

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Minutes of the Planning, Environment, Agriculture & Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee meeting held in the Council Chamber on Tuesday 7th July 2020

I LATHAIR:

Baill: Cllr. Michael Connolly, Chairperson
Cllr. P.J Murphy
Cllr. Donagh Killilea
Comh. Daithí Ó’Cualáin
Cllr. Dermot Connolly
Cllr. Shane Curley
Cllr. Michael Maher
Mr. Mark Green
Aodán MacDonncha, Uasal
Ms. Anne Mitchell
Mr. Colm Ryan

Oifigigh: Ms. Eileen Ruane, Director of Services
Ms. Valerie Loughnane, Senior Planner, Planning
Mr. Brendan Dunne, Executive Planner, Planning
Ms. Rita Gately, Veterinary Inspector
Mr. Mike Melody, Senior Executive Engineer, Environment
Ms. Ann Dolan, Executive Scientist, Environment
Ms. Eileen Keaveney, Administrative Officer, Planning

1. Minutes of meeting of Planning, Environment, Agriculture & Emergency Services SPC dated 19th May 2020

On the proposal of Cllr Dermot Connolly and seconded by Comh Daithi Ó’Cualáin the minutes of meeting dated 19th May 2020 were adopted. There were no matters arising.

2. Commencement of the review of the Galway County Development Plan and preparation of new Galway CDP 2022 -2028.

Ms. Loughnane gave an overview of the County Development Plan process and the current stage that the County Plan was at. Ms. Loughnane advised the meeting of the NPF and the RSES and where the County Plan sits in this hierarchy. The Pre-Draft Issues Paper was published on the 18th June 2020 and is on display for 12 weeks in total until the 10th of September 2020. It was considered appropriate to extend the public consultation period with additional four weeks in light of COVID-19. There are also four video clips/recordings that have also been published which are a high-level summary of the issues facing the county. Ms. Loughnane highlighted the key challenges facing the county in terms of infrastructure deficiencies and flooding. In addition, she stated that a number of Urban Frameworks will be prepared for Garraun and Briarhill.

Aodán M.D requested that the Issues Paper would be issued to the SPC members. Ms. Loughnane responded stating that the Issues Paper had been issued to SPC Members and all relevant documentation was available on Galway County Councils website.

Cllr. Murphy raised a number of strategic issues facing the county especially the villages that do not have Municipal Treatment Plants. He stated that the Development Plan must address these villages to allow the growth of these areas to take place in the coming years.

Cllr. M. Connolly enquired as to the process of enquiring about the CDP process and where people should be looking at. Ms. Loughnane again referred to the GCC website.

Cllr. Maher welcomed the publication of the Issues Paper and he again referred to the challenges facing the county, especially east Galway and flooding and the villages that do not have wastewater infrastructure. He stated that we need a mechanism to help these people.

Mark Greene referred to the pressures facing the small villages and commented that a framework should be prepared to address these issues. Mr. Greene advised that the Biodiversity Plan should be taken into account in the preparation of this plan. He also queried in relation to the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan, as to the level of interaction that there will be with Galway City Council and the County Council. Ms. Loughnane advised that there was constant interaction and discussion with the Planning Section in Galway City Council and this will continue throughout the CDP process.

Ms. Loughnane confirmed that a full review of the settlement hierarchy will take place and that rural villages without municipal treatment plants will be examined. She stated that it was important to develop the small towns to appropriate levels and this would be a consideration in the CDP review process.

Cllr. M. Connolly thanked Ms. Loughnane for the presentation and that a lack of investment in our villages and towns were a key issue. There was major investment required to prevent more dereliction from taking place. Where there were no municipal treatment plants there was no determination from Irish Water to fund these new treatment plants. More work should be carried out on reduction of rates in our towns and villages.

Ms. Loughnane thanked the SPC members for the opportunity to give an overview on the Issues Paper and reminded the meeting of the closing date for submissions i.e. 10th of September 2020.

3. Update on River Basin Management Plan

Ms. Dolan outlined the progress with development of Wastewater treatment plants in communities. She said that Craughwell was a priority as there was a major problem with WWTPs in individual estates. Discussions were taken place between Planning & Environment Units but there was no progress due to lack of funding, so other ways must be looked at. She commented that getting plants in place was the easiest part, the

management of them is the difficult part and that where management fees are not being paid management and maintenance becomes a problem. She felt that pressure needs to be put on the Department and Irish Water to provide services.

Ms. Dolan highlighted that the process of drafting the River Basin District Plan for the 3rd cycle had commenced, and a draft document would be ready by the end of December. A review is taking place of the 2nd cycle to see what worked well, and to determine what areas are to be put forward for the next cycle. Ms. Dolan outlined some of the work completed to date e.g. St. Cleran's, Craughwell scheme which she said had been very successful. She also noted that a lot of septic tanks had been surveyed and improvements had been made. She advised that farmers can seek advice from their agricultural adviser in relation to farming practice. She informed the meeting that the EPA will use a technical scientific assessment tool to agree the next area and then a resource assessment would take place in order to proceed with the 3rd cycle. The consultation period for the new plan would be December 2020 to June 2021 and the new plan would be for the period 2022-2027.

She also outlined the process of inspection of septic tanks and the grants available.

Cllr D. Connolly stated that there were rivers in the County for which neither the County Council or the OPW were responsible, and that water quality had deteriorated. He also spoke about the effect of conifer plantations on the environment, and the impact on water quality.

Cllr Murphy commented on the treatment plant in Craughwell which was not functioning properly. He also queried why a private developer was refused Planning permission in Ardahan with a private treatment plant, but a Council scheme was granted.

Aodan Mac Donnacha raised the issue of private treatment plants and said that the management of them should be enforced as a national policy, and that developer should be held responsible.

Cllr Maher stated that there was excellent work being done. He mentioned Loughrea scheme in particular and queried the level of water in the lake now that IW were not going to be extracting water from the lake. He felt that the EPA should be working better with the County Council

Cllr M. Connolly said that treatment plants built to a high standard should be taken over by Irish Water.

Cllr Ó' Cualáin raised the issue of treatment plants in housing estates and whether there were grants for upgrading them.

Ann Dolan responded as follows-

She said that not all treatment plants in Craughwell were giving trouble. With regard to Ardahan, the Council development was recommended for granting as the Council would be fully in control of the treatment plant. She said that the work done in Loughrea where the water was sourced from the lake would not be wasted. She said that Luimnagh plant was one of the best in the country.

4. Update on Waste presentation byelaws working group

Ann Dolan informed the meeting that the Waste presentation byelaws had been adopted by the Council in September 2019. She said that a work plan had been prepared in January 2020 and a period of time had been allocated to waste inspections. However, due to Covid 19 no inspections had been carried out under these byelaws and that she would be looking to progress that. She said the sub-committee of the regional group had met the previous Thursday and that a draft proposal would be rolled out in January 2021.

Cllr D. Connolly spoke of a recent case where a community warden was called out to where dumping had taken place in a bog, and ¾ of the material dumped could have been recycled.

5. Schedule of meetings – to be finalised

Cllr Maher said discussions regarding the County Development Plan should take place at the SPC as they took too long at the Council meetings the last time.

Cllr M. Connolly said as many meetings as necessary would be facilitated as the County Development Plan was so important.

6. AOB

Cllr Killilea raised the issue of unfinished estates in Tuam and said that developers should not be allowed to walk away without fully completing the estate. Cllr Murphy said that such developers should not get permission again. Eileen Ruane advised that this was a matter for the Roads section.

CRIOCHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN