

**Minutes of Meeting of Planning & Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 10.00a.m. via zoom from Planning Meeting Room, Civic Offices, Nenagh.**

**Present:** In the Chair - Cllr. Phyll Bugler  
**Councillors –** Via zoom - Michael O’Meara, Joe Hannigan, John Carroll, Roger Kennedy, Michael Fitzgerald, Ger Darcy, Marie Murphy. John O’Shaughnessy, Patti O’Neill.

**In Attendance:** Eamon Lonergan, Acting Director of Services via zoom  
Brian Beck, Acting Director of Services via zoom  
Nuala O’Connell, Acting Senior Planner via zoom  
Dave Carroll, Chief Fire Officer via zoom  
Marie Ryan, Senior Executive Planner via zoom  
Anne Marie Devaney, Acting Senior Executive Planner via zoom  
Clare Lee, Executive Planner via zoom  
Clifford Guest, M.R.D., M.Sc, Limerick Institute of Technology via zoom  
Brian Clancy, Administrative Officer

**Apologies:** Mike Edwards

**1. Minutes of last meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021 were proposed by Cllr. M. Fitzgerald, seconded by Cllr. G. Darcy and adopted.

**2. Presentation on Sustainable Development Goals**

Clifford Guest, Limerick Institute of Technology gave a presentation to the meeting on Sustainable Development and the UN Sustainable Development Goals and replied to queries raised. The principal points were as follows:

**Part 1**

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – The Basics

- 17 interlinked goals designed to be a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all”
- The SDGs were agreed in 2015 by the UN General Assembly
- They are to be achieved by 2030
- Signed off by 193 countries

The 17 SDGs are:

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-being

4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace and Justice Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the goals

Each goal is important in itself and they are all connected.

SDG Champions 2019-2020 include An Post, BIM, Carlow Co. Council, ECO UNESCO, GAA, ICTU, USI, National Women’s Council of Ireland, Irish Men’s Sheds Association, Musgrave, Smart Farming, Student Switch Off and Vodafone. Examples include the Green Club Programme which is a partnership between the GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association and local authorities which develops a Green Club Toolkit structured around energy, water, waste, biodiversity, travel and transport. Another example is Smart Farming which covers the areas of soil fertility, energy, grassland, water, feed, inputs and waste, machinery and time management.

Issues in relation to Irish Water, smart farming including extended grazing, solar panels, group water schemes, endangered species, conservation, biodiversity, community buy-in and SDGs regarding Clár were raised by the members and discussed. Eamon Lonergan welcomed Clifford and thanked him for the presentation and emphasised the need for a partnership approach to this issue. Clifford stated that Thurles has been chosen as a Sustainable Development and Research Institute. Nuala O’Connell stated that SDGs will be examined in the preparation of the County Development Plan with a view to demonstrating their practical implementation. Cllr. M. Fitzgerald requested that Clifford’s presentation be brought to the full Council through the Corporate Policy Group.

## **Part 2**

Two important definitions:

### **Sustainable Development**

“A managed process of continuous innovation and systemic change in the direction of sustainability”

### **Sustainability**

“A set of conditions and trends in a given system that can continue indefinitely.”

Human Population growth is a challenge and there are worsening trends in the damming of rivers, water use and fertiliser consumption but there have also been improvements in the areas of science, harvest (cereal yield), literacy and democracy. There is a need to look beyond cheap fossil fuels towards green technology. The Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development published in 1987 known as the Brundtland Report popularised the term Sustainable Development and recognised that Global Development had become unsustainable. The Rio Earth Summit 1992 set eight Millennium Development Goals and there was a World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002 and the Summit was again held in Rio in 2012. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals were set in 2015.

At local level LIT Tipperary has a strong track record and commitment to Sustainable Development. Thurles Campus is home to the LIT Development Unit and will be the base for a new Technological University "Sustainable Development Research Institute" offering degrees in Environmental Science and Community Development, Sustainable Energy and was a founding partner of the Tipperary Energy Agency. Clonmel and Thurles are set to become university towns after the merger of Limerick and Athlone ITs. Technological University status will be transformational for Tipperary.

In response to Cllr. J. Hannigan Clifford Guest stated that LIT Thurles already had strong links with sport through the modern sports centre on site and was willing to talk to local GAA Clubs. Replying to Cllr. P. Bugler Clifford stated that world population growth projections had shown that it is likely to peak at 10 billion and reduce from around 2050 and there is a need to move towards smarter industrial output. Cllr. G. Darcy conveyed congratulations on achieving university status. Cllr. P. Bugler thanked Clifford for the presentation.

### **3. Update on Department Circular re Residential Densities in Towns and Villages**

Nuala O'Connell, Acting Senior Planner gave a brief overview of the recent Circular issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on Residential Densities in Towns and Villages, as set out in Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Development in Urban Areas (2009). The purpose of this Circular is to provide clarity in relation to the interpretation and application of current statutory guidelines in advance of issuing updated Section 28 guidelines that will address sustainable residential development in urban areas, later in 2021. It is considered important to address this matter in the context of both the need for significantly increased and more sustainable housing supply throughout Ireland, and national recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Discretion may be applied in the assessment of residential density at the periphery of larger towns, with net residential densities below 35 dwellings per hectare permissible in certain cases. Accordingly, 'minimum' densities should not be equated with 35 dwellings in all contexts, and may be lower than that figure. Nuala stated that the Council will be advising agents about this and will keep the SPC updated. She clarified that the Circular doesn't affect the County Development Plan

timeframes and the draft Plan will be circulated to the Elected Members in the coming week. There won't be a zoning framework included for the larger towns, it will just be allowed in principle. There will be separate Settlement Plans for Ballina, Newport and Fethard. Issues in relation to passive houses, clusters and the government policy document 'Our Rural Future' were discussed. Nuala stated that the overriding principle in relation to Rural Housing in the draft Plan will be strengthening our rural communities. The policy will support the construction of passive houses in appropriate rural settings. A marketing campaign will be prepared in relation to Cluster developments which will include leaflets, publicity and establishing a register of people interested in serviced sites. The public consultation period of the draft Plan which will be for a minimum of 10 weeks will provide an opportunity to market these initiatives. The Kilsheelan project has secured finance and will be a model for serviced site developments across the county. Finance generated will be used to support other similar projects. Eamon Lonergan stated that pre-planning consultation had recently taken place in relation to another Cluster proposal and the Kilsheelan pilot will be a good selling point. John O'Shaughnessy welcomed the Circular on densities and stated that the current densities were not viable commercially for builders.

Eamon Lonergan stated that the Draft County Development Plan will be launched at the end of May and four workshops will be held in June with the Elected Members to consider it as it will be a large and complex document.

#### **4. Date of next meeting/Any other business**

Members were advised the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021.

This concluded the business of the meeting.