

**Minutes of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly Meeting held on the 19th of January 2024
at 11.00am (Meeting held online)**

Present:

Cllr. Jack Murray	Cllr. Joe Sheridan	Cllr. Justin Warnock
Cllr. Declan Bree	Cllr. Donal Gilroy	Cllr. Declan McDonnell
Cllr. Christy Hyland	Cllr. Orla Leyden	Cllr. Donal Lyons
Cllr. Tim Broderick	Cllr. David Collins	Cllr. Enda McGloin
Cllr. David Maxwell	Cllr. Jimmy McClearn	Cllr. Patrick McGowan
Cllr. Brian McKenna	Cllr. Niall McNeils	Cllr. Jarlath Munnelly
Cllr. Aine Smith	Cllr. Enda Stenson	

Presided: Cllr. John Naughten (Cathaoirleach)

Apologies:

Cllr. Clifford Kelly, Cllr Michael Crowe, Cllr Donal Gilroy, Cllr Frank McBrearty,

Officials: Northern & Western Regional Assembly:

Mr Denis Kelly (Director)
Mr Gerry Doyle (Assistant Director HR/Corporate/External Engagement)
Mr Paddy Austin (Assistant Director ERDF)
Mr Conal McGettigan (Acting Assistant Director/Senior Planner)
Mr Brendan Mooney (Programme Executive)
Ms Tanya Whyte (Acting Senior Executive Planner)
Mr Declan Meehan (Acting Senior Executive Planner)
Ms Eimear Dowd (Regional Development Officer)
Ms Allison Ruane (Assistant Staff Officer)
Ms Claire Callaghan (Clerical Officer)

Cathaoirleach John Naughten welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated that given the prevailing weather warnings that it was considered to be the right thing to do in the interests of the safety of all attendees to hold the meeting online.

1. Adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on the December 15th (Circulated)

Proposed by: Cllr Donal Lyons

Seconded by: Cllr Justin Warnock

And unanimously resolved that:

“the minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Assembly held on December 15th be adopted”.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes. Members were advised by Cllr Smith of the death of Mrs Betty Kelly, wife of Cllr Clifford Kelly.

Proposed by Cllr Smith

Seconded by Cllr Lyons and

unanimously resolved that

“a vote of sympathy be passed to Cllr Kelly and his family on the death of Mrs Betty Kelly”.

3. Directors Update

Staffing

Mr. Denis Kelly Director advised that a number of vacancies had been filled by the Assembly in recent weeks. He confirmed that Mr. Paddy Austin Assistant Director ERDF had just joined the Assembly. He further advised that Declan Meehan, Acting Senior Executive Planner, Ms. Claire Callaghan Clerical Officer and Ms. Alison Ruane Assistant Staff Officer had also joined. Mr Kelly thanked Brendan Mooney who had been Acting Assistant Director ERDF since last May, for his excellent performance of his duties and the expertise he had brought to the role.

The Cathaoirleach on behalf of the Members welcomed all the new staff and complimented Brendan Mooney for leading the ERDF team over the past year.

Association of Irish Region’s Conference (AIR)

Gerry Doyle, Assistant Director, asked that the Members strongly consider attending this year’s AIR Conference to be held on February 7th to 9th in the Woodlands Hotel Adare Co. Limerick. He stated that the Conference would focus on the role of Councillor’s who are Members of Regional Assembly’s and would also include the launch of the ERDF THRIVE Programme by Minister Kieran O Donnell.

In response to a query from Cllr Leyden, Mr Brendan Mooney advised that the THRIVE scheme is targeted at publicly owned vacant or derelict heritage buildings within designated town centres. The scheme he stated promotes the renovation, renewal, and adaptive reuse of such buildings and may possibly include a small element of housing accommodation in limited circumstances. He suggested that a presentation on the scheme could be given at the next Assembly meeting.

4. Planning and Economic Development

a) Submission on Draft Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030

Mr Conall McGettigan reminded Members that a presentation on the Draft Sligo County Development plan had been made at the December meeting and that subsequently a report had been finalised and agreed with the Cathaoirleach in accordance with procedure. The submission was made and the report was for noting.

Proposed: by Cllr Declan Bree

Seconded by Cllr Donal Lyons

And Unanimously agreed that:

‘Members note the report and endorse the Submission to the Draft Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030’

b) Submission on Proposed Variation to the County Donegal Development Plan 2018-2024 in respect of the deletion of Letterkenny-specific policy content.

Mr Conall McGettigan advised Members that the Variation had been mentioned at the December Meeting and the purpose of the proposed Variation was to reflect that the policy framework for Letterkenny is now provided within the Letterkenny Plan and Local Transport Plan 2023 – 2029 and that it supersedes policy provisions within the County Development Plan specific to Letterkenny. He advised that the proposed deletion of the Letterkenny specific content from the County Development Plan 2018-2024 should be welcomed.

Proposed by: Cllr Paddy McGowan

Seconded by Cllr David Maxwell

And Unanimously agreed that:

‘Members note the report and endorse the Submission to the Proposed Variation to the County Donegal Development Plan 2018-2024 in respect of the deletion of Letterkenny-specific policy content.’

c) Consideration of Pre-Draft ‘Strategic Issues Paper’ for the Athlone Joint Area Plan 2023-2030 (Slides at Appendix 1)

Ms Whyte made a presentation on the issues papers for the joint plan, advising that a submission is due by 1st of February 2024. She advised that the Issues Paper reflects the provisions of the RSES and outlined why 16 areas were being proposed for consideration.

Members Questions and Comments

Cathaoirleach John Naughten thanked Ms Whyte for her presentation and commented that it was a comprehensive submission that would benefit the plan making process.

Cllr Brian McKenna asked for clarification on the recommendation regarding a hospital in the plan. Mr Kelly, Director, outlined that the ambition of the RSES was to grow Athlone and that the RSES advocated consideration be given to this infrastructure.

Cllr Jimmy McClearn advised that he was very supportive of the concept of a Hospital in Athlone.

Proposed by Cathaoirleach John Naughton

Seconded by : Cllr Orla Leyden.

And Unanimously agreed that:

‘ Members note the report and endorse the submission to the Pre-Draft ‘Strategic Issues Paper’ for the Athlone Joint Urban Area Plan 2024-2030.’

(d) Consideration of Draft Roscommon Town Local Area Plan 2024-2030 (Slides at Appendix 1)

Ms Tany Whyte advised that the report had been circulated and proceeded to give a detailed presentation on it.

Members questions and comments

Cllr Orla Leyden queried if unzoned lands could be zoned for green belt /community purposes. She stated also that there was no Local Transport Plan for the town even though it had been waited for, for a long time. She also stated that the Draft Roscommon Town plan does not include all the town and that there were some estates on the outskirts that have not been included, including an unfinished housing development. Cllr Leyden asked if it was appropriate to include all built development within the boundaries of the LAP that are included in the CSO "Built Up Area" of Roscommon Town.

Cllr Tim Broderick expressed his concern with the absence of a local transport plan. Cllr Broderick also made reference to the fact that paid parking cannot be justified when there are no transport plans in place.

Responses

Ms Whyte confirmed she will question the land zoning and the use of land for community purposes. Ms Whyte also confirmed she will highlight the fact that there is no transport plan. Ms Whyte also stated that she had noted that some of the residential land and estates are not included in the zoned area and will include this in the NWRA submission.

Mr Denis Kelly acknowledged Cllrs Leydens suggestion as a very good one and that Members could ask that the Council consider zoning 'Un-zoned' or 'White Lands' for particular purposes, such as Agricultural, Community Infrastructure or Green Infrastructure

Mr Conal McGettigan confirmed that it would be appropriate for Members to ask for the LAP to include the CSO "Built UP Area".

Proposed by Cllr Orla Leyden

Seconded by: Cllr Tim Broderick

And unanimously agreed that:

'Members note the report and endorse the submission to the Draft Roscommon Town Local Area Plan 2024-2030, subject to inclusion of the following:

- (i) Zoning 'Un-zoned' or 'White Lands' for particular purposes, such as Agricultural, Community Infrastructure or Green.
- (ii) LAP to include the CSO "Built UP Area"
- (iii) Provision to be made for quality green infrastructure as provided within RPO 3.5 of the RSES.

d) Consideration of Draft Ballina Local Area Plan 2024-2030 (Slides at Appendix 1)

Mr Declan Meehan advised that the report had been circulated and gave a presentation on it.

Proposed by: Cllr Jarlath Munnelly

Seconded by: Cllr Niall McNelis

Unanimously agreed that:

‘Members note the report and endorse the submission to the Draft Ballina Local Area Plan 2024-2030.

e) Consideration of Draft Ministerial Directions on Letterkenny Plan & Local Transport Plan 2023-2029 and Castlebar LAP (Appendix 1)

Mr Conall McGettigan outlined that the Assembly had received notification of the Draft Direction in respect of the Letterkenny LAP and also the Castlebar LAP but had insufficient time to bring a recommendation to Members. He provided some insight into the proposed approach in respect of the Draft Direction for the Letterkenny LAP. Ms Tanya Whyte gave an outline in respect of the emerging position in respect of the Draft Direction for the Castlebar LAP.

Members Questions and comments

Cllr Patrick McGowan expressed his concern that so much work goes into these plans at a local level and that people based in Dublin do not have the local knowledge needed to make decisions on these plans. Cllr Murray agreed with all the points Cllr McGowan brought up regarding the knowledge of the local staff. Cathaoirleach John Naughten invited further questions and when none were forthcoming it was agreed that Mr McGettigan & Ms Whyte could continue with their work on responding to these Ministerial directions along the lines proposed.

f) Submission to National Ports Policy Consultation

Mr Conall McGettigan advised that the submission made had been circulated to Members.

Proposed by: Cllr Donal Lyons

Seconded by: Cllr Declan McDonell

Unanimously agreed that:

‘Members note and endorse the submission’.

5. Correspondence

Mr Gerry Doyle confirmed that a letter was sent to Minister Eamon Ryan's office on 27th of October 2023 requesting a meeting and that he would follow up on this again.

Mr Gerry Doyle circulated a list of dates for the monthly Assembly Meetings for 2024 which he stated can be reviewed when a new Assembly is in place in July.

6. Any other Business

Dates for West SPC agreed for 6th March 2024.

Dates for Border SPC were agreed for 13th February 2024.

Cllr David Collins expressed his concern regarding the town plan for Athenry and the Town Boundaries. His queried as to who defines the boundaries. In response Mr Conal McGettigan explained that there were many factors that influenced the boundaries, Government guidelines, county plans, previous planning, serviceability etc.

Cllr Joe Sheridan asked was there any follow up on the invitation for Eirgrid to attend the Assembly. In response Mr McGettigan confirmed that he had followed up with Eirgrid by email since the last meeting and has had no response and he will follow up with them again.

Cllr McGowan proposed that Members should examine whether the Dehante system of allocating positions to Elected Members in the new Assembly could be agreed in advance of the election. In response and following discussion, Cathaoirleach John Naughten suggested that a separate meeting should be held after the next Assembly meeting to give Members a chance to discuss this matter.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: 

Date 16/02/24

