

Minutes of Strategic Policy Committee for Economic Development & Enterprise held on Monday 9th May 2016 at 11.00 a.m. in the Training Room, Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare.

In Attendance:

Cllr. Richard Nagle
Mr. Gerard Dollard
Cllr. Gabriel Keating
Cllr. Ian Lynch
Cllr. Johnny Flynn
Cllr. Clare Colleran Molloy
Cllr. Pat McMahon
Cllr. P J Ryan
Mr. Tom Floyd
Mr. Pat Morris
Ms. Dymphna O'Callaghan
Ms. Theresa O'Donohoe
Mr. Brian McCarthy
Mr. Padraic McElwee
Mr. Jerry Moloney
Ms. Harriet Cotter
Mr. Niall O'Callaghan

Organisation:

Chair
Director of Services
Elected Member
Elected Member
Elected Member
Elected Member
Elected Member
Elected Member
Trade Union
Ennis Chamber of Commerce
Business/Commercial Sector
Environment/Conservation
Planning & Enterprise
Head of Enterprise
Enterprise Ireland
Enterprise Ireland
Regional Business Development Manager IDA
Ireland

Also Present

Mr. Michael Neylon Tourism & Community Development
Mr Brian McCarthy Senior Planner

Apologies

Mr. William Hanrahan Agriculture/Farming

1. Strategic focus to enterprise development in County Clare

The Chair welcomed Mr Jerry Moloney and Ms Harriet Cotter of Enterprise Ireland and Mr Niall O'Callaghan of the IDA Ireland to the meeting.

Michael Neylon provided a brief presentation on the Location, Sectoral composition, Education Profile and Gender of employment: in Clare; in Ennis; in Shannon; among outward commuters and among inward commuters. The scale of FDI over recent years and its associated employment was also presented. The performance of the Local Enterprise Office was highlighted by Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise, Local Enterprise Office. Brian McCarthy, Senior Planner, Clare Co. Council, outlined the scale of the lands that were

zoned for enterprise in Clare at the University of Limerick and on the Clare shore of the Shannon Estuary.

Ger Dollard introduced the topics for discussion as:

- The need to achieve regional balance
- The number of itineraries to Clare and feedback from them
- The sectors that were being targeted for Clare.
- The promotion of the opportunities relating to the Shannon Estuary
- The potential acquisition of Information Age Park Ennis (IAPE)
- The Update situation in relation to the Community Enterprise Centres
- The achievement of the targets in the Regional Action Plan for Jobs

Jerry Moloney of Enterprise Ireland highlighted the agency's focus on:

- R&D in conjunction with UL, LIT and GMIT and which accounted for approximately one third (€30m) of the agency's expenditure in the region in the past number of years. This was predominantly industry-led and focused on particular sub-sectors within the different 3rd Levels
- various voucher, equity and grant-aid packages. The latter were generally on a 50/50 basis and involved almost €3m in Clare in the past number of years.
- Community initiatives by way of Community Enterprise and Community Enterprise Centres. Harriet Cotter of Enterprise Ireland noted that Clare had one Community Enterprise Centre (Ennistymon) and they were awaiting a final decision on the other Clare applications (eight in total).

Niall O'Callaghan of IDA Ireland highlighted the Agency's ambitious targets for the Region that will see:

- growth of 30%/40% in its investment
- increased itineraries in the Mid West Region to 66 in the period 2015-2017. There were 9 to Clare in 2015
- continued support for **existing** 'IDA-supported' enterprises, which nationally accounted for 70% of all investment by the Agency. In the case of Clare, IDA-assisted and Enterprise Ireland-assisted employment accounted for 7,000 jobs approximately.

He also noted that former economic advantages associated with high levels of Grant-Aid and low Corporate tax rates were no longer as applicable. In order to achieve competitiveness on a global stage it was necessary for Clare to focus on; proximity to 'talent pool' of two university cities; the critical mass offered by this new inter-regional entity; significantly lower cost base compared to other major cities; the large clusters of cutting edge technologies and industries; international connectivity; quality of life.

He highlighted the need to develop a particular 'signature identity' for the county that perhaps drew on a globally recognisable heritage such as 'Aviation' and 'Shannon'.

A number of councillors highlighted the need to develop:

- the Clare shore of the Shannon Estuary, including the major Moneypoint facility, in terms of large industry, transshipment, alternative energy, etc.
- the Northern shore of Shannon Estuary which provided comparative advantage over the Southern Shore in terms of the low flood risk and low silting associated with the former. These were serious considerations in light of Climate Change Adaptation.
- the Aviation Sector and its linkages with 3rd. Level
- a talent pool that was willing to forego premium salaries in light of Quality of Life opportunities that the county offered, albeit that there was a need to quantify the scale of potential 'talented returnees'.
- the opportunities offered by the county to enterprises who wanted to express their 'social responsibility' by way of generating/consuming 'Green Energy'
- the Information Age Park in Ennis (IAPE) and the Ballymaley Business Park.
- the physical facilities in Shannon to accommodate new/expanding enterprises
- the expansion/creation of smaller enterprises which resulted in job-creation on a scale equivalent to the 'one-off' job-creation announced by larger enterprises, albeit the former are seldom 'announced'.
- the opportunities for Renewable Energy and access to water.

By way of response, Niall O'Callaghan noted that, with the completion of the N18 to Tuam and the resultant 45 minute commute, not only did the Region require to develop its Unique Selling Point (USP) so did the newly connected inter-regional entity and all sub-regions including County Clare. The acquisition of the IAPE by IDA Ireland needed to be understood in the context of: the limited funding available; the strong strategic case made for the two sites acquired in Limerick City - Raheen and Plassey, where there were many current agency-clients. He also noted that all itineraries gave equal consideration to publically-owned, agency-owned and privately-owned facilities and that the Agency had strong working relations with the Shannon Group (comprising Shannon Airport, Shannon Commercial Properties, International Aviation Services Centre-IASC, Shannon Heritage).

Jerry Moloney indicated that it was very difficult to estimate the return on investment (ROI) in R&D as the route to commercialisation was not a direct causal pathway. However, much 'Green' energy R&D was beginning to come to market.

He also noted that there were supports for enterprises at different stages of product development from 'blue sky' to 'pre-commercialisation' to 'commercialisation' and support for enterprises that were engaged in 'sub-supply' to become 'own product developers', which in turn may have potential to sell overseas. However, experience indicated (with print Industry

diversification as an example) that industry knows best 'where opportunity will emerge'.

At a broad level the strong sectors were Aviation, Engineering (Modern) and Life Sciences with ICT a common cross-cutting sector. At a more local level there appeared to be potential for the development of Home working centres, provided they had access to cutting edge Broadband and cutting edge technologies that were Broadband-based (eg. design and manufacturing software that could be accessed via broadband).

In summary, Niall O'Callaghan indicated, that the task was to leverage what is currently available. The strategic element of this task was most challenging in terms of:

- which location to focus on?
- which cluster to engage?
- what 'signature identity' is or has potential to be 'global'?

In addition, Jerry Moloney highlighted the absolute necessity of 'single messaging'.

The meeting closed with the Chairman Cllr. Richard Nagle thanking all councillors and sectoral representatives for their constructive input and thanking Jerry Moloney and Harriet Cotter (Enterprise Ireland) and Niall O'Callaghan (IDA Ireland) for their constructive analysis, response and suggestions.

2) Date of next meeting:

Noted that date of next meeting is 12th September 2016.

3) AOB:

With no other business the meeting concluded.

Signed:

Cathaoirleach

**Director, Economic Development
& Enterprise**