

Minutes of the Planning Strategic Policy Committee held on Friday, 12th October 2018 in The Hub, Castlereagh.

Present

Members

Cllr. Paschal Fitzmaurice, Chairperson,
Cllr. John Cummins,
Cllrs. Rachel Doherty,
Cllr. Michael Mulligan,
Cllr. John Naughten,
Cllr. Ivan Connaughton,
Cllr. Patrick Kilduff,
Cllr. Valerie Byrne
Mr. Albert Looby, Business/Commercial Sector

Officials

Martin Lydon, Director of Housing, Planning, ICT, Roscommon M.D., Special Projects & Head of Finance.
Mary Grier, Senior Planner
Mary Dolan, Administrative Officer

Apologies

Cllr. Tony Ward

Prior to the business of the meeting Cllr. Paschal Fitzmaurice paid tribute to Mr. John Roche, Community/Voluntary Sector representative who passed away on the 19th August, 2018. A minute's silence was held in his memory. It was agreed that a message of sympathy would be sent to Mr. Roche's family.

08.18 Minutes of Meeting of 8th March, 2018

The Minutes of the Meeting of the 8th March, 2018 were proposed by Cllr. John Cummins and seconded by Cllr. Rachel Doherty.

09.18 Matters Arising.

The meeting was informed that a seminar on the new County Roscommon Rural Design Guidelines would be held for Members on the 19th November, 2018 and a seminar for Agents would be held on the 20th November, 2018.

10.18 Planning and Development (Amendment) Act, 2018

Mary Grier, Senior Planner gave a presentation in regard to The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act, 2018 which was signed into law on the 19th July, 2018 and a handout summarising the main provisions of the new legislation was circulated, which included a summary of both the

Sections commenced on enactment and the Sections which will be enacted following the signing of Commencement Orders.

The following issues were raised in regard to the not yet commenced Section 8 and to planning exemptions for forest entrances on public roads:

- Was the Council asked for its opinion?
- Does the exemption apply to private afforestation?

Martin Lydon, Director of Housing, Planning, ICT, Roscommon M.D., Special Projects & Head of Finance responded that the Council had been consulted.

Mary Grier, Senior Planner responded that the exemption was applicable to private afforestation

In response to a question as to whether or not the Roads Section would be informed in regard to forest entrances, Martin Lydon, Director of Housing, Planning, ICT, Roscommon M.D., Special Projects & Head of Finance stated that the process had yet to be defined.

A question was asked in regard to the functions of the Office of the Planning Regulator.

Martin Lydon, Director of Housing, Planning, ICT, Roscommon M.D., Special Projects & Head of Finance responded that the Office was taking on some of the functions of the Department in regard to the overview of Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

In response to a question as to whether or not the Planning Regulator could overrule An Bord Pleanála, Martin Lydon, Director of Housing, Planning, ICT, Roscommon M.D., Special Projects & Head of Finance stated that he did not know this yet.

In response to a question as to the role of the Planning Regulator in regard to the required notification of any proposed material contravention to the Office, Mary Grier, Senior Planner responded that the Planning Regulator would be likely to seek to ensure the material contravention was for appropriate reasons.

11.18 Review of Development Contributions Scheme.

In a presentation given by Martin Lydon, Director of Housing, Planning, ICT, Roscommon M.D., Special Projects & Head of Finance, he outlined a number of suggested changes which Members may wish to consider to make to the Development Contributions Scheme 2014:

- Car parking in town centres – remove the added cost where there was an established business already in place.
- Infilling lands, for example where lands were zoned previously and are being infilled in order to revert back to agricultural use.
- Re-examine agricultural levies in respect of farming on an industrial basis as opposed to typical small scale farming and determine which development charge should be levied – agricultural or industrial?
- Potential exemptions for situations such as rebuilding a fire damaged house or renovating and extending a house which had been inhabited until fairly recently – unfair to put development charge on those people. This would not apply where a house has not been lived in for a long time.
- Telecommunications infrastructure.

He said that the proposals were in the interests of regeneration of towns and supporting agriculture and he invited the Members to come back to the next meeting with suggestions and ideas.

The following issue was raised in regard to car parking charges:

- The removal of development contributions in respect of shortfall in provision of car parking space in town centres was commended but it was considered that legal advice might be needed as large retailers away from the centre of towns might challenge this and seek to avail of the exemption also.

It was queried if wind farm developments would be increased to more than €6,000 per MW. Martin Lydon, Director of Housing, Planning, ICT, Roscommon M.D., Special Projects & Head of Finance stated that he thought that this was governed by national policy and that the purpose of proposed amendments to the Development Contribution Scheme would be to address things that are in the control of the Council.

In regard to the matter of intensive agricultural development it was asked if the level of contribution was not governed by Table 5 (G) of the 2014 Development Contribution Scheme.

Martin Lydon Director of Housing, Planning, ICT, Roscommon M.D., Special Projects & Head of Finance responded that the Development Contribution Scheme referred to “Agriculture” was but that it was possible that intensive commercial scale activity might be dealt with as commercial rather than agricultural.

The following issues were raised in regard to agricultural charges:

- There might be a concern if greater charges were levied on feedlots that they might then reduce the price they paid to farmers in order to recoup their costs.
- Feedlots are a pure commercial undertaking and are there to eliminate the farmer.
- It was stated that a big criticism of development contributions was that the people on the ground do not see how their own local area benefitted from the payment of development contributions.

12.18 Update on Vacant Homes Activity

Mary Grier, Senior Planner stated that at the previous meeting a presentation had been given on The Vacant Homes Action Plan for the County. She stated that in June a Circular Letter had been received from the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government advising of funding for the establishment of a Vacant Homes Office. Jennifer Foy, Assistant Planner has been appointed as the Vacant Homes Officer.

There are 1,600 residential units in Monksland, of which 94 were vacant in 2017, and in the most recent survey this had reduced to 42 vacant units. In Hodson Bay there were 17 vacant units in December, 2017 which has now reduced to 5. As the vacant properties have been identified, the task is now to identify the owners and start communications. Initial contact had not yet been made with the owners.

The following questions were asked:

- Are the vacant units identified anywhere?

- Are any of the vacant units Council owned properties?

Mary Grier, Senior Planner responded that the properties were recorded on Roscommon County Council's internal Map Viewer but that they will not be published and that there were no Council owned properties identified to date.

13.18 Vacant Sites Levy Update

A copy of the Vacant Sites Register was circulated to the meeting.

Mary Grier Senior Planner stated that in order for the levy to be applied in 2019, sites were required to be on the Register on the 1st January, 2018, she said that most of the sites on the Roscommon Vacant Sites Register were added in June, 2018 so therefore the levy would not be applicable to those sites until January, 2020.

She stated that owners had been notified, that there were initially 170 potential sites and 230 owners. 30 sites were ultimately included on the Register. Formal Notices had been issued and one notice had been appealed to An Bord Pleanála. She stated that the market value of the site had now been added to the Register and that the recourse to appeal the market value was through the Valuation Tribunal.

The following matter was raised:

- The increased workload the Department is putting on Local Authorities in regard to the Housing and Planning Departments without any additional staff resources.

14.18. Any Other Business

It was queried if any update had been received from the Department in relation to the criteria regarding the Rural Housing Guidelines.

Martin Lydon, Director of Housing, Planning, ICT, Roscommon M.D., Special Projects & Head of Finance responded that the Council was still waiting for the guidance to issue.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

Chairperson

Signed:

Meetings Administrator