

WEXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of Special Meeting of Wexford County Council
Held Monday 26 April, 2021 (via MS TEAMS)**

Attendance:

In the Chair: Cllr. Ger Carthy, Cathaoirleach.

Councillors:

BARDEN	PAT	FARRELL	MARY	MOORE	JIM
BELL	MAURA	FLEMING	JOHN	MURPHY	BARBARA-ANNE
BOLGER	ANDREW			MURPHY	BRIDÍN
BREEN	PIP	HEGARTY	JOHN	O'ROURKE	JOHN
BROWNE	AIDAN	HYNES	DAVID	O'SUILLEABHAIN	FIONNTAIN
BYRNE	CATHAL	KAVANAGH	WILLIE	OWENS	JACKSER
CODD	JIM			SHEEHAN	MICHAEL
CODD-NOLAN	KATHLEEN	KENNY	DONAL	STAPLES	FRANK
CONNICK	ANTHONY	LAFFAN	GARY	SULLIVAN	JOE
DEVEREUX	DIARMUID	LAWLOR	GEORGE	WALSH	OLIVER
DONOHUE	ANTHONY	MCDONALD	LISA	WHELAN	MICHAEL

Officials:

- Mr. T. Larkin, Director of Services
- Mr. E. Hore, Director of Services
- Ms. A. O'Neill, Head of Finance
- Ms. A. Byrne, A/Director of Services
- Ms. C. Godkin, A/Director of Services
- Mr. D. Minogue, County Secretary
- Mr. D. Houston, Senior Planner
- Ms Sinead Casey, Senior Engineer
- Ms. D. Kearns, Senior Executive Planner
- Ms. Pauline Doyle, Executive Planner
- Ms. F. Fenlon, Assistant Planner

Oireachtas Members: Deputy Verona Murphy

Public: A number of members of the public attended the meeting remotely

Apologies: Cllrs T. Forde and L. Kelly

The Cathaoirleach welcomed all to the meeting.

1. Consideration of draft County Wexford Development Plan 2021-2027 and Chief Executive's Report on submission received to the draft Plan

Chief Executive Tom Enright addressed the Members and pointed out that the Members' role in reviewing and adopting a Development Plan was one of the most important of all reserved functions of the Elected Members. He reminded the members that the plan was not the Executive's plan, but was the Members plan, to review, amend, and agree as the Members saw fit.

Mr. Enright advised the Members that the Council was now at Stage 8 of a possible 13-stage process to review the Development Plan and that when the Plan was eventually adopted and in place, it would be followed by the process of reviewing and adopting a series of Local Area Plans for the larger settlement areas within the county.

Mr. T. Larkin, DoS introduced the draft Plan and the accompanying Report of the Chief Executive. He pointed out that the draft Plan sought to achieve a balance between the protection of the environment, amenities and landscape and the need to promote and accommodate sustainable economic, social and community growth. Mr. Larkin drew the attention of the Members to the constraints on development brought about by limited water and sewerage capacity in towns and villages all across the county.

Mr. Diarmuid Houston Senior Planner then addressed the meeting and presented in detail the Report of the Chief Executive. The Report listed and considered each of the 168 submissions received following the public consultation process and outlined the views of the Executive in relation to each of those submissions. Mr. Houston drew the Members attention to the submission of the Planning Regulator in particular and outlined the main provisions of the submission to the Members for their consideration.

There followed a robust and extensive debate to which all Members contributed. Among the views expressed and concerns raised by the Members were the following:

- One-off rural housing is necessary for the continued growth and development of rural communities and should be facilitated and allowed in certain circumstances.
- The desire of those seeking to build in town and village settlements is significantly constrained by water and sewerage capacity within those settlements
- The town and village housing densities suggested by the PR are not appropriate in a rural county such as Wexford

- The absence of national guidelines to regulate the development of solar energy farms is of concern
- The increase in public demand for remote working which has been brought about by Covid-19 is contrary to the preference expressed by the PR to encourage development in the larger towns.
- The expression “economic need” as described in the draft Plan requires clarification and definition.
- The scale and complexity of the submissions and the Chief Executive’s Report on same requires considerable effort and input by the Members in order to properly consider same. It was proposed that independent expert planning advice be funded and made available to the Members to assist them in their deliberations

Following discussion in relation to the last point above, it was agreed that the Council would meet in smaller groups (by political party/smaller party/non-party groups and by Municipal/Borough District) to comprehensively consider and review the draft Development Plan and the accompanying Chief Executive’s Report.

The proposal to fund and provide independent expert planning advice to the Members will be reconsidered following these meetings.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING

Daingithe ar an

lá de Bealtaine, 2021.

Cllr. Ger Carthy
Cathaoirleach

David Minogue
County Secretary