

Minutes of the Rural Development Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) held on Tuesday 26th April at 11.30am in Room 242 and on-line

In attendance:

Cllr. Pat Hayes
Cllr. Shane Talty
Cllr. Pat Burke
Cllr. Joe Killeen
Cllr. Cillian Murphy
Cllr. Bill Chambers
Cllr. Mary Howard
Mr. Denis Tuohy
Ms. Niamh O'Callaghan
Ms. Jean Tierney O'Keeffe
Ms. Anny Wise
Mr. Leonard Cleary
Ms. Bernadette Haugh
Ms. Helen Moloney

Organisation:

Chair
Elected Member
Elected Member
Elected Member
Elected Member
Elected Member
Elected Member
Agriculture/Farming
Community/Voluntary
Social Inclusion
Environment/Conservation
Director of Service, Rural Development
A/Senior Executive Officer
Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies

Mr. Eugene Crimmins

Community/Voluntary

Cllr. P. Hayes welcomed the members to the meeting.

No. 1 Minutes of Meeting held on 23rd February 2022:

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd February 2022 were proposed by Cllr. P. Burke, seconded by D. Tuohy and agreed.

No. 2 Matters arising:

D. Tuohy requested an update on the Rural Development Strategy. L. Cleary advised that they are awaiting the final report and that the process has been delayed due to staff assisting with the Ukrainian Crisis. Leonard stated that a number of aspects of the work programme had to be paused. Dr. Sean Ó'Riordain has the final draft ready, which has incorporated the views of the SPC, and will be presented to the SPC at a later date.

No. 3. "Rights of Nature" (Presentation by Clare PPN):

Cllr. P. Hayes introduced Emanuela Ferrari to the members. Emanuela thanked the members for the opportunity to present on the framework entitled "Rights of Nature". She outlined the following details:-

- What are the Rights of Nature?
- Principles
- A Healthy and Habitable Country

- In practice: globally
- In practice: Ireland
- Pathway towards the Rights of Nature in practice
- Pathway towards the Rights of Nature: work programme
- Declaration of the Rights of the River Shannon

Cllr. P. Hayes thanked Emanuela for her presentation and enquired if it is a national body that is promoting the “Rights of Nature” or is it an individual representation.

Emanuela advised that it is similar to human rights. There is a body appointed to promote it and there are individuals involved. She advised that they are in contact with many organisations e.g. the Environmental Justice Network who are based in Northern Ireland and includes academics and individuals.

Cllr. C. Murphy thanked Emanuela for the presentation. In relation to the River Shannon, he enquired what would the consequences of the Rights of Nature be on the current system. He advised that there is a need to be specific on the consequences and impacts. Cllr. C. Murphy requested a copy of the presentation.

D. Tuohy stated that this is a Rural Development SPC and the fundamental role of the SPC is to discuss policy and try and shape it for the Council as a whole. Denis enquired how relevant this is for the Rural SPC, what needs to be done by this SPC and stated that a lot of the ambitions/aims could contravene existing National and European legislation.

Emanuela advised that the first step is to undertake dialogue with this committee and get ideas as soon as possible. It is a pathway and the first step is to adopt a motion to draft a declaration. Emanuela stated that if it gains legal weight it will compliment legislation. She stated that they will form a working group within the PPN and will endeavour to change people’s mindset and change the basis of how people are thinking. It is a process similar to the human rights and in the medium term it would gain legal weight. The working group will have to be assisted by experts and advocates of the Rights of Nature. She stated that she visited different projects recently and some are of a destructive nature. The key is to preserve nature which benefits humans too.

A. Wyse thanked Emanuela for her presentation and stated that nature has become disrupted to us and it is fighting back. She advised that it is a matter of humility and recognising where we are at.

Cllr. P. Hayes thanked Emanuela for her presentation and stated that it is something that needs to be discussed and the SPC has given commitment to discuss environmental issues. He stated that all initiatives are proofed against environmental issues. The topic needs a lot of thought and debate as there are implications but there are counter arguments on every side. There is a need to understand what people are trying to do. Cllr. Hayes requested that a copy of the presentation be sent to the members.

No. 4 Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Biodiversity:

A. Wyse advised that Emanuela's presentation covers this item.

No. 4 (b) Update on Ukrainian Crisis:

Prior to the presentation from Music Generation Clare, L. Cleary updated the members on the Ukrainian situation as follows:-

- 2,000 Ukrainians are in hotels at present.
- In addition to the 2,000, there are another 1,000 that have arrived privately, who are meeting relations and friends and are renting their own accommodation.
- The International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) is responsible for the provision of accommodation and related services.
- The locations are Lisdoonvarna, Ennis, Shannon, Kilkee, Flagmount and Fanore.
- Clare has the second highest rate of refugees. Dublin has the most.

Leonard acknowledged the huge community and voluntary response to this crisis and advised that the Council is getting agencies to work together and there is good engagement from stakeholders. All agencies are stretching staff and services to make sure there is an immediate response. There is a national coordinated approach being worked out by government and a structured system will be put in place. Leonard advised that the approach is to try to build and increase capacity. He stated that there is a large forum at each location and there will be one voice from each location. There are a number of agencies working on this at specific locations. He advised that there is a need to plan and put a structure in place on the provision of services and have a balanced service approach. Leonard stated that this will be a long-term role with a minimum of 2/3 years. He advised that he would provide a more comprehensive report at the next SPC meeting.

A. Wyse referred to the SICAP programme and report. She advised that at a recent PPN meeting the members enquired about the Council's housing situation in rural areas. She stated that in rural areas it does not have a list as the population is too low. She advised that it would be good to have social housing in rural areas.

L. Cleary advised that there is a SICAP Programme Development Officer employed by the CLDC and the local authorities have requested additional funding in the discretionary budget for SICAP. There is a need to look at KPIs for this Programme. Leonard stated that there is a need to balance existing KPIs in social housing and the Housing Directorate will lead on this. He advised that there is a great opportunity to utilise investment into vacant properties e.g. old shops could in time morph into social housing. There is a need to take into account the new Town Centre First policy which will be set up in every county. For immediate accommodation it is difficult to turn around properties.

Cllr. P. Hayes stated that there is a lot of vacant properties that would meet the requirements.

J. Tierney O’Keeffe enquired about an update on the Data Centres. Leonard stated that this project was being led by the Economic Directorate and that he would pass on the query.

No. 5 Presentation by Music Generation Clare

L. Cleary introduced Padraig Rynne and Fiona McGrath, Music Generation Clare to the members. Padraig thanked the SPC for the opportunity to present to the members and outlined details of the Music Generation Clare programme as follows:-

- Introduction to Music Generation Clare
- Funding Model
- Benefits of Music and results from funding
- **Programmes;**

Large Group Classes: Kids Ceol, Teens Ceol, Youthreach

Ensembles: Harp Ensemble, Irish Concertina Orchestra, The Junior Trad Group

Hubs: Instrumental Hubs, Creative Hubs, Strings

Sound Engineering and Music Production: 8 learners. This takes place in their recording studio.

Additional Once Off Programmes: Central Cultural Irlandais partnership, Phoenix, Arizona twinning performance, Consairtin Fest, SoundWaves Festival, PIMA! Festival, Response to Ukrainian Crises.

- Governance and Finance

Padraig advised that there has been a strict analysis of expenditure and Music Generation Clare is not a charity and is non profitable. They receive generous funding from the LCETB and businesses and they have been successful in applying for funding but need matched funding. They have secured funding of €15,000 from Clare County Council but that would have been the lowest. Padraig enquired if this can be reviewed and a commitment put in place. Padraig stated that he is hopeful that Music Generation Clare will be seen as a long term investment.

Cllr. P. Hayes thanked Padraig and Fiona for their comprehensive presentation and stated that it is probably the first time that most of the members have heard what Music Generation Clare do. He stated that they are doing wonderful work and people do not know or understand how it is funded or what work they do. He advised that music is what keeps this County alive and is part of education. He recommended that Clare County Council, through the Arts, sit down and negotiate a long term plan for Music Generation Clare as they need stability and Clare is the home of music.

Cllr. S. Talty echoed Pat’s support and agreed that people are not fully aware of what Music Generation Clare do. He thanked Padraig for the excellent presentation and coverage and noted the great collaborative approach. He recommended that this be discussed at budget time to support the great work they are doing.

J. Tierney O'Keeffe advised that Clare Youth Service has worked with Padraig creating hubs. The hubs are a fantastic resource in the areas and young people experience so much from the tutors they bring in. Without Music Generation this would not be happening on the ground.

D. Tuohy agreed with the comments and recommended that the Council step up with regard to funding. Denis enquired if there are other resources that they need to apply for e.g. administrative staff.

Padraig advised that they are very stretched and only have two full time employees and their wages comes out of the €200K funding. They usually work a 12 hour day and any assistance would be appreciated. They received assistance from the LCETB with the provision of laptops.

Fiona advised that it is hard to summarise what Music Generation do. They are ten years in Clare and wanted to expand the programme. They have achieved this aim and they now want to build on it. She advised that since Covid there has been an increased need to boost self-esteem. She stated that they love what they do but they need more support.

N. O'Callaghan advised that she fully supports this application for extra funding.

L. Cleary took the opportunity to acknowledge their excellent work. In relation to funding, he advised that this can be applied for within the Arts budget. For Budget 2023, Leonard recommended they carry out preliminary research, formalise a project and the request should then come in through the Arts Office. When this is being debated in the Council Chamber the SPC can offer their support. He also recommended that Music Generation visit all SPCs as they all need to hear about this. In each SPC there is elected and non-elected members and the programme can be promoted. It needs a multi annual plan which is a key part of the remit of this SPC.

B. Haugh thanked Padraig and Fiona for their presentation and acknowledged the work that they carry out. She advised that additional funding was approved for the CSS grant this year in the sum of €20k. She stressed the importance of planning the work as it is very important to see an overview of the work that they do. Bernie wished them all the best in the future.

Cllr. P. Hayes thanked Padraig and Fiona for attending the meeting and stated that there is a need to sit down and look at a long-term plan collectively and work with the other agencies. A decision has to be made by this Council in support of a once off grant or community grant.

No. 6 Any Other Business

Burial Ground Review and Shannon Heritage

Cllr. S. Talty requested an update on the Burial Ground Review and a comment on the engagement with Shannon Heritage.

B. Haugh advised that the SPC agreed to do a review of the Burial Grounds and the Council engaged a consultant. The consultant has now completed his review. There are a series of actions arising that need to be progressed in the autumn work programme. Bernie advised that a lot of work has been done and the next step was to progress the document and engage legal advisors but this has been put on hold until available capacity.

L. Cleary advised that in order for Clare County Council to take over Shannon Heritage sites, investment is needed. Without financial support the Council will not be in a position to take on any of the products. There is a meeting of key Government Departments next week and Leonard advised that he will update the members at the next SPC meeting. By the next meeting, the Council will still be in a transition phase and they will have to work closely with Shannon Group. Leonard took the opportunity to acknowledge Shannon Group's support in bringing the proposal to this stage.

Standing Orders

D. Tuohy enquired if Standing Orders need to be reviewed or amended in light of the hybrid meetings. In relation to special meetings of the Council he proposed that non-elected members be invited to attend in the public gallery. He recommended looking at inviting presentations from the National Rural Network and Teagasc and some of the presentations could involve the 4 SPCs.

Cllr. P. Hayes stated that he was unsure about non-elected members attending other meetings and also stated that the hybrid meetings are still very challenging. He stressed the importance of reviewing the Tourism Strategy in line with the addition of Shannon Heritage i.e. what type of tourism product is needed.

With no other business the meeting concluded and Cllr. Hayes thanked everyone for their attendance. He invited members to submit items for the next Agenda and to let him know if they wanted a presentation on Shannon Heritage.

Signed: _____
Cllr. P. Hayes
Cathaoirleach

Leonard Cleary
Director of Rural Development and
West Clare Municipal District