

**Minutes of Meeting of Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee
held on 1st June 2021 via Zoom**

PRESENT: Cllr. Jim Ryan (Chair)
Cllr. Michael O'Meara
Cllr. Declan Burgess
Cllr. Kevin O'Meara
Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald
Cllr. Micheál Anglim
Mr. Gerard Shanahan (PPN)
Ms. Michelle Aylward (CEO County Tipperary Chamber)
Mr. Marcus O'Connor, Director of Services, Roads
Mr. Liam Brett, Senior Engineer, Roads Operational
Mr. James Murray, A/Senior Engineer, Roads Operational
Mr. John Hassett, Tipperary Energy Agency (TEA)
Mr. Michael Tierney, Executive Engineer, Roads Operational
Mr. Thomas Duffy, District Engineer, Thurles Municipal District
Mr. Denis Holland, Senior Engineer, Water Services
Ms. Michèle Maher, Administrative Officer, Roads
Ms. Mary Murphy, Assistant Staff Officer, Roads (Minutes)

APOLOGIES: None

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 1 March 2021 and Matters Arising

Cllr Jim Ryan welcomed everybody to the meeting. The Minutes of the meeting of 1 March 2021 were proposed by Cllr. Declan Burgess and seconded by Michelle Aylward. There were no matters arising.

2. Tipperary County Council – Interreg North West Europe Smart Space Energy Project

A presentation on the Project was given by Mr. John Hassett from Tipperary Energy Agency (TEA). He noted that SSE Airtricity has been appointed to complete the works. The contract was awarded 70/30 cost/technical components. Work will begin in June and is expected to be completed in August.

Cllr. Jim Ryan thanked Mr. Hassett for his presentation and complimented Mr. Hassett, Mr. Michael Tierney and Roads staff for their work on the project to date. He said that it is a very exciting project and a good news story for the areas involved and that it would add to the experience of Thurles given the regeneration of Liberty Square.

Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald agreed with Cllr. Ryan and said it is a marvellous project. He wondered if there is a priority list to bring this project to other parts of the county.

Mr. Liam Brett replied that this is a pilot project and that there will be learnings to be taken from it on how to optimise energy efficiency while providing adequate lighting for the public. It is expected to extend the system to other parts of the county and that all 17,000 lights will be changed to LED on completion of the RMO Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project.

Cllr. Jim Ryan asked who was funding the project. Mr. Brett replied that the project would cost €400,000 and that 60% of this was provided by the EU Interreg Programme.

Cllr. Jim Ryan asked what the targets for energy efficiency would be for 2030. Mr. Hassett replied that Tipperary County Council would be obligated to reduce energy usage by 60%. He said that this would be very difficult to achieve as Tipperary County Council had been a leader over the past 10 years and already has a very low base.

3. Transformation of Water Services to Irish Water: update by Denis Holland, Senior Engineer, Water Services

Mr. Denis Holland gave a presentation on the transformation of Water Services to Irish Water.

Cllr. Jim Ryan thanked Mr. Holland for his presentation. He wondered if it could be given to the full Council meeting in June. Mr. Holland said that Water Services was on the Agenda for the Council meeting every second month and that he would liaise with Michèle Maher and the Meetings Administrator about this for the July meeting.

Cllr. Ryan said that he had a number of concerns regarding the transformation particularly in relation to Council employees. He is concerned that if Irish Water is privatised in the future that there would be job losses. Mr. Holland said that a commitment has been given by the government to hold a referendum on keeping Irish Water in public ownership.

Cllr. Michael O'Meara said that he fully supported what Cllr. Ryan had said. He would also like to see this brought before a full Council meeting. He said that he would not like to see the role of public representatives being taken away and that he felt that the link between Councillors and staff would be severed. He also thanked Mr. Holland for his very comprehensive report.

Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald agreed with the concerns expressed by Cllr. Ryan and Cllr. O'Meara. He said that it's frightening that it has gone so far without any voices of concern being raised. He noted that Councillors have always had a direct line to staff that they could ring at any time to have an issue dealt with. He wondered if the SPC could register concern about this.

Cllr. Kevin O'Meara also agreed that the role of the public representative was being diminished. He said that a direct line is needed for Councillors 7 days a week and that Irish Water needs to be answerable to the Council and to attend Council meetings.

Mr. Holland agreed that there will be a different relationship between Irish Water and Councillors. He noted that the transformation proposal is government policy and as such has to be complied with. He also noted that Irish Water had held workshops for Councillors in each Municipal District.

Cllr. Ryan said that he wasn't previously aware of some of the information contained in the presentation and asked if it would be possible for the SPC or the full Council to make a submission on the proposals. Mr. Holland said that it would be possible to make a submission and advised that it would be better coming from the full Council and that July wouldn't be too late to do this.

4. Draft Policy on the provision of Disabled Parking Bays in residential areas

Cllr. Jim Ryan advised that amendments to the draft Policy as considered by the SPC in March 2021, had been circulated for consideration. Mr. Thomas Duffy gave some background to the changes which were made in response to concerns expressed in the last SPC meeting or following consultation with the Irish Wheelchair Association, the Department of Transport and the Disabled Drivers Association. Cllr. Ryan thanked and complimented Mr. Duffy for his work on the policy. Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald proposed that the draft Policy be presented to the Plenary Council Meeting. This was seconded by Cllr. Burgess. Ms. Maher said that she would arrange for this to be brought to the June Council meeting when items from the Roads Directorate would be considered.

5. Correspondence

There was no correspondence to be considered.

6. To Note Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Infrastructure SPC will be held on Monday 6 September 2021.

7. AOB

Cllr. Jim Ryan asked if the Council policy on the installation of new footpaths could be discussed at the next SPC meeting. He said that on five approach roads to Thurles there are footpaths outside the 50 km/h which seemed to contradict the stated policy. Mr. Marcus O'Connor replied that this could be discussed at the meeting.

Cllr. Declan Burgess asked if the provision of Age-Friendly Parking Bays could be discussed. He noted that some Councils have already started adopting policies on them. This will also be noted for discussion at the next meeting.

Cllr. Kevin O'Meara noted that it is hoped to get a Waste Water Treatment Plant in Grangemockler in the future and wondered if pipes could be laid when the proposed TII roadworks are being undertaken on the national road. Mr. O'Connor said that it was unlikely that Irish Water would pay for them so far in advance of the waste water scheme, but it could be looked at.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____

Cllr. Jim Ryan
Cathaoirleach