

Planning, Development and Environment Strategic Policy Committee

Minutes of meeting held on 1st March 2022

Via Zoom

Present:

Cllr. Edward Timmins; Cllr. Shay Cullen; Tessa Stewart; Jim Wood; Conor McCarthy; Cllr. Sylvester Burke

Apologies:

Cllr. Erika Doyle, Cllr. Patsy Glennon, Michael Byrne

In attendance (WCC):

Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services; Marc Devereux, Senior Engineer; Christine Flood, Senior Executive Officer; Jackie Carroll, Senior Executive Officer; Sorcha Walsh, Senior Planner; Merlin Ovington, Administrative Officer; Ciara Ruane, Assistant Staff Officer

Item 1 Adoption of minutes of meeting held on 7th December 2021 and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th December 2021 were proposed by Cllr. Shay Cullen and seconded by Cllr. Gerry O'Neill

Item 2 Receive presentation on Town Centre First Policy

The members received a comprehensive presentation on the Town Centre First Policy, which aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the business, service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.

It was noted that the policy is an enabling framework that will co-ordinate actions across Government, Local Authorities and key stakeholders to support towns to identify, develop and progress their own unique town centre revitalisation plans which incorporate best-practice with regard to place-making.

It is a new way to approach town regeneration and it is important to note that there is a strong interrelationship between the content of a TCF plan and the relevant statutory plans.

A dedicated Town Regeneration Officer will be appointed to assist in policy delivery and implementation of the TCF actions and to coordinate stakeholder engagement at a national level.

The policy supports the establishment of Town Teams where they do not exist and develop a skill building programme to increase the capacity and capability of Town Teams. The members were also updated on the current review of the Town Teams currently operating in Co. Wicklow.

A brief discussion ensued, with some concern expressed by members regarding the role of the Town Teams and the perceived erosion of the role of the Elected Member. The members were advised that the Town Teams and the Elected Members work together collaboratively.

The review will assist in identifying where there are issues and inconsistencies throughout and will also set out clear Terms of Reference.

It was noted that there will be one Town Regeneration Officer per local authority and the Council awaits further clarification on the new post.

Overall, the policy was welcomed as a positive initiative for towns in the County.

Item 3 Planning and Development

Development Management – Update on Maritime Area Planning Act 2021

The members received a comprehensive presentation on the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021. The new planning system will operate in the maritime area that will extend from the high water mark to the outer limit of Ireland's continental shelf and include the territorial seas and the Exclusive Economic Zone.

Regarding Development Management the consenting regime established in the Act comprises three distinct elements:

- Maritime Area Consent (The MAC) sets the terms of occupation of the maritime area, including rehabilitation obligations;
- governs the relationship between the MARA and the holder and acts as the gateway into the planning permission process. Failure to secure planning permission will terminate the MAC automatically.
- Licencing: specified maritime usages will be subject to a licencing regime and will not require a MAC or planning permission. Any activity that attracts an Environmental Impact Assessment requirement will not be licensable and will be subject to planning permission.
- The terrestrial planning permission regime, augmented with marine specific considerations, will be extended to the entire maritime area.
- It is within this process that specific projects will be examined in detail including Environmental Impact Assessments and Appropriate Assessments.
- Local authorities will examine all other applications within their own designated "nearshore area" extending a maximum of 3 nautical miles from the shore
- An Bord Pleanála will examine applications for specified infrastructural, all far off-shore (i.e. outside three nautical miles) projects and those which cross more than one local authority nearshore area

The Coastal Planning Authority will accept planning applications for works in the Near Shore area (3 nautical miles).

It was noted that, whilst the Act has been signed into law by the President, regulations will have to be made by the Minister to commence same.

A brief discussion ensued, with commentary on the need for this legislation due to the proposed Wind Farms and concerns re the Marine Protected Areas expressed. The PPN has been active in this area.

The serious resource implications for Planning staff were discussed also in this regard and in light of the other legislation in the Planning area.

- **Forward Planning – Update on Co. Development Plan 2022-2027**

The Members were updated on the current status of the draft Co. Development Plan 2022-2027. Over 300 submissions were received and CE report has issued to the members. It was noted that the submissions are more complex and much more substantial than previous.

The draft plan will be considered by the members at special meeting to be held commencing 28th March 2022. Proposals from members were accepted to 28th February and maps are being prepared to incorporate these proposals and these will be recirculated to the members.

There are statutory timelines for review and adoption of the plan and it is assumed that the plan will be adopted in July (depending on the outcomes of the Special meeting)

New guidelines are due to be published and regarding serviced zoned land, this must comply with the population targets.

Item 4 Review of Burial Ground Policy

A presentation on the proposed review of Burial Ground Policy in the County was given to the members.

