

SPC 3 Meeting 11th June, 2021 – Notes of Patricia Gardiner, Environmental Representative of PPN.

We received the agenda, minutes and reports on the two days before the meeting and I really only had time to focus on the 1st item on the agenda, the draft economic and community development plan as I felt this was the most important item of the meeting. Unfortunately this meant I didn't have time to review the minutes, and realised my contributions in the last meeting were ignored and misrepresented. That will teach me!

KPMG made a presentation of their work on the draft economic & community development plan, Following a comment from Cllr. Marie Casserly, I asked the KPMG representative if they would be situating the draft plan in the context of the new legislation given the urgent and radical cuts required in carbon emissions of 51% by 2030, moving to net zero carbon in 2050. He said they would be responding to all inputs as part of the extensive consultation process. It was interesting that one of the things that KPMG highlighted in their review of facts & figures about Sligo was that the majority of people drive to work and higher education despite the fact that the average commute is just 22 minutes.

The Chair then moved to ask for a proposer and seconder for the report to be moved on to the public consultation phase.

We then listened as the reports were read out, on vacant housing, the public arts programme and finally the proposal to sign up to the National Pollinator Plan.

As the meeting was being called to a close by the Chair, Cllr. Rosaleen O'Grady, I asked to speak and noted that Siobhan Ryan had referenced the Youtube link she had included in her report on the National Pollinator Plan, if we'd had a chance to watch it as it was only short. I said that I hadn't seen the Youtube video and as the only person who wasn't paid to be there or there as part of their job, I felt that it was a waste of my time to receive these reports two days before the meeting. I had spent a lot of time reviewing one item and making notes only to find that actually there was no room for discussion, that the 'strategic policy development' was actually simply being carried out by Council staff and KPMG and that we were just being informed of it.

I asked why I was there as a representative of the PPN if there was no role for me to play in contributing to any strategic policy development, when reports were only sent to us two days prior to the meeting? The other two PPN representatives, Corena Ward, the Community & Voluntary Rep, and Karen O'Hara, the Trades Unions representative both spoke to agree with me and Corena suggested receiving meeting documentation two weeks in advance of meetings. Karen requested that a copy of the standing orders be sent out to the members of the committee so that members would understand the protocol of the meeting administration.

The KPMG staff person spoke to say that they would be consulting widely and our views would absolutely be taken into account, but I spoke again to say that wasn't the point, that the framing of the document itself would be part of the 'strategic policy development'. The senior Council staff person, Dorothy Clarke, spoke quite firmly, and defensively, to say that she felt everything they did was strategic development, that they were very busy and had deadlines and they informed us of these documents that they prepared and they couldn't always get them to us earlier. The Chair intervened to ask if the reports could be sent out three working days before the meeting as with Council meetings but I noted this wasn't just about the reports being sent out.

The meeting concluded.