

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY BUILDINGS, WICKLOW ON MONDAY 15th OCTOBER 2018, COMMENCING 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

COUNCILLOR P. VANCE, CATHAOIRLEACH, COUNCILLORS: J. BEHAN, V. BLAKE, S. BOURKE, T. CULLEN, S. CULLEN, G. DUNNE, T. FORTUNE, C. FOX, M. KAVANAGH, P. KENNEDY, S. MATTHEWS, M. MCDONALD, G. MCLOUGHLIN, D. MITCHELL, O.O'BRIEN, D. O'BRIEN, G. O'NEILL, J. RUTTLE, J. RYAN, J. SNELL, E. TIMMINS, G. WALSH, J. WHITMORE AND I. WINTERS.

APOLOGIES:

COUNCILLORS: T. ANNESLEY, P. DORAN, P. FITZGERALD, N. LAWLESS, M. MURPHY, D. NOLAN AND B. THORNHILL.

IN ATTENDANCE:

**MR. F. CURRAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
MR. S. QUIRKE, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MS. S. WALSH, SENIOR PLANNER
MR. T. MURPHY, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MS. L. GALLAGHER, MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR
MS. C. FLOOD, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MS. T. O BRIEN, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MS. B. HARVEY, EXECUTIVE PLANNER
MS. G. LANG, ASSISTANT STAFF OFFICER**

**DEPUTY PAT CASEY
DEPUTY JOHN BRADE**

Item 1

To discuss the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

Contextual Information circulated:

Elected members were circulated by email on the 12th of October, 2018 with the following contextual information:-

The Regional Assembly is in the process of preparing a new draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). The draft RSES has been prepared having regard to the National Planning Framework and will when adopted be one of the suite of higher level strategies and policy documents that will inform the preparation of future county development plans and local area plans. When adopted the RSES will form the framework for the spatial and economic development of the eastern and midland region of which Wicklow is part. The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly is comprised of 38 members nominated by the 12 constituent local authorities. The Wicklow representatives on the regional assembly are Cllr Pat Vance, Cllr Irene Winters, Cllr Derek Mitchell and Cllr Tommy Cullen.

The Director of the regional assembly has this week issued a proposed draft RSES for the consideration of the members of the Regional Authority. This proposed draft RSES has not been published as it is currently a proposal. It will only become the draft RSES if and when it is adopted

as such by the members of the regional assembly. The regional assembly is meeting on Friday 19th October 2018 to consider adopting the draft RSES.

The Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council has convened a special meeting on Monday 15th October 2018 in order to advise members of the Council of the key issues set out in the proposed draft RSES and to give them an opportunity to express their views regarding the proposed draft in advance of the regional assembly meeting next Friday.

End

The Cathaoirleach advised of the subject matter of the meeting which was to discuss the draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and that while there was no document currently available for circulation to all of the Elected Members (outside of the Members of the Regional Assembly) he considered it important that the special meeting go ahead having regard to the fact that the Members of the Regional Assembly would be meeting the following Friday and that prior to considering public consultation of the document, he considered it important to get the views of all of the elected members.

The Cathaoirleach advised that the draft document was some 200 pages in length and that he had identified what he considered to be the important issues to highlight them to the Elected Members following which he would open the discussion up to the floor and that he and the other Mid East Regional Assembly Members, Cllrs. T. Cullen, I Winters and D. Mitchell would endeavour to give as much information as possible to the members and respond to question they might have.

He highlighted the following issues:-

- NPF launched in February 2017
- Presentation to the elected members at WCC meeting in March, 2017
- Submissions were invited - WCC made a submission on 31st March, 2017
- NPF published February 2018
- Key elements: 50% of all new population and employment in the 5 cities as defined by the CDO (Census District Office); 40% of all new housing in the built up parts of cities, towns, villages and brownfield sites; 50% in cities and 30% in other towns.
- Eastern and Midlands Regional – Population growth proposed at between 490,000 and 540,000
- Employment growth: plus 320,000
- National Planning Roadmap published in July, represents a significant element of the planning process as it contains the population figures for the County.
- This is the key element of the NPF and is what most people are focusing on which speaks about a population of 155,000 - 157,000 in 2026 and 160,000 - 164,000 in 2031.
- This conflicts with the Wicklow County Development which speaks about a population growth of 178,000 and 185,000 by 2031.
- The Amended Planning Act, August, 2018 requires that within 26 weeks of the adoption of the RSES the County Development Plan must be varied or reviewed to incorporate the NPF and RSES.

The Cathaoirleach outlined the make up of the Regional Assembly in that it is a 37 member group, which meets once a month in City Hall, Dublin. During the consultation process there were a number of working groups, 11 sessions between January and June 2018, as well as a number of area meetings. He advised that a working draft of the RSES was produced in 2018 and Members had a number of queries around population growth in the metropolitan area, how the figures were arrived at, were they CSO or ERSI derived; there was a lot of information requested and Departmental officials addressed the meeting and clarified quite significantly a lot of the questions that were asked at that time.

The Cathaoirleach advised of the following points in relation to the issue:-

- The Wicklow County Development Plan provided for the building of 35,000 housing units up to 2031
- The recommendation of the NPF provides for 25,000
- This represents a reduction of 10,000 which would require land rezoning and which caused a lot of consternation.
- Wicklow and other Counties suffering the same figures carried out a strong campaign to have this addressed and made a case that if Bray is to be in the Metropolitan Area then the figures for the growth in the Bray Area should be contained in the Metropolitan Area.
- As Bray, Maynooth and Swords are identified as growth towns a significant amount of infrastructural development, and planning will be channelled towards those three towns.
- Wicklow Town on the other hand, despite having huge infrastructural investment was only going to be allowed to grow to 17,000 whereas the County Development plan had provided for a growth of 25,000 which meant that depending on household sizes up to 8,000 units would have to be reduced in Wicklow Town.
- Following discussion it was confirmed that all housing growth in Bray is to come out of the Dublin City target rather than the County Wicklow target i.e. 7,000
- Concern was also expressed in relation to Arklow's designation in the Regional Plan having regard to the fact that while there is a deficiency in infrastructure presently, the waste water treatment plant will be delivered within a couple of years and it would be desirable that Arklow be allowed to grow also.
- Small towns (<5,000 but >1,500) also mentioned are Newtown, Baltinglass, Enniskerry, Kilcoole and Rathdrum
- The settlements (<1,500) of Ashford, Aughrim, Carnew, Dunlavin, Tinahely, Avoca, Donard, Kilmacanogue, Newcastle, Roundwood and Shilleagh
- While there is a lot of interest in rural areas and rural housing, these aspects do not feature as they will be addressed in the County Development Plan.

The Cathaoirleach advised of infrastructural deficiencies:-

- The only road scheme listed for Wicklow is the M11 from Junction 4 to Kilmacanogue and the Council should be seeking that this be extended to Coyne's cross
- There is no mention of the strategic Dublin to Rosslare Corridor (Euro Route 01), seems to have been taken out and one other remaining, described as 'an economic corridor', Dublin to Belfast. This is important having regard to Brexit.
- No mention of the N81
- No inclusion of any significant regional road schemes in Wicklow.
- Reference made to the continuation of DART services to Greystones, but no mention of improved rail services.
- There is reference to a new park and ride in Greystones, but no mention of the existing park and ride.

The Cathaoirleach referenced the following issues which he said required discussion:-

- Planning permissions that have already been granted and the counting of these permissions in the overall figures
- The Film Industry doesn't appear to get a mention; Wicklow should make a strong case for the development of a film cluster between Ashford and Bray. The down grading of the film industry in County Wicklow has been fought extremely hard
- There is little mention about offshore wind energy and while greenways are mentioned there is no mention in Wicklow.
- The Fassaroe Development is referred to as medium term, Bray Members would not agree with this and require it as phase 1 with 50% of the housing development going into phase 1.

The Cathaoirleach concluded by advising that this matter will be discussed on Friday next, when the committee will either decide or not decide to let the document go out to public consultation. In

that time he advised that he will bring it to the Wicklow County Council Executive to go through it line by line with a view to making a submission in relation to County Wicklow. He opened the discussion out to the floor.

Elected Members made the following contributions, expressed the following views:-

- View expressed that the process has been handled poorly and that elected members have been kept in the dark.
- Concern expressed in relation to the difference in population targets in the NPF and the Wicklow County Development Plan.
- Imperative that the Elected Members on the Regional Assembly would insist that no de-zoning take place and that this be 'stitched' into the text.
- Will the document require the Council to reopen the County Development Plan Process?
- Concern expressed in relation to the impact on one-off housing and the direction policy seems to be taking in this regard and that the only document that should be relevant in relation to one-off housing is the County Development Plan.
- Difficult to present findings in the absence of any documentation
- In a time of a national housing crisis, more houses are required, not less houses, dezoning should be resisted.
- No mention of the N81 and no mention of the Blessington Greenway described as disturbing
- Concern expressed in relation to the lack of information available to the Elected Members
- The concept of increasing the population into central Dublin described as a worthy process
- Dezoning/reduction of 10,000 units for County Wicklow makes no sense in a serious housing crisis and change in figures welcomed.
- Described as nonsensical not to provide units in Wicklow Town where huge sums of money has been invested in putting in essential infrastructure such as roads and sewage treatment.
- View expressed that infrastructure to support the growth of Greystones has not been provided.
- View expressed that recent changes to the railway system have provided a worse service to Greystones and Wicklow and that the service needs to be improved.
- Clarity requested as to how the current document differs from the previous one
- Query as to when the elected members will get a copy of the draft plan
- Can population figures be changed after the plan goes on public display?
- Will the plan go before the Dail to be ratified or will it come back to the local authorities?
- The mirroring of the figures in the Plan to the County Development Plan viewed as key.
- Concern expressed as to the future of rural planning and that the document could be used to overrule the Council's County Development Plan.
- Lack of mention of the N81 viewed as disappointing
- Breakdown of the membership of the 37 representatives on the Regional Assembly requested.
- Reference made to childcare in Wicklow being the second highest in the state and how can this be addressed in the document?
- Reference made to the number of people living in County Wicklow and leaving the county to work and the severe gridlock on the N11, view expressed that the lack of investment in public transport is not helping.
- View expressed that there is not enough reference to climate change within the document.
- Concern expressed at the lack of transparency
- View expressed that there should be more emphasis on film industry, greenway and off shore wind and the IDA lands at Greystones
- Reference made to commuters from Gorey and Arklow to Dublin and that more needs to be done to relocate business to County Wicklow and Arklow.
- What impact will the plan have on the Municipal District of Greystones?
- Clarification sought as to the rationale behind suggesting a growth figure of 17,000 for Wicklow Town when there is a projected figure of 25,000 in the County Development Plan and considering the investment on infrastructure around Wicklow Town, this does not make sense
- How will the reduction figure be reached without dezoning land?
- Query as to what will the effect be on Arklow with a proposed new €30m sewage treatment plant
- What will the effects be on towns such as Rathdrum

- How will the shortfall be addressed in terms of funding

At the conclusion of the discussion the Cathaoirleach advised of the process to date and the input of the Regional Assembly Elected Members. He thanked the officials of the Planning Department for their assistance in terms or provided information and figures.

Ms. S. Walsh Senior Planner provided the Elected Members with a background to the National Planning Framework and the requirements once the Regional Plan comes into being. She also provided the members with clarity around the population targets and other issues raised by them.

Mr. F. Curran Chief Executive thanked the Cathaoirleach and the Elected Members who had directly influenced change in the population figures. He outlined again the main issues for County Wicklow in terms of no dezoning, the N81, the development of Fassaroe, the film industry and the Blessington Greenway. He also mentioned the Belfast to Rosslare Route and how it would impact Wicklow as well as an improved rail service. The meeting then concluded.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING

CLLR. PAT VANCE
CATHOIRLEACH
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

MS. LORRAINE GALLAGHER
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER/
MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR

DATE _____