

**Minutes of the Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee Meeting
held in Áras Contae an Chláir on Monday, 9th March 2020 at 11.00am**

Present: Cllr Pat McMahon, Chairperson
Cllr P.J. Ryan
Cllr Johnny Flynn
Cllr Gabriel Keating
Cllr Michael Begley
Mr Pat Morris
Ms Rosaleen O'Reilly
Ms Emma Karran
Mr Pat Keogh
Mr Seamus Ryan
Ms Elaine D'Alton
Liam Conneally, Director of Service
Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise
Brian McCarthy, Senior Planner
Carmel Greene, Senior Executive Officer
Helen Quinn, Senior Executive Planner
Congella Maguire, Heritage Officer
Valerie Fleming, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies: Cllr P.J. Kelly

1. Minutes of Economic Development SPC meeting 16th December 2019.

Seamus Ryan requested the following amendment to the Minutes of the Economic Development SPC meeting held on 16th December 2019:

“Seamus Ryan requested information on the marketing of the Data Centre and asked if the Council have a preference for an end user for the Junction 13 Data Centre site; what progress has been made on the categorizing of properties owned by the Council; if the Council is considering working towards encouraging the use of robotics, (higher end manufacture, AO, Robotics and Blockchain) and what work is being done with the Government’s Transition Fund in preparing for the repurposing of Moneypoint in the County.”

This amendment was proposed by Seamus Ryan and seconded by Cllr Michael Begley.

Elaine D'Alton requested that the following comment be included in the Minutes:

“That future economic activities should take Climate Change Adaptation Strategy Objectives into account.”

The inclusion of this comment was proposed by Elaine D'Alton and seconded by Cllr Michael Begley.

Subject to the above amendments the minutes of the Economic Development SPC meeting held on 16th December 2019 were proposed by Cllr P.J. Ryan, seconded by Cllr Gabriel Keating and agreed.

Pat Morris requested a hard copy of the RSES document. Liam agreed that Helen Quinn would forward an electronic link to the RSES document following the SPC meeting and as soon as hard copies became available from the Southern Regional Assembly a copy would be forwarded to Pat. In the meantime if Pat requires a hard copy then the printing of one can be arranged.

2. Biodiversity presentation by Ms Congella McGuire, Heritage Officer.

Using a PowerPoint presentation Congella McGuire, Heritage Officer, presented on Biodiversity in County Clare including such areas as Heritage and Biodiversity Plans, Bees in Ireland, All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, Biodiversity Training Programme, Reading Your Local Landscape Course, Holy Wells and iCan – Clare Community Heritage Website.

Emma Karan queried if Clare County Council had any plans to employ a full time Climate Change and Biodiversity Officer and Liam Conneally responded that the position would be considered in conjunction with other staffing requirements throughout the organization.

Cllr Johnny Flynn requested that the Reading your Local Landscape Course be extended to cover the River Fergus in the Ennis area. He also asked if the title should be changed from “Climate Change and Biodiversity” to “Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency.” He asked Congella if it is true that the Irish Honey Bee is the only one that will fly in the rain.

Cllr Gabriel Keating requested clarification on what the plan for Holy Wells in Clare is.

Congella responded that the record of Holy Wells in Clare already exists but she hopes to bring together some groups who have done background work on Holy Wells and see what they can achieve together.

Cllr Michael Begley stated that sometimes Climate Change Actions can be thought of as something that is very high level but actually a lot of the actions listed in the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 – 2024 can be achieved locally.

In response to Cllr Johnny Flynn’s suggestion Liam Conneally advised that the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019 – 2024 was adopted by Clare County Council and the title will not be changing at this point. He added that all actions within the Strategy are considered a priority and thus will receive equal significance and said that he is aware that policy discussions at national Government level factor in climate change so the matter is on the policy agenda at national, regional and local level.

Emma Karan supported Cllr Michael Begley’s comment and suggested that climate change be considered more in terms of “climate vandalism”.

Cllr Johnny Flynn said there were two ways of addressing climate change the first is in terms of mitigation to prevent further damage and the second is in terms of adaptation to manage change that has already occurred.

Liam Conneally complemented the level of discussion on the topic and suggested that Ms Aoife Sugrue of Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO) be invited to address a future Economic Development SPC meeting. This was agreed.

3. LEO:

Padraic McElwee outlined that the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) in Clare has supported the creation of 120 net jobs in 2019 which was an increase of 15% on the previous year. Since April 2014 there have been a total of 872 new jobs created in Clare with 20 enterprises being supported by Enterprise Ireland as they are now competing on the global stage. Currently the LEO supports 229 enterprises.

- Brexit Impact Paper

Padraic McElwee circulated Clare County Council’s Draft paper titled **Brexit: Impact on Clare** and outlined its contents to the meeting. He stated that LEO Brexit training and mentoring has been underway for some time but due to the length of Brexit some apathy exists regarding Brexit within the business community. He added that he is working closely with contacts in Philadelphia and Rhode Island to promote access to Europe through Shannon Airport and Ireland’s midwest.

Cllr Johnny Flynn proposed that the Economic Development SPC would write to all political party leaders requesting the inclusion of recommendations from the recently published Copenhagen Report in any Programme for Government. He highlighted that when the UK leaves the EU Shannon Airport will no longer have a year round direct daily link to an EU hub and therefore Shannon would at a minimum require two flights daily midweek and one flight daily at weekends into a European airport hub.

Cllr Johnny Flynn also suggested that the Economic Development SPC should agree a Position Paper on Brexit rather than an Impact Paper. He requested the inclusion of the agricultural sector in the paper and suggested that Government funding is required for new tourism related flights into Shannon as both the agricultural sector and Shannon Airport are very vulnerable in light of Brexit.

Cllr P.J. Ryan supported Cllr Flynn's comments and stated that it was important to seek the rebalancing of flights into Ireland from Dublin to Shannon Airport. In relation to the agricultural sector Cllr Ryan pointed out that Britain contributed €8.5bn to EU funds annually and so the farming community will directly feel the impact of the reduction in the CAP budget.

Pat Keogh said he represents the construction industry and requested that the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) be included as a stakeholder as construction is a huge employer in Clare both directly and indirectly. He added that a lot of construction material is sourced through Britain and so will be hugely impacted by Brexit.

Liam Conneally advised that the SPC is a committee of Clare County Council and while it can make a recommendation to full Council to communicate with political party leaders on policy issues the Committee itself will not communicate directly with these leaders.

Pat Morris supported the previous comments and asked about Opportunity No 7 "Develop an "Economic Profile" promoting Clare as a place to do business". Padraic McElwee responded that there is a summary document in relation to this which is currently being prepared by Clare County Council and discussed with the IDA.

Padraic McElwee will update the Brexit Impact Paper taking account of SPC members' comments before presenting to full Council for agreement and subsequent forwarding to political party leaders if desired.

- **Diaspora Policy Paper**

Padraic McElwee circulated his report on the Introduction of Clare Diaspora Policy and outlined the contents. Both he and Liam Conneally have been engaging with a number of stakeholders and put considerable effort into building networks and creating links with Clare people at home and abroad with the aim of encouraging more inward investment and also assisting Clare companies to expand into other regions and abroad. Liam advised that the Council will be in contact with the Clare Diaspora regarding big investment opportunities for Ennis as identified in the Ennis 2040 Spatial and Economic Plan.

Emma Karan requested the circulation of Economic Development SPC discussion papers two weeks in advance of an SPC meeting to allow her time to circulate the paper to other PPN members for their opinions. Liam Conneally responded that any written submissions that the PPN members wish to make can be tabled at the next SPC meeting as both Brexit and Diaspora position papers are evolving pieces of work. He added that there will be further opportunities to feed into both papers.

Cllr P.J. Ryan agreed that effort should be made to contact Clare people outside the Country and referenced meetings in the past that he attended with various philanthropists. He suggested it is now time to reschedule such meetings and to consider connecting with groups such as the Clare Association in New York and the New York Hibernian Group.

Pat Morris suggested that while it was very important to forge links abroad it was also important to engage with Clare people living within Ireland.

In response to Seamus Ryan's query regarding the resources available for Diaspora engagement Padraic McElwee said the role is currently being fulfilled by him and the LEO team.

Emma Karan asked if this paper would be on the Economic Development SPC agenda in the future and Liam Conneally responded that once the SPC members were in agreement this Draft would be updated and brought before the Economic Development SPC members for approval and then tabled at a full Clare County Council meeting.

Cllr Johnny Flynn agreed that it was hugely important to seek Diaspora engagement abroad but also to look at Clare companies based in other counties who are interested in relocating to the West.

Liam Conneally added that the Ennis 2040 plan will be very beneficial for this type of work as it will provide the necessary information/requirements for particular sites and so connections can be made with targeted companies.

Padraic McElwee finished by asking the members to advise him of any contacts they have who hold senior positions outside of Co. Clare and he would be happy to make contact with them.

4. Planning:

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and County Development Plan (CDP) variation

Using a PowerPoint presentation Helen Quinn outlined the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region and spoke about its impact on Clare's County Development Plan. The commencement of a full review of the County Development Plan is due in December next however it is proposed to do a statutory variation of the County Development plan at this time to take account of RSES.

With regard to the full review of the County Development Plan Cllr P.J. Ryan stated that it is important that the population projections for County Clare be increased to allow for the additional zoning of land to facilitate population growth across the county.

5. Strategic Economic Development Activities:

- Presentation by Brian McCarthy, Senior Planner

Using a PowerPoint presentation Brian McCarthy outlined the following Strategic Economic Development Activities:

- Killaloe – Ballina Town Enhancement, Tourism and Mobility Plan
- Shannon Town Centre Action Area Plan
- Roche, Clarecastle
- Cahercon Maritime Economic Zone (MEZ)
- UL/South Clare Economic Strategic Development Zone

Liam Conneally confirmed that there could be a presentation on Cahercon Maritime Economic Zone at a future Economic Development SPC meeting.

In reference to the UL/South Clare Economic Strategic Development Zone Cllr Michael Begley stated that it is taking a disappointing length of time to make this application. He stated that clarity is needed regarding the definition of this particular SDZ proposal and asked Brian McCarthy for a timeframe for making the application. Regarding the Shannon Town Centre Action Area Plan Cllr Begley felt the proposed expansion is a very linear development and stated that Bóthar Mór and lands to the north of the N19 should be incorporated into the active life of Shannon Town Centre.

Brian McCarthy responded that over the preceding months a lot of background work has been done with regard to the SDZ application and it was vital to have the SDZ proposal included as an objective in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and to have an economic appraisal and jobs survey as part of the application material. He added that Clare County Council has been working with UL and believes that UL understand the concept of the Economic SDZ proposal.

Brian clarified that the proposed development area in Shannon is 70ha in size which will facilitate an amount of development.

Liam Conneally advised the members of Brian McCarthy's change of role to focus on the delivery of these Strategic Economic Initiatives which underlines Clare County Council's commitment to the delivery of these strategic projects.

6. A.O.B.:

Liam Conneally outlined the work underway preparing Clare County Council's Business Continuity Plan in the event of an outbreak of Covid 19 virus. He stated that a deep clean of public areas has taken place within Clare County Council's buildings and that the Council is being guided by the HSE as lead agency and will continue to do what is asked to help contain the virus.

A link to the PowerPoint presentations will be forwarded to the SPC members following the meeting.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____

**Cllr Pat McMahon
Chairperson**

Date: _____

Signed: _____

**Liam Conneally,
Director of Economic Development.**

Date: _____