

**Minutes of Meeting of Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee,
held on 2nd March 2020
in Thurles Municipal District Offices**

PRESENT: Cllr. Jim Ryan (chair)
Cllr. Hughie McGrath
Cllr. Declan Burgess
Cllr. Michael O'Meara
Mr. Gerard Shanahan (PPN)
Mr. Seán Reidy (Development Construction)
Mr. Brian Pope (An Taisce)
Mr. Marcus O'Connor, Director of Services, Roads
Mr. Liam Brett, Senior Engineer, Roads Operational
Mr. James Murray, A/Senior Engineer, Roads Operational
Mr. Paul Keane, Executive Engineer, Nenagh MD
Ms. Michele Maher, Administrative Officer, Roads
Ms. Mary Murphy, Assistant Staff Officer, Roads (Minutes)

APOLOGIES: Cllr. Kevin O'Meara

1. Welcome

Cllr. Jim Ryan welcomed everybody to the meeting and outlined the background to the SPC's. He noted that the Infrastructure SPC is for Roads and Water Services and listed some important policies that had been developed in the past including policies on Roadside Memorials, Traffic Calming in Housing Estates and Special Speed Limits. He also stressed that the SPC considers areas of policy and not operational issues.

Introductions took place.

2. To note the annual declarations under Section 171 of the Local Government Act, (2001)

Ms. Michèle Maher outlined the provisions of Section 171 of the Local Government Act, (2001) which had already been circulated to members of the SPC. Mr. Brian Pope asked if this applied to areas that an organisation has interest in or just personal interests. Mr. Marcus O'Connor replied that as Mr. Pope is representing An Taisce it was expected that his views would mirror those of An Taisce. Cllr. Hughie McGrath made a similar enquiry and was

advised by Mr. O'Connor that Cllr. McGrath's experience would be very useful to the SPC as he would not be making representations on specific projects.

3. Role and Functions of Strategic Policy Committees

Mr. Marcus O'Connor gave a presentation (already circulated to members of the SPC) on the Role and Function of SPC's. He noted the various Pillars represented on the SPC and that the SPC helps to develop local authority policy. He reiterated to the members that the SPC is concerned with policy and does not deal with day to day issues. He advised that the Chair of the SPC sits on the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) along with the Cathaoirleach of the County Council. Mr. Brian Pope queried the numbers nominated to the SPC's and was informed that one person has still to be nominated.

Cllr. Jim Ryan again emphasised that the purpose of the SPC is to bring forward new policies which would then be brought before the full Council for adoption.

4. Consideration of Standing Orders for Tipperary County Council's Strategic Policy Committee

Ms. Michèle Maher gave an overview of the Standing Orders which had already been circulated to the SPC members. Cllr. Jim Ryan queried if the media were allowed and was advised, according to the Standing Orders adopted by the Council in January 2020, the meetings would be held in committee.

5. Introduction to the Roads and Transportation Department

A presentation on the work of the Roads Department was given by Mr. Liam Brett and Mr. James Murray. It was noted that Ireland has double the road network that other countries have and that if the Tipperary road network was laid in a line that it would reach Syria. It was also noted that Tipperary has 2,000 bridges and that 101% of the funds allocation was spent in 2019. It was also noted that all of Tipperary's public lighting would be upgraded to LED bulbs over the next two years.

Cllr. Jim Ryan thanked Mr. Brett and Mr. Murray for their very detailed outline of the work of the Roads Department. He said that people don't appreciate the work of the Roads Department and suggested that this presentation should be given to the full Council.

Cllr. Michael O'Meara wished Mr. Murray well in his new role. He commented on roads in his local area which were particularly impacted during recent bad weather events, and asked if a policy might be considered whereby particular roads get extra treatment.

Mr. Marcus O'Connor replied that the SPC was not the correct forum for raising operational issues. Cllr. Jim Ryan reiterated that the SPC is a policy committee and not the correct forum for local issues as he had advised earlier. He noted that a budget of €180 million would be needed to bring all the roads in Tipperary up to satisfactory condition and that the allocation for 2020 is €43 million.

Cllr. Hughie McGrath asked if there was a policy which could be implemented to allow budgets roll over from year to year or if a loan could be obtained to front load jobs so that there wouldn't be a gap every winter.

Cllr. Jim Ryan noted that the financial crash had cut the roads budget by 50% making it very difficult to plan long term. Mr. Marcus O'Connor advised that the Council is in the second year of a three year programme based on a certain level of funding. He emphasised that the Council had spent its full allocation in 2019. Mr. Liam Brett noted that road works are not suited to winter conditions as a better quality finish is obtained in the summer.

Mr. Ger Shanahan queried if it would be possible to create a policy that roads in low lying areas would be raised to prevent flooding. Mr. O'Connor replied that for a number of years there was no money available to deal with flooding but that Tipperary County Council has hired an engineer specifically to work on flood relief projects and that a presentation on that work could be given at the next meeting. He said that the issue of flooding is much bigger than County Tipperary with a number of counties affected and all applying to the same source of funding. Also, the river Suir is in the charge of the OPW and the Shannon is under the remit of the ESB.

Mr. Brian Pope wondered if this matter should be going through the Planning SPC. Mr. O'Connor replied that it is also looked at under Planning policy. Mr. Ger Shanahan queried if funding would be available for drainage and cleaning of the rivers. Mr. O'Connor said that there is a proposal under CFRAM for five minor schemes initially in Tipperary (Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme).

6. Presentation on Driver Feedback Signs Pilot Programme

Mr. Paul Keane gave a presentation on the Driver Feedback Signs Pilot Project. The principle of the project is to warn, inform and improve driver behaviour. The pilot programme will be carried out on National Roads. The signs are accurate to plus or minus three kilometres an hour. The radar can detect a car at 150 metres and an HGV at 300 metres.

Mr. Brian Pope queried if there is a mechanism whereby the public can give feedback on the signs. Mr. Liam Brett said that if the public give feedback the Council will consider it. He said that very little research has been done and that they would appear to be of benefit for a limited period. The results of the project will determine their future use. Mr. Keane said that this project will lead to an evidence based approach, as the signs will have remote access capability to the 'Cloud' and will be able to record speeds even if the sign is switched off. He noted that the planning element has been done and that signs have been procured.

Mr. Ger Shanahan asked if one of the signs could be located at Turtulla on the way into Thurles. Mr. O'Connor said that any locations on national roads would have to be agreed with TII.

Cllr. Hughie McGrath thanked Mr. Keane for the presentation and said that it throws up the multi agency approach needed e.g. sharing of information with An Garda Síochána. He wondered if frequent remarking of lines on roads would be of help particularly when driving in the fog or in darkness.

Mr. Brian Pope said that it would be interesting to measure the effectiveness of the flashing signs versus the speed sign. Mr. Keane said that the software allows the user to print out different reports and that signs such as those outside schools are reprogrammed every September, in line with requirements.

Cllr. Declan Burgess asked how many speed feedback signs there are in the county. Mr. Keane said that the Council is currently undertaking an inventory and it was likely that there are 80 to 90 in total. Mr. Liam Brett said that this is one tool in a suite of safety tools but that there is an expense involved with these signs. Mr. Seán Reidy said that this is a great initiative and wondered if any consideration had been given to deploying these near schools to see not only the speed of people driving to the school but also driving away from the school. Mr. Keane replied that many schools already have periodic speed limits and flashing amber signs.

Cllr. Michael O'Meara said that the technology is improving so much that these signs are nearly like speed vans and felt that they do save lives and are effective wherever they're put. He wondered if it would be possible to send people a warning letter to let them know that they have exceeded the speed limit to discourage them from doing it again, noting that the Gardaí would have a role to play. Mr. O'Connor replied that the Council meets with the Gardaí on a regular basis but doesn't have the legal authority to send such letters.

Cllr. Jim Ryan welcomed the scheme and asked how long it would take to have results. Mr. Keane said that it would take about one year.

7. Discussion on Policy Areas to be considered by the SPC

Cllr. Jim Ryan proposed that the issues of Hedge cutting and Sulky Racing on roads should be considered.

Cllr. Hughie McGrath raised the issue of public lighting on the N52 bypass in Nenagh. He said that a lot of people go walking there in the evening time and that it could tie in with the HSE "Healthy Living" policy. He also asked for feedback on the Clonmel Inner Relief Road Scheme.

Cllr. Jim Ryan said that the chair of each District has a meeting with TII each year and that the chair of the Infrastructure SPC should also be invited and could bring forward this issue. Cllr. Ryan was advised that an invitation to attend at the annual TII meeting had been issued to him as Chair.

Mr. Ger Shanahan enquired if the SPC would be able to consider future infrastructure projects. Mr. Liam Brett replied that this would be the appropriate place and that projects will go through the Part 8 Planning process. Cllr. Jim Ryan advised that such projects will go on Public Display in the relevant District Offices as part of the planning process.

8. To agree schedule of meetings for 2020.

The following dates were proposed for SPC meetings in 2020:

- 15 June 2020
- 21 September 2020
- 7 December 2020

9. AOB

There was no other business.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____

Cllr. Jim Ryan
Cathaoirleach