

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ON THURSDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER, 2020 AT 2.30PM.**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Laurence Fallon **PRESIDED**

**MEMBERS:** Cllr D. Kilduff, Cllr M. McDermott, Cllr A. Waldron, Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr L. Callaghan, Cllr I. Connaughton, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr O. Leyden, Cllr J. Murphy, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher and Cllr T. Ward.

**OFFICIALS:** Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive  
Martin Lydon, Director of Services  
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator  
Pio Bymes  
Brian Farragher  
Mary Grier, Senior Planner

**Apologies:** Cllr T. Crosby, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice and Cllr M. Mulligan.

**119.20 TO CONSIDER THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT ON THE PRE DRAFT CONSULTATION PHASE OF THE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Mary Grier, Pio Byrnes and Brian Faragher from the Planning Unit to the meeting to present the Chief Executives report on the Draft Development Plan.

Mr. Martin Lydon informed the members that this is Stage 1 of the Statutory process for the preparation of the County Development Plan 2021-2027 where the Chief Executives Report on the Pre-Draft Consultation is presented to the members for consideration. In accordance with S11(4)(d) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, and following consideration of the Report, the Elected Members may issue directions to the Chief Executive regarding the preparation of the Draft Development Plan. No policies or objectives have been set yet. Further meetings will be held with the Elected Members in January 2021 regarding progress on the Plan.

Mr. Pio Byrnes from the Planning Department delivered a presentation on the context of the County Development Plan and work to date:

- The issues paper and associated public consultation period for Stage 1 commenced on 27th March 2020 and ended on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020.
- The themes for the issues paper included the vision for Roscommon, core strategy and settlement policy, people places and housing, towns and villages, rural development and natural resources, economic development, infrastructure, climate action, energy and environment, built and natural heritage and social, community and cultural development.
- A number of new initiatives for public consultation were developed including new branding of the Plan, with a dedicated website and social media presence, an online video, facilitation of online submissions and surveys, school's activity packs, art competition, webinars with town teams and drop in consultation events.
- 88 submissions received, 203 online surveys completed, 245 engagements of school pack, 4000 hits on website
- The Chief Executive's Report included the following as required under the statutory process:

- List and details of submissions received including summary of submissions and give an opinion on the issues raised taking account of the proper planning and sustainable development
- Recommendations are based on National Policy (NPF), Regional Policy (RSES) and submissions received
- Office of Planning Regulator (OPR) highlights a number of key areas to be addressed:
  - Population growth to be concentrated in Athlone & Roscommon Town
  - Follow national policy on population growth
  - Specific policies on measures to encourage infill/brownfill development in towns
  - Coordinate economic development and employment with population growth
  - Rural housing policies consistent with national policy
  - Promotion of renewable energy sources
  - Promotion of sustainable settlement and transport strategies with measures to adapt to climate change,
- Headline Issues include:
  - Reduction in Local Area Plans with LAP's for Roscommon and Boyle and the Monksland/Bealnamullia plan incorporated in the joint plan for Athlone
  - New Zoning approach with mixed use zoning which allows a more flexible approach to future development moving away from zoning with single or limited uses
  - Housing policies for rural housing must be consistent with National Policy Objective 19 i.e. to ensure that a distinction is made between catchments and centres of employment and elsewhere and the facilitation of rural housing in specific circumstances.
- Development of SMART towns and villages

The Cathaoirleach referenced the submission from the OPR and the need to be in compliance with regulations. The significant changes to the new plan is the designation of Athlone and Roscommon town as centres of population growth and out plan must take this into account. He also commented on the uncertainty that the Covid 19 pandemic has created and welcomed the idea of sustainability of out rural areas towns and villages that the proposed change in zoning will generate.

The members welcomed the presentation and thanked the Planning Section for the work done to date and discussed as follows:

- Rural housing developments will be a big issue to be dealt with and we have to ensure that areas of the county do not suffer depopulation.
- We will have to plan for more space for our people to live as a direct result of the pandemic.
- Welcome the plan for Athlone as a designated growth centre – this is a cornerstone of the plan.
- While the South of the County will benefit from Athlone's designation, a similar designation town in the North of the county needs to be defined such as Sligo town.
- The old road from Strokestown could be linked to Sliabh Bawn and Rathcroghan
- Can the Council work with Leitrim County Council to develop a joint plan for Carrick on Shannon?
- There are huge opportunities in the development of tourism, public realms and parks
- Welcome the SMART concept for towns and villages
- Need to address urban depopulation with a plan for refurbishment of older rural houses and to take advantage of increased remote working
- When will the Joint Urban Area Plan with Athlone be complete and will it run concurrently with the progress of the Development Plan?

- What is the timeline for the completion of the Plan?
- Welcome the flexibility in zoning but rural housing needs flexibility too.
- The development of greenways and cycleways should be a priority in north Roscommon
- Increased emphasis on developing our heritage to appreciate what is on our doorstep and people have more awareness of local amenities
- We need to incorporate and foster an Age Friendly Society initiatives.
- Need to promote and define Roscommon as a place to live and work.
- Focus on climate change and agriculture
- Take into account the broadband need and more consultation with locals where masts are to be provided
- Need to incorporate the needs of people with disabilities – 9,300 people in our county have been designated as having some form of a disability.
- Welcome the new consultation methods to engage the public utilised by the Planning Section in preparing the Draft Plan
- What will the changes in zoning mean and when will submissions be invited on this matter?
- Welcome collaboration with GRETB to promote educational needs of the county
- What is intended by the review of housing for all settlements in the plan and the alignment or position of rural housing in the hierarchy mentioned
- Inclusion of UN17 sustainable development goals be included in all aspects of the plan
- Inclusion of establishment of energy management plans for towns and villages that will be aligned to our climate goals
- Opportunity for sustainable living in rural areas
- Currently 5,000 vacant properties in Roscommon, but huge demand for these units due to Covid and this demand is from people outside the county
- Need new house in county Roscommon but a developer cannot build in most areas
- In favour of low density houses adjacent to villages – need development levies to be reduced but need high density housing for centre of villages for sustainability.
- Need to address unfinished estates in towns and villages
- Plans for towns and villages should be advanced so they are ready for any funding opportunities that may arise.
- In the context of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency declared by the members 18 months ago, biodiversity must be included in all aspects of climate considerations in the plan as they go hand in hand.

Mr. Lydon responded to queries raised and stated that function of the Plan is to create the environment for development to take place:

- The population allocation of 7,000 is very generous for the county and it will be an achievement to meet this.
- Roscommon has one of the lowest population densities in the country and there has been engagement with the OPR regarding the characteristics of the county.
- The joint urban plan for Athlone is progressing as the economic and development plan commenced followed by the traffic assessment work. It is expected this will be substantially progressed as we move to finalising the Co. Development plan.
- The timeline for the completion of the Development Plan will depend on the members, policies put forward, material amendments and further consultation but currently projected to be complete in

March 2022. The LAP's will be complete before the plan is adopted and zoning in other areas in late 2021

- The proposed changes in zoning on the basis of a matrix will be discussed further with the members in January 2021.
- The housing needs assessment will be carried out to provide an evidence based approach for housing needs to meet the national statutory guidelines
- UN17 Sustainable Development Goals are already included as part of the RSES.
- The Development Plan process was delayed 8 weeks due to Covid.
- The settlement hierarchy will be included in more detail but we must be mindful of national policy regarding rural housing.
- There will be engagement with Leitrim County Council for complete a joint plan for Carrick on Shannon.
- Climate change considerations will be a theme running all through the Plan.

The Chief Executive thanked the members for their attendance and views on the report and it is important that they have informed understanding of the process. He assured the members that all of their views will be considered in preparing the plan. He thanked the Planning department for their work in relation to the consultation and engagement and welcomed the thoughtful and excellent submissions received from the public. He emphasised the importance of climate change and sustainability considerations throughout the plan including green energy and the resources that will be applied to energy audits going forward.


On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Shanagher

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Cummins

It was **AGREED** that in accordance with S11(4)(d) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), that the Chief Executive proceed to prepare the Draft County Development Plan for County Roscommon 2021-2027

**This concluded the business of the Special Meeting.**

**The foregoing Minutes are Confirmed and Signed:**



Meetings Administrator



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Cathaoirleach



Countersigned