

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COBH MUNICIPAL DISTRICT HELD VIA MS TEAMS ON MONDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2021

Present: Cllrs. C. Rasmussen, S. Sheppard, A. Barry, A. O'Connor, S. O'Connor & S. O'Callaghan.

Officials: Mr. S. O'Callaghan, Senior Executive Officer
Ms. G. Vallone, Senior Architect
Mr. P. Lynch, Municipal District Officer
Mr. R. O'Sullivan, Executive Engineer
Mr. E. O'Dwyer, Executive Architect
Mr. G. Daly, Executive Technician
Ms. C. McDonnell, Cobh Municipal District

1.0 Cobh Public Realm Enhancement Scheme:

Cllr. C. Rasmussen welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked S. O'Callaghan to give an update on the proposed scheme.

S. O'Callaghan stated that the purpose of the meeting was to get a recommendation from the members of the Cobh Municipal District to full Council in respect of the Public Realm proposals. Today's meeting was the latest stage in a 20 month long process which included engagement with Council officials internally, the members of the Municipal District, and various external stakeholders. The proposal had been advertised on 9th July and submissions were accepted up to 20th August. Prior to the formal launch of the proposal, a webinar had been held to advise people what the proposals included. A video had also been launched, which had been viewed 5,877 times. In total, 722 submissions, including 7 from statutory and non-statutory bodies, had been made on the proposals.

S. O'Callaghan advised that of the submissions received, 384 were in favour of the proposals, while 338 had objections. Of the 338 with objections, 201 were identical and issued from the customers of a business that was opposed to the introduction of a one way system in part of the town. He confirmed that one of the modifications to the original proposals included the removal of the proposal in relation to the one way street. He stated that he was satisfied that the Plan being presented to the members would satisfy the requirements of the bodies that were likely to fund the proposed works. He stated that the Plan as advertised had now been modified slightly in view of the submissions received and advised that G. Vallone would outline the modifications to the scheme.

G. Vallone advised the members that 7 modifications had been made to the overall scheme, and that drawings showing each of these were included in the Chief Executive's Report on the proposal. These were:

- 7 additional parking spaces had been provided on West Beach
- The footpath at the upper part of Midleton Street had been widened
- 2 extra parking spaces had been provided on the Eastern side of Midleton Street

- The disabled parking space on Middleton Street which had been removed to facilitate moving the Loading Bay had been relocated to John O’Connell Street, while the proposed set down space on Canon O’Leary Place was now fully accessible
- The crossing point on East Beach had been narrowed to facilitate 2 parking spaces here. One of these would be a disabled parking space while the other would be fully accessible.
- As mentioned by S. O’Callaghan, Casement Square would now be two way, with the provision of 2 pull-in areas to facilitate traffic passing up and down.
- An additional disabled parking space was being provided on the Western side of Pearse Square, while all of the taxi spaces on the Eastern side of the Square would now be fully accessible.

G. Vallone also referred to a number of clarification drawings in the Chief Executive Report which set out to clarify issues raised in some submissions. These included:

- Concerns had been raised that all of the railings of the Promenade were being removed. The clarification drawing showed that only a small section was being relocated to facilitate continuous access to the Promenade. Sections of the railing at this location had been replaced over the years so much of what is there now is not original.
- Concern had been raised in relation to the fact that the original proposal showed that playground equipment would be placed at a number of locations in the Promenade, thus making it more difficult for parents to keep an eye on their children. The clarification drawing shows the equipment being located in one area of the Promenade only to facilitate parents. Additional equipment would also be provided here.
- In view of concerns raised about the suitability of some of the seating for elderly people, a clarification drawing showed that all of the proposed seating would be Age Friendly and accessible to all.
- In response to concerns about potential anti-social behaviour at the Khyber Pass, a clarification drawing showed that the proposed lighting strategy would help to counter anti-social behaviour in this area by facilitating passive surveillance.

G. Vallone confirmed that all of the modifications had gone through a Road Safety Audit and an Accessibility Audit. She stated that the aim of the proposals were to make the town accessible for all – locals and visitors alike – and not to favour one group over the other.

Cllr. A. O’Connor asked what the net impact of the modified proposals were on parking availability in the town. G. Vallone stated that the proposals provide for 8 additional spaces in the town.

Cllr. S. O’Connor stated that the main concerns that had been raised by people with him were the one way system on Casement Square and the impact on parking for residents of the town centre. He was satisfied that the Casement Square issue had been resolved and asked if the proposals would resolve issues for parking in the town centre. S. O’Callaghan advised that the CE’s report made it clear that the Council would continue to look at viable options to increase parking in the town.

Cllr. C. Rasmussen stated that parking was a major concern in many areas. He stated that a sub-committee of the Municipal District had been set up to look at the whole issue of parking, separate from any change to be brought about by the current proposals. He asked

how many taxis spaces would be in Pearse Square following the works. G. Vallone confirmed that 8 fully accessible taxi spaces would remain at this location.

Cllr. C. Rasmussen asked if loading bays would have time restrictions on them. P. Lynch stated that ultimately that would be a matter for the members but that this was included in the proposal. Limiting the times that loading bays were available would allow those spaces to be used for part of the day as general parking. His view was that it was probable that any changes here would be in consultation with businesses in the town.

Cllr. Rasmussen stated that he was still concerned with the loss of parking spaces on East Beach, particularly in the area near the pharmacy. He asked if these spaces would be fully accessible and also that consideration be given at detailed design stage to try to put in extra spaces here. G. Vallone confirmed that the parking spaces here would be fully accessible. S. O'Callaghan stated that the plan had to have regard to the possible development of a second cruise liner terminal at Lynch's Quay.

Cllr. Rasmussen asked if bus parking would be provided to replace the spaces across from Casement Square. S. O'Callaghan confirmed that these spaces would be set down only but that the Council was optimistic that additional bus parking could be accommodated on Lower Road and that the number of bus parking spaces in Cobh was most likely going to be increased from the current level.

Cllr. Rasmussen stated that he had concerns that the proposals for Small's Well could lead to difficulties. He stated that if this area was turned into a drop-off area only it could cause problems due to the numbers currently using the carpark morning and evening. Cllr. Sheppard agreed, stating that 6-8 spaces are in constant use here, leaving very little for drop offs. She has concerns that the proposals could lead to bottlenecks. S. O'Callaghan advised that the aim of the scheme is to improve the situation and not make it worse. When the proposals go to detailed design, the Council would ensure that the Plan delivered what is required.

Cllr. Sheppard asked if there was going to be a reduction in the number of disabled parking spaces. G. Vallone stated that there would be no reduction in the number.

Cllr. Sheppard asked for clarification in relation to the disabled, and general parking spaces on the lower part of Midleton Street. G. Vallone advised that the disabled space would be moved to John O'Connell Street and that the road at Midleton Street would be narrowed to a single lane to facilitate the two general parking spaces being proposed for this area. Cllr. Rasmussen stated that he had not been aware that this would happen and that he had serious concerns with this as it would exacerbate the tailbacks in this area. Cllr. Sheppard agreed and stated that she had major concerns with this suggestion. G. Vallone stated that the issue could be examined further at detailed design stage but that the proposals had been agreed with the Road Safety Auditors. P. Lynch stated that one possible option that could be looked at here was to re-examine the junction priority at this location to minimise disruption to traffic flows. Cllr. S. O'Connor stated that he shared the concerns of his fellow councillors and that reducing the roadway to a single lane would add to existing problems at this junction. S. O'Callaghan stated that the CE report highlights the fact that the Council will look at short-term parking in the area to try to alleviate problems.

Cllr. Rasmussen asked for details of the timescale and the budget for this project. S. O'Callaghan advised that the budget is not known at present.

Cllr. A. Barry asked if any parking spaces are being lost on John O'Connell Street. G. Vallone confirmed that no spaces are being removed here.

Cllr. S. O'Callaghan asked if there would be any parking directly outside the pharmacy on Midleton Street. G. Vallone confirmed that parking would extend to the property next door but that as the pharmacy was adjacent to the junction with Park Lane, the parking space immediately in front of the pharmacy would be removed.

S. O'Callaghan set out the timeline for the project. He stated that if the proposal was approved by the members of Cork County Council on 26 October, some minor work needed to be done to get the proposal ready to go to the funding request stage. He stated that it was hoped that the proposal, if approved, would be submitted for URDF funding in early 2022. If this was successful, the project would then move to detailed design stage. On completion of detailed design, a Tender pack would have to be prepared to go out to the market. He advised that it was likely to be at least 2 years before any construction work started on this project.

The members unanimously agreed to recommend the proposal to full Council. P. Lynch advised that the matter would be placed on the Agenda for the next Council meeting on Tuesday 26th October.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Cathaoirleach

Municipal District Officer.