# Minutes of the Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held remotely on MS Teams on Monday, 1st March 2021 at 11.00am

**Present:** Cllr Pat McMahon, Chairperson

Cllr Michael Begley

Cllr P.J. Ryan

Cllr P.J. Kelly Cllr Gabriel Keating

Cllr Pat Daly

Cllr Johnny Flynn

Ms Rosaleen O’Reilly

Mr Pat Morris

Ms Emma Karran

Ms Elaine D’Alton

Liam Conneally, Director of Service

Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise

Helen Quinn, A/Senior Planner

Congella McGuire, Heritage Officer

Valerie Fleming, Assistant Staff Officer

**Apologies:** Mr Patrick Keogh

1. **Minutes of Economic Development SPC meeting 7th December 2020.**

The minutes of the Economic Development SPC meeting held on 7th December 2020 were proposed by Cllr Gabriel Keating, seconded by Cllr P.J. Ryan and agreed.

Cllr Johnny Flynn requested that presentations for SPC meetings be circulated in advance of the meetings as he is involved in the renewable energy industry and would need to know in advance if he should withdraw from the meeting due to a conflict of interest. The Chairman stated that presentations are normally circulated after meetings however where possible this request will be facilitated. Cllr J Flynn requested that the minutes record that at the December 2020 Economic Development SPC meeting no discussion took place around the development of policy for renewable energy and therefore Cllr J Flynn did not need to withdraw from that meeting.

1. **Climate Change and Biodiversity**

* **Funding opportunities for Climate Action**

Using a PowerPoint presentation Helen Quinn outlined the range of funding opportunities at EU, National and local level in the area of Climate Action.

* **Biodiversity Progress Report**

Using a PowerPoint presentation Congella McGuire, Heritage Officer, outlined details of the Clare Biodiversity Programme 2021.

Elaine D’Alton also requested that SPC presentations be made available in advance of meetings and asked if presentations could be saved electronically at a central location. Elaine asked if there was any opportunity to register energy usage in the County, if a social inclusion analysis has been carried out with regard to biodiversity training and suggested that an inventory be compiled of all courses available in the County.

Cllr P.J. Ryan welcomed the opportunity to apply for climate action funding and asked that Rural Development Officers be kept fully informed of these funding streams.

Cllr Gabriel Keating recommended that the EU Investment Bank be better utilised in terms of funding applications.

Cllr Johnny Flynn referred to study carried out in 1991/2 regarding the vulnerability of the Irish coastline and which assessed Clare’s coastline as being one of the most vulnerable. He suggested a funding application be made to facilitate a review of that study to determine the current status of Clare’s coastline. Cllr Flynn also referred to a 2007 study commissioned by Ennis Town Council to identify climate change protection measures for the town. One of the suggestions was to relocate the coastal barrage at Clarecastle at some time in the future and Cllr Flynn suggested now might be an opportune time for this relocation.

Liam Conneally advised that another Directorate was responsible for coastal protection in the County and he committed to bringing these suggestions to the attention of the Project Management Office.

1. **Planning**

* **County Development Plan Review update**

Using a PowerPoint presentation Helen Quinn, A/Senior Planner provided an update on the review of the County Development Plan and advised that the Chief Executive’s report on pre-draft submissions has issued to Elected Members for their consideration.

Emma Karran asked if it was possible to establish a local task force to work in conjunction with Irish Water to ascertain the order for upgrading/installing water and waste water infrastructure. She added that without the necessary infrastructure whole areas of rural Clare will be de-zoned according to planning regulations which will lead to even greater rural depopulation.

Liam Conneally advised that the Elected Members of Clare Co Co have raised the matter of increased capacity and provision of new water and waste water infrastructure with Irish Water and the Council will continue to work closely with Irish Water on this matter. He clarified that with the establishment of Irish Water that the Council no longer provides the water services functions.

Cllr P.J. Kelly referred to the County Development Plan review and that the elected members will issue a direction to the CE regarding the County Development Plan.

Cllr Pat Daly referred to the proposal to seek city status for Ennis similar to Kilkenny and Sligo. He stated that in recent years the IDA has not brought sufficient employment opportunities to Ennis. He asked for the support of the Economic Development SPC on this matter and stated that city status for Ennis would bring more development and industry opportunity to the town.

Cllr Johnny Flynn stated that the County Development Plan is the primary statutory policy document for Clare County Council with the LECP being the second most important. He said that the socio economic evidence informing the LECP is now out of date and asked if a behaviour and attitudes study will be carried out for the County Development Plan review. He also queried if the County Development Plan will be updated to reflect 2022 census data when available. Cllr Flynn supported Emma Karran’s concerns regarding the depopulation of rural Clare.

Liam Conneally responded that the Council is conducting the review of the County Development Plan in compliance with national policy guidelines and legislation. With regard to the IDA Liam advised that he has had very active engagement with the IDA and Clare is receiving significantly more visits in recent years and that this improved working relationship will continue. Liam clarified that the issue of city status for Ennis was discussed at Clare County Council’s February 2021 meeting where the Chief Executive advised that this matter would be more suitably considered in the context of the National Planning Framework. In response to Cllr Flynn’s query Liam advised that data is not available for up to 12 months following a Census and therefore 2022 Census data will not inform the County Development Plan review. However, figures for projected population growth will be taken into consideration as will any studies undertaken as part of the LECP.

Cllr Michael Begley queried if there is any way of influencing Irish Water’s work programme through the review of the County Development Plan. Helen Quinn, A/ Senior Planner responded that it is possible to zone lands which will guide IW in utility provision however the County Development Plan cannot force a pipe to be put in the ground.

Cllr Pat Daly supported Cllr Gabriel Keating’s earlier recommendation to apply for funding from the EU Investment Bank as there have been talks of Carrigaholt getting a sewerage scheme from as far back as 1992/1993. Helen Quinn responded that an application was made for RRDF funding in 2018 to fund waste water infrastructure for Carrigaholt, Broadford and Doolin but this application was unsuccessful.

**4. LEO update**

Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise, provided an update on the supports provided to businesses through the Clare Local Enterprise Office and advised that the Trading on Line voucher has reduced from 90% to 50% funding.

Cllr Johnny Flynn asked if it is possible to continue the Click for Clare initiative through level 4 and level 3 Covid restrictions in order to bolster local spending. He also suggested recording all training provided to businesses and making the recordings available to others through the LEO website.

Cllr Gabriel Keating referred to ongoing running costs of the community hall in Miltown incurred by the Willie Clancy Summer School and added that as they don’t qualify for the Business Continuity Voucher that they require some type of financial support.

Pat Morris requested an update on the Innovation Hub planned for Ennis and Liam Conneally responded that a suitable location has been identified for the Innovation Hub and the project is advancing under the auspices of the Ennis 2040 DAC.

Liam Conneally advised that a significant amount of funding for business was channeled through the Finance section of Clare County Council and he acknowledged the work of Noeleen Fitzgerald, Finance Officer, and her team in the restart and restart plus grants schemes.

Padraic McElwee advised that it is intended to continue with the Click for Clare initiative and he will look into providing training recordings on the website but advised it is difficult to do this due to Data Protection issues.

**7. A.O.B.:**

Liam Conneally suggested that he could request the Southern Regional Assembly to give a presentation on EU Funding opportunities at the June Economic Development SPC meeting. This was proposed by Cllr Pat McMahon, seconded by Cllr Gabriel Keating and agreed.

Liam Conneally acknowledged the continued support of Ciaran Collins, IT, in hosting the Economic Development SPC meeting remotely.

The meeting then concluded.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Cllr Pat McMahon, Chairperson**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Liam Conneally,**

**Director of Economic Development.**