

**Draft Minutes of the Rural Development Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September at 3:00 p.m. in Ennis Digital Hub and on-line**

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**In attendance:**

Cllr. Pat Hayes

Cllr. Shane Talty

Cllr. Pat Burke

Cllr. Joe Killeen

Cllr. Cillian Murphy

Cllr. Mary Howard

Mr. Denis Tuohy

Mr. Jason Murphy

Ms. Bernadette Haugh

Mr. Brendan Boyce

Ms. Niamh Wiley

Ms. Grainne McCormack

Mr. Seamus Murríhy

Mr. Darren Carroll

Ms. Helen Moloney

**Organisation:**

Chair

Elected Member

Elected Member

Elected Member

Elected Member

Elected Member

Agriculture/Farming

Director of Service, Rural Development

Senior Executive Officer

Administrative Officer

Rural & Community Development Officer

Rural & Community Development Officer

Rural & Community Development Officer

Rural & Community Development Officer

Assistant Staff Officer

**Apologies**

Ms. Jean Tierney O’Keeffe Social Inclusion

Cllr. Pat Hayes welcomed the members, the Rural and Community Development Officers and Jason Murphy to the meeting. Cllr. Hayes advised that Jason is the Director of Rural Development with responsibility also for the Ukrainian Services and Sports and Recreation. He stated that the Tourism brief remains under the Rural SPC brief until after the local elections. He advised that an update on all Tourism matters will be on the Agenda for the November SPC Meeting.

Jason introduced himself to the members and outlined his role and responsibilities in relation to the Rural Directorate, Ukrainian Services and Sport and Recreation. He introduced his team of Rural and Community Development Officers. He stated that in relation to the LECP process they are working with the LCDC in relation to the broader framework of projects e.g. Town and Village Renewal Scheme, Outdoor Recreation etc. He outlined the various grant schemes and advised that the RCDOs and Elected Members are critical in relation to how functions are delivered. It is important to recognise the sectoral interests which is critical from an SPC policy and programme delivery and they will look towards sustainable resilient communities. Jason advised that he met with the Audit Committee in relation to sports and recreation and will be setting out a work plan.

Cllr. P. Hayes welcomed Brendan Boyce and the RCDOs to the meeting. He stated that the RDOs have an important role and it is important to have people on the ground as some committees struggle to get projects off the ground.

## **No. 1 Minutes of Meeting held on 18th April 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023 were proposed by Cllr. S. Talty, seconded by Cllr. P. Burke and agreed.

## **No. 2 Matters arising**

Cllr. P. Hayes requested a special meeting with burial ground staff as communities are struggling to get projects off the ground due to funding issues. He proposed that this special meeting take place in advance of the Budget. The Rural SPC is a policy group but policy needs funding. Jason advised that a number of notices of motion have been raised and there are strong concerns. He advised that he has spoken to Finance and they will take the issues on board. Shane advised that it was a project that was taken on three years ago and he proposed that the special meeting take place. This was seconded by Cllr. M. Howard and agreed.

Cllr. C. Murphy enquired about the vacancy of Senior Executive Officer in North Clare as the Senior Executive Officer in West Clare is doing two jobs. Jason agreed to follow this up with the HR Department.

A discussion took place on rural transport and the lack of joined up thinking. Issues raised included time-tables, school busses, employment of drivers. Cllr. Killeen stated that a meeting was held with the Principal Officer in the Department of Education and it was recommended to make contact with Local Link to co-ordinate the use of busses so that there could be greater use of resources.

Cllr. Hayes requested that Jason liaise with Local Link or write to them with the issues affecting rural communities and this was agreed. He stated that it is a rural issue and affects rural communities and there should be more research carried out in relation to demand.

**Action 1:** Workshop to be held.

**Action 2:** Engagement with Local Link to be developed through the LECP process.

## **No. 3 Presentation by Project Management Office (PMO) on Greenway Projects and other initiatives.**

Sean Lenihan introduced himself to the members and presented on the following:-

- PMO Background
- Policy Context
- Benefits of having a PMO
- PMO Projects – Cross County
- Major PMO Projects – completed, at construction stage and design stage
- Greenway - High Level Objectives
- Summary of Clare Greenway Projects
- Shannon, Bunratty and Sixmilebridge
- River Shannon Greenway/Blueway
- EuroVelo 1 - Cycle Route Network

Members of the SPC raised queries on the presentation and Sean replied as follows:-

- Funding for public realm works in Ennis is 75% departmental funding and 25% is local authority matched funding. Irish Water are paying for mains upgrades
- An element of the old N18 will be used for the cycleway. Sean agreed to talk to TII on this and will talk to Fergal Timlin in relation to Active Travel.
- Sean agreed to speak to TII in relation to funding for Mountshannon.
- In relation to roads in Kilnamona Sean stated that he raised it again as part of funding for 2024. It is substandard for a national road that has high volumes of traffic.
- In relation to Blakes' Corner the CPO was confirmed but one of the affected landowners are taking a judicial review in October.
- Waterways Ireland are progressing matters and will have a preferred route at the end of the year. They are all put in as options and all options have to be considered.
- The Council is working with the farming community in relation to embankments and the Council is working on them under the minor works programme.
- Land valuers will be available to advise farmers. The code of practice sets out the criteria and the Council will also work with farmers. There will be investment by the state and landowners.
- Concerns in relation to the N67 and North Clare will be passed on to the Senior Engineer and TII.

Sean advised the members that if there had any further issues or concerns to contact him.

Cllr. P. Hayes thanked Seán for his presentation and referred to the upcoming projects and challenges faced.

## **No. 4 Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) Update**

Brendan presented an update on the LECP as follows:-

- Stages of the LECP
- Data informing Clare LECP
- Clare Survey 2023 findings
- Pilot Engagement Project
- High level goals for Clare
- Strategic Actions currently underway
- Next Steps

Cllr. Pat Hayes enquired about the time frame around the plan and Brendan advised that it is a 6 year plan. The statutory 6 week public consultation process will be undertaken and it will then go to the full Council in late January/early February. Jason advised the members that the process is lengthy and if they have any particular ideas or strategic actions that might feed in to the LECP they are welcome to submit same.

## **No. 5 Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Biodiversity**

Cllr. Cillian Murphy referred to an email received from Morgan Lahiffe inviting the members to a briefing. He stated that it aligns with the forthcoming LECP and will compliment each other as well as the County Development Plan and Age Friendly Strategy.

## **No. 6 Any other business**

Cllr. Murphy referred to Active Travel funding and in particular to the protest in Ballyvaughan and stated that active travel funding should be made available in rural areas. He enquired if the distribution of active travel funding is carried out at national level. Cllr. Murphy read out a report from John Leahy that was presented to the Physical SPC. He enquired how much funding Ennis has been granted under Active Travel. He recommended that the Rural SPC make a submission for the Budget for funding to be ring-fenced to rural parts of Co. Clare that are not getting active travel funding.

Cllr. Kileen enquired about who makes the decision on Active Travel funding and if there is a list of projects completed under this funding. He advised that the Ballyvaughan community met and expressed disappointment that they were not getting more funding to improve travel in North Clare. In terms of density of traffic, issues have been raised.

Cllr. Hayes supported this and stated that the Rural SPC should be debating this and that Active Travel should be for the whole County. He stated that he would speak to Cllr. Murphy on this.

Further discussion took place on the various MDs and their applications for active travel funding. Cllr. Howard stated that a huge amount of the funding is executive led and the Municipal Districts apply for it. It is available to all MDs and this should be taken up with the executive in the MDs.

Cllr. Pat Hayes fully endorsed what the members were saying and requested that Jason come back to the members on whether it is a policy of Clare County Council or a national government policy. Jason advised that he would look into this .

Cllr. P. Hayes thanked the Rural and Community Development Officers for attending and that it is important that the SPC and the RCDOs are aligned with the views of the SPC and what is being heard from the communities.

**Action:** Submission to be made for Active Travel funding.

With no other business Cllr. Hayes drew the meeting to a close.