



MID-EAST REGIONAL AUTHORITY

ÚDARÁS RÉIGIÚNACH AN MHEÁNOIRTHIR

MINUTES

OF THE MID-EAST REGIONAL AUTHORITY

HELD ON

TUESDAY 21 APRIL 2009

IN

COUNCIL CHAMBER

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTE NO. 16.09 – 19.09



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MID-EAST REGIONAL AUTHORITY HELD ON TUESDAY 21 APRIL 2009 IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL AT 5.00 P.M.

Present:

Cllr. Tommy Reilly, Cathaoirleach

Cllr. Pat Black

Cllr. Jimmy Fegan

Cllr. Brian Fitzgerald

Cllr. Tom Fortune

Cllr. Rainsford Hendy

Cllr. Jim Holloway

Cllr. George Jones

Cllr. Conal Kavanagh

Cllr. Kathleen Kelleher

Cllr. Paul Kelly

Cllr. Michael Lynch

Cllr. Tony McEvoy

Cllr. John McGinley

Cllr. James Mangan

Cllr. Martin Miley

Cllr. Séamus Murray

Cllr. Micheál Nolan

Cllr. Patsy O'Neill

Cllr. Pat Vance

Apologies:

Cllr. Sylvester Bourke

Cllr. John Ryan

In attendance:

Mr. Tom Dowling, Meath County Council, Designated Manager.

Mr. John Byrne, Director MERA

MINUTE NO. 16.09

Minutes of Meeting of the Mid-East Regional Authority held on 12 March 2009

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Mid-East Regional Authority held on 12 March 2009 were proposed by Cllr. George Jones and seconded by Cllr. Micheál Nolan, and agreed.

MINUTE NO. 17.09

Matters Arising.

No matters arose from the Minutes.

MINUTE NO. 18.09

Discussion on Regional Planning Guidelines Update Process.

The Director reminded the Members that, as agreed at the meeting on the 12 March last, the Regional Authority agreed to meet at 5 p.m. in advance of the joint meeting with the Dublin Regional Authority to receive an update briefing from the Director in relation to the continuation of the RPG update process. Circulated with the Agenda for both meetings was the Director's Report on the Public Consultation at pre-draft stage. The main purpose of this report is to set out the context of the Review of the RPG's, to summarise the issues raised by submissions received, and to summarise the issues raised during the consultation meetings, and from this to set out the issues of strategic importance as recommended directions to preparing the Regional Planning Guidelines.

The Director reminded the Members that they had started a legal process as set down in Acts and Regulations, and this Report meets the requirements of Section 7 of the Planning and Development (Regional Planning Guidelines) Regulations 2009. There had been a total of 73 submissions made from various interest groups and these were listed in part 1 of the Report. They included a broad spectrum of interest groups from individuals, including retail proprietors, developers, agents, statutory consultees, and

representative bodies. Part 2 of the Report was a review of the overall delivery of the Regional Planning Guidelines since 2004. This section outlines what has and has not been achieved under each key topic area of the RPG, and whether short-term targets set out have been met, or if trends indicate that longer term targets are on course to be met.

Part 3 of the Report is an analysis of the current issues and the base line position, which sets out the current issues facing the RPG's as it progresses towards preparing a new draft. The text of this part 3 was used in the publication of the Issues Paper and circulated and publicised for the pre-draft publication consultation paper.

Part 4 of the Report contains the summary of issues raised from County Councils and County and City Development Board Consultation meetings. Fifteen meetings were held between January 2009 and March 2009. At each meeting, a wide range of issues was raised, and the importance of encouraging submissions from interested members of the public as well as organisations was highlighted.

Part 5 of the Report sets out in detail the range of issues raised by submissions received during the pre-draft public consultation process. Following a listing of all the points made on each issue, a comment and recommendation from the Directors is set out on each issue.

The final part of the Report, part 6 sets out the final core elements of what is required under the Planning Act and Regulations as part of a Review of the RPG's from the Joint Regional Authority meeting. Two requirements are contained:

1. Setting out the implications for the Greater Dublin Area Regional Planning Guidelines from the National Spatial Strategy, and in this section implications from the Planning Regulations and Act, as the key direction we are required to follow.
2. A list of Director's Joint Recommendations on the directions from the elected representatives to undertake the writing of the Draft RPG's as required under the Planning and Development Regional Planning Guidelines Regulations 2009, passed on the 10 March 2009.

In the debate which followed, Cllr. Brian Fitzgerald suggested that the updated RPG should be made more proactive and deal with obstacles which have been making progress difficult for the three counties in the Mid-East. Time and time again, various proposals for development were knocked down by a combination of objections from the National Roads Authority, An Taisce, and decisions of An Bord Pleanala. He also suggested that the jobs ratio figure for this region needs to be updated following the last updating in 2004. He also suggested that the proposals by the Dept. of Environment Heritage & Local Government for increasing high densities in high-rise buildings are not acceptable to people in the Mid-East Region. This proposal maybe okay in city centres but what people in towns and villages require is a better quality of life not a high-density development.

Cllr. Jimmy Fegan suggested that there may be more of a conflict than a consensus arising from the consideration of this document jointly with the Dublin Regional Authority. The basic facts are that the Mid-East is losing out to economic progress and all the focus for economic development would continue to be in the Dublin Metropolitan Region.

Cllr. Vance reminded the Members that in a recent survey, over 60% of commuters from Wicklow go to the Dublin commute area. We have not been able to stop this commuting flow, and a huge percentage of respondents in this survey said that they would take a drop in income for a higher quality of life in the Mid-East Region. He suggested that the Reviewed Regional Planning Guidelines should come out much more strongly in this than previously.

Cllr. Jim Holloway reminded the Members of the recent decisions of An Bord Pleanála, and the objections from An Taisce and others to development proposals in the region. He said such decisions are holding back economic progress, and a case made by the Planning Authority should stand on its own merits. He also suggested that at the core of the regions problems is the funding mechanisms set up to deliver funding to the regions from Government and this must be reviewed at this time.

Cllr. Paul Kelly said that the most important issue facing the region at the moment is the effectiveness and availability of public transport. This is at the root of all quality of life and commuting issues. He suggested that the tradition of higher density developments may be suitable in city/towns and that there was reluctance towards high-rise development in the regional commuter towns. To come to terms with the urban sprawl it was necessary to focus on high-density developments centred around public transport corridors. This was not the same as high-rise development.

In summarising the debate, the Designated Manager, Mr. Tom Dowling said that the Director's Report Document is an important contribution to defining the strategic direction that this region and the Dublin region is going in future economic development. The final decision making in this process will be taken at the next stage when the Draft Regional Planning Guidelines are published, and at that stage it is up to the Mid-East as regional members to define their priorities and make sure their policies are included in the next draft document.

MINUTE NO. 19.09.

Any other business

An Cathaoirleach confirmed that it had been agreed that because of the upcoming local elections, that no meeting of the Regional Authority will take place in May. He thanked all the Members for their work and contributions to the Regional Authority over the past year and he also gave his thanks and good wishes to the Designated Manager, Mr. Tom Dowling, to the Managers of Wicklow, Mr. Eddie Sheehy, and Kildare Mr. Michael Malone, and also to the Regional Director Mr. John Byrne for all their work and assistance to the Members throughout the year. In conclusion, An Cathaoirleach wished all the candidates in the forth-coming local elections the very best of luck, and gave his best wishes to those candidates who are not going forward for re-election.

Signed:

Cllr. Tommy Reilly
Cathaoirleach

Mr. John Byrne
Director

Date:
