029'

d) Consideration of Draft Galway City LECP 2023- 209 (Slides at Appendix 2)

Mr Conall McGettigan outlined LECP adding that the plan was satisfactory in general with some small points noted on the submission.

Cllr. Donal Lyons noted that the amended plan had only been circulated by Galway City Council that morning.

Proposed: Cllr. Donal Lyons

Seconded: Cllr. Jimmy McClearn and

Unanimously agreed that:

'Members agreed the submission and statement to be made in respect of the Draft Galway City LECP 2023-2029'

e) Consideration of submission to Joint Carrick-on-Shannon LAP – Pre-Draft Issues Paper.

Mr Conall McGettigan gave a brief overview of the Pre-Draft Issues Paper and he highlighted that delivery of residential units could possibly be one issue. He advised that a report would be prepared and agreed with the Cathaoirleach before being submitted and would be brought to the next Assembly meeting for noting.

f) Pobal HP Deprivation Index Nov 2023 – Analysis presentation by John Daly (Presentation at Appendix 3)

Mr John Daly gave a detailed presentation on the Pobal HP Deprivation Index. He stated that the index clearly showed that counties in our Region were classified as disadvantaged. Mr Daly highlighted the following:

- 20,0000 people in the region classified as disadvantaged.
- Cavan and Monaghan figures have disimproved
- The data can be viewed on a county level but also by electoral division.

Comments and Questions

- Members thanked Mr Daly for the presentation.
- Cllr. Orla Leyden stated that the data was very useful and she enquired whether there was a plan to gather all relevant data from all reports and put it together in a report. She stated that Roscommon had been chosen as pilot for a project hosted by UCD and LEADER stating that there was very important data presented at this workshop. Cllr. Leyden emphasized the importance of using all these data sets to campaign for funding for the Region.
- Cllr. Brian McKenna asked that the presentation be sent to all Members.
- Cllr. David Collins stated that he had used the Pobail Deprivation Index in the past. He asked if there was a contact point for the index where queries could be sent regarding the data etc.
- Cllr. Patrick McGowan stated that the figures were not surprising adding that proximity to Northern Irelands adds to the challenges even if there is supposed to be an 'All Island' approach. He questioned whether there was a way to see if funding allocated had impacted certain areas.
- Cllr. Donal Gilroy questioned how the areas were divided.
- Cllr. Donal Lyons stated the map can be deceiving as it can conceal pockets of poverty.

Responses

Mr John Daly agreed with Cllr. Leyden regarding the use of data to argue for funding and to determine the effectiveness of funding already dispersed in the community. Mr Daly agreed that Donegal and Derry figures are similar. He added that he will examine the possibility of

linking data sets adding this could be very beneficial. Mr Daly added that it would be interesting to integrate these figures with the Regional Development Monitor. Mr Daly confirmed that he will circulate the presentation, his Pobal contact and the method of breaking down the areas on the map.

7) Taoiseachs visit – 8th December in Monaghan

Mr Gerry Doyle stated that there will be an online meeting for all attendees before the meeting.

Cllr. Collins enquired whether the number of delegates allowed had been confirmed.

Cllr. Patrick McGowan suggested that the contents of the Pobal report could form part of the presentation to the Taoiseach.

Mr Doyle stated that the deputation had been agreed at the October meeting.

Mr Daly stated that he will make a presentation and then there will be questions and comments from Members, and he added that there will be a slide or two from the Pobal index and / or the Regional Development Monitor.

8) Study Visit – Denmark

Mr Gerry Doyle stated that the final itinerary had been circulated to the Members attending. He stated that the Irish Ambassador to Denmark would now be meeting the delegation and that it was great that she would be in a position to do so.

Mr Doyle thanked Marie Moriarty stating that she had done a lot of work behind the scenes for this trip. He stated that if there were any issues do not hesitate to contact himself or Marie.

Cathaoirleach John Naughten wished all Members an enjoyable trip stating that there was a great delegation going which will be a good representation of the Region.

9) Proposal to invite MEP's to attend future Assembly meetings on an Annual basis referred to at the Special Meeting held on 27th October.

Proposed: Cllr. Donal Gilroy

Seconded: Cllr. Patrick McGowan and

Unanimously agreed that:

'MEP's will be invited to attend Assembly meetings on an annual basis going forward.'

10) Any other Business

Cllr. Donal Lyons noted the Seanad elections are coming up and he suggested that a delegation present to the Seanad so that they know the important work we do. It was also proposed to raise this at AIR and AILG level also.

Members discussed the powers of Councillors in Local Government noting that a recent report stated that they had very few powers when compared to their European counterparts.

Vote of Sympathy

Proposed: Cathaoirleach John Naughten

Seconded: Cllr. Jimmy McClearn

And Unanimously agreed that:

'A Vote of Sympathy be passed to Cllr Declan McDonnell upon the death of his mother-in-law'



Northern & Western Regional Assembly

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: *John Dwyer* (Cathaoirleach)

Date: 15/12/23