

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF ADJOURNED SPECIAL
MEETING OF NORTH TIPPERARY COUNTY COUNCIL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES,
LIMERICK ROAD, NENAGH ON 20th July, 2009 AT 12.00 A.M.**

Present

Cllr. Denis Ryan, Mayor – Presided.

Cllrs Dr. Phyll Bugler; Jim Casey; John Carroll; Billy Clancy; Pauline Coonan; Ger Darcy; Seamus Hanafin; John Hogan; John Kennedy; Micheál Lowry; Hughie McGrath; John ‘Rocky’ McGrath; Jonathan Meaney; Eddie Moran; Séamus Morris; Virginia O’Dowd; Michael O’Meara; Mattie Ryan; Michael Smith

Apology

Cllr. Jim Ryan

Also Present

Terry Ó Niadh, County Manager; Paddy Heffernan, Director of Services; Karl Cashen, Director of Services; Brian Beck, A/Director of Services; Marcus O’Connor, Director of Services; Liam McCarthy, Head of Finance; Rosemary Joyce, Meetings Administrator/Senior Executive Officer; Attracta Lyons, Community & Enterprise Development Officer and Mary Quigley, Acting Senior Staff Officer.

**Employment
Creation**

Cllr. D. Ryan welcomed Ms. A. Lyons to the Meeting.

Ms. A. Lyons gave a brief outline of the Socio/Economic Profile of North Tipperary. She outlined the background to the North Tipperary Economic Strategy & Action Plan 2009-2012 with examples of actions being pursued. She referred to the Presentation given by the County Manager and Director of Services to the Mid-West Task Force and follow-up. She outlined the potential for North Tipperary Local Authorities to generate employment through Capital expenditure programmes and through Employment Programmes/Schemes and advised that potential examples of the latter had been forwarded to the Mid West Task Force for its consideration and progression.

Cllr. D. Ryan thanked her for her presentation.

Members debated issues relating to employment in North Tipperary. Cllr. S. Hanafin advised that there was a need to start with job protection and outlined the difficulties facing businesses arising from declining revenue, overheads and the costs of local authority charges to businesses. He stressed the need for the Council to concentrate on the core business. He complimented the work being done by the County Enterprise Board and emphasised the value of training. He considered the Council should chase at national level having the CEBs subsumed into local authorities rather than into Enterprise Ireland as proposed in An Bord Snip’s Report. He highlighted two issues of strategic importance – the Motorway Interchanges and the future of the Lisheen Mines Site.

Cllr. P. Bugler stressed the need to be more proactive in relation to tourism and marketing particularly in areas such as Newport, Ballina and the Lough Derg area and called for a masterplan for tourism in the area.

Cllr. J. Casey emphasised the need to concentrate on the local position and to talk about what the Council was able to do to maintain jobs and keep people at work and off Social Welfare. He said it was economically more sensible to keep people at work. He felt that the costs of keeping people employed by the Council needed to be looked at. The problems confronting the Council today had not confronted them in the past. He called for the development of schemes and systems to encourage employment in small numbers in consultation with the Department of Social Welfare.

Cllr. P. Coonan highlighted the problems caused by excessive rules and bureaucracy. She did not consider the proposal of An Bord Snip to transfer LEADER functions to the Department of Agriculture would be good for small operators. She expressed concern at the costs of water charges and rates for businesses. She also called for the charges imposed on tourists to be examined.

Cllr. J. Hogan said there was a need to fight to retain the Tipperary Institute. He also called for an incentive package to promote new business in rural areas. He said there was a need to zone some part of every village for business purposes. He also called for a five year waiver of rates and other charges for new businesses and said that North Tipperary should be the first county to promote this thus making North Tipperary more competitive for new start ups.

Cllr. V. O' Dowd also stressed the need to maintain current employment and the need for re-skilling and up-skilling. She also referred to the future of the Ballybrophy – Limerick rail line and the investment that had taken place in upgrading the line. She asked for a commitment from Councillors that a clear message go out that the future of this line be safeguarded.

Cllr. B. Clancy referred to the amount of money being sent out of the economy by the repatriation of funds, the effects of membership of the EU on the fishing industry and the downturn in agriculture. He called on the tourism sector to spell out what they could offer by way of a week's holidays for €300 and said that what people want to hear about is hard cash rather than stands and promotions.

Cllr. S. Morris stressed the need to protect the jobs we have. He highlighted the cost of rates to business. He also referred to the investment in places such as Dromineer and said that there was a need to think of how people could be encouraged to come into such areas and to stop spurious objections to development. He referred to the investment in cycle ways and walk routes but highlighted the problems arising because of the failure to cut ditches. He also referred to the National Spatial Strategy and said its effect was to turn North Tipperary into a commuter county.

Cllr. G. Darcy felt that the Council should reflect on what we can do for ourselves and that there was little point in talking about agencies. He highlighted the potential of Lough Derg as a product from Portland to Ballina and felt there should be a concentration on who could give sustainable employment in that area. There was a need to look at planning and charges and to see that no difficulties were put in the way of such developers. He also referred to the need to keep road workers and to ensure that work on roadside hedges and verges was carried out. Social Welfare needed to collaborate with local authorities to assist small and medium sized enterprises. He referred to Procter & Gamble and job losses in the building industry and felt that all that was left was small indigenous industry and, where this was proved to be sustainable, it should be supported.

Cllr. M. Smith referred to the need to get back to being a competitive economy. He referred to a site at Parkmore which the owner was prepared to give to the community for allotments. The review of the County Development Plan was very important. Existing policies on rural enterprise were very restrictive. There was a need to market tourism in the county.

Cllr. M. O'Meara referred to the dependence on agriculture and the loss in revenue which would arise from the withdrawal of the REPS scheme. He stressed the need to re-invest in farming. He also called for the re-introduction of FÁS Schemes and highlighted the tremendous work in towns and villages under such schemes in the past. He considered that great work had been done under the Community Development Levy Scheme and that more work could be done by communities in lieu of financial contributions under the CARS/LIS Schemes.

Cllr. J. Kennedy stated that pressure should be put on the I.D.A. in relation to the Lisheen Mines Site and the Erin Foods Site in Thurles. He also said they should engage with local business people to come together or individually to re-invest money made in their own county and to create jobs. He said it would be a sad day for North Tipperary if the Tipperary Institute were to close – it was a state of the art building and there were 1900 applications to continue studies this year. He stated that the Councils should start themselves in the protection of employment by keeping on the temporary workers.

Cllr. M. Lowry stated that North Tipperary had been badly let down by the I.D.A. We would be better off to look at our own indigenous business and should negotiate a deal with the Department to get some small portion of money to support local enterprise. This could be done through the Enterprise Board. There was also a need to bring FÁS on board and to ask them what their forward strategy was. People are not interested in being re-skilled – they want to use their existing skills. Communities could benefit from employment schemes – every parish has something that could be done. There was a need to look at rates – in order to pay rates businesses had to let people go.

Cllr. D. Ryan stated that there were three areas that the Council should examine. He considered that development charges were unjust at the current time. Capital funding was not coming from the Government now. There needed to be some concessions. He referred to small building contractors who were out of work and said that concessions on charges should be given for house extensions to create employment in this area. The second area that needed to be examined was the County Development Plan. There was a need to concentrate on rural business and environmental issues. Businesses should be allowed to expand and to create jobs in rural areas and it should not matter if these were considered obtrusive. The third area was the need to be innovative in relation to Community & Rural Employment Schemes. There were a lot of highly qualified people who had nowhere to go. There was a need to proceed and try to pursue the provision of such schemes.

Mr. T. Ó Niadh welcomed the debate and responded to a number of issues raised by members. He referred to the work of the Economic Working Group under the County Development Board and stated that the model they were using was now being spread nationally. A Strategy had been prepared and adopted based on an integrated approach of agencies working together. This did not exclude individual agencies doing their own thing. The Plan identified specific objectives with one agency taking

responsibility for each as the lead agency. It was hoped that this approach would be successful.

Mr. Ó Niadh referred to the Bord Snip Report and stated that knee-jerk reactions were not a good idea. There was a €20 billion gap in national finances this year and there was a need to do something about it. There was a menu of options including numbers and expenditure in the public service. Members had referred to the cost of local authority charges and the need to reduce them. The Council sought to charge the economic cost of services. In addition to facilitating local democracy the Council had a role in the provision of services. If the cost of such services was to be reduced this would result in a reduction in employment. In the case of Water Services it was European and Government policy to charge out the cost of providing the service.

One of the provisions in An Bord Snip's Report was a reduction of €100 million in the Local Government Fund. This would be a significant reduction in funding for local authorities and would have an effect on the provision of services. In concentrating on the core business of the Council services would be categorised as Emergency, Essential and Priority.

Mr. Ó Niadh advised members that members of the Economic Working Group had met senior staff of Lisheen and would be meeting again to review progress. He also referred to the Tourism Strategy which concentrated on three different areas built around the product available. In the tourism area there were a significant number of offers out there which gave very good value for money. The sector was working on promotion under the auspices of Shannon Development. A meeting had taken place with the owner of the Erin Foods Site.

He re-iterated that cutting of hedges was a matter for land owners. In the case of capital funding he advised that the Council had not given up on getting funding for two major Schemes and small schemes. All the money for the current year had not been allocated. Loan approval had been received for €1.4 contribution for Templemore Wastewater Scheme and bids were in for further allocations. The Council does not have the money to meet the local contribution. No increase in development charges had been applied in the last scheme adopted. There were three elements under the scheme – the Community Development Levy under which great work had been done; Roads in respect of which the bulk of receipts would be spent in the current year and Water Services. In the case of Water Services if the infrastructure was not in place, planning permission could not be granted.

Mr. Ó Niadh advised members that there was nothing in the County Development Plan which excludes development in rural areas provided it was appropriate and sustainable. If members felt that policies needed to be more refined this could be built in to the review of the Plan.

Members' views on the Community & Rural Employment Schemes had been fed into the Mid West Task Force Report. The report had been submitted to Government and action on the creation of such schemes would have to come from Government. He believed there was the capacity to create up to 1,000 jobs and that these would not affect permanent jobs in local authorities.

Members questioned how the matter could be further progressed. Mr. Ó Niadh stated that there would always be an opportunity to continue the debate, for example

through the Planning and Community & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee and through the workshops on the County Development Plan dealing with the economic side.

Members expressed concern that the workload of the Planning and Community & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee had been such that planning matters had been given priority and only one or two Community & Enterprise matters had been considered even though this S.P.C. met more often than any other S.P.C. Consideration should be given to separating Planning and Community & Enterprise. Mr. T. Ó Niadh advised that the configuration of the S.P.C.s would be coming up as an item on the agenda for the July Meeting. There was no provision for more than 4 S.P.C.s. He considered that Enterprise development feeds into planning and would still see planning and enterprise as one S.P.C. It was a matter for the chair to decide on the agenda and additional meetings could be held.

This Concluded the Business of the Meeting, a true copy of which we hereby certify

Signed: _____
Cllr. Denis Ryan
Mayor

Date: _____

Signed : _____
Ms. Rosemary Joyce
Meetings Administrator/
Senior Executive Officer

Date: _____