

# **Minutes of Special Meeting of West Clare Municipal District held on 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2020 at 4pm. in the Council Chamber, Aras Contae an Chlair, Ennis**

## **Cathaoirleach sa Cathair:**

Cllr. B. Chambers.

## **I Láthair:**

Cllr. S. Talty, Cllr. R. Garvey, Cllr. G. Keating, Cllr. J. Killeen, Cllr. J. Garrihy, Cllr. I. Lynch, Cllr. C. Murphy, Cllr. P.J. Kelly.

## **Officials present:**

Mr. Leonard Cleary, Area Co-Ordinator & Director of Service  
Mr. J. O'Malley, A/Senior Executive Officer ,West Clare Municipal District  
Mr. P. McElwee, Head of Enterprise, Local Enterprise Office  
Ms. Trina Rynne, Financial Accountant  
Ms. Deirdre O Shea, A/ Head of Tourism, Rural Development  
Ms. Bernadette Haugh, A/SEO, Rural Development  
Mr. Urban McMahon, Head of Information Systems, Digital & Broadband.  
Mr. J. Corry, Administrative Officer & Meetings Administrator.  
Mr. Steve, Lahiffe, SSO, West Clare Municipal District

## **1. Economic development in West Clare post Covid 19**

At the outset L. Cleary welcomed everyone to the Special Meeting to consider priorities and service supports for economic development to respond to the impact of Covid-19 on the West Clare MD. He indicated that he had invited a number of speakers to focus on positive supports available from Clare Co Council, as well as to provide details of projects that were underway and investments available. He the invited each of the speakers to speak in turn.

### **Mr. J. O'Malley, A/Senior Executive Officer ,West Clare Municipal District**

He discussed the **Plan of Strategic Projects in West Clare MD** to highlight the key projects that he felt would have the most positive effect as well as to highlight the role that the SEO would play in this. He added that the MD agreed a number of key strategic areas that would be central to the design and delivery of Council services in West Clare namely:

- A focus on actions and policies that will support population growth throughout the District but with a clear focus on building our towns and villages so that they can become supporting hubs for our rural areas
- Supporting the delivery of council actions so that the people of the District have access to high quality Local Government services.
- Focusing on the sustainable development potential of the District

- Deliver on a number of underpinning priority actions and tasks to ensure that the District is able to grow its population, enhance quality of life and become acknowledged as the centre for well being in Ireland by building a sustainable economy that would be carbon neutral.

He highlighted some of the key priority actions in the Plan namely:

- Delivery of sustainable tourism products
- Linked cycleways/walkways
- Population stabilization/growth
- Programme to refurbish older buildings
- Broadband development
- Network of water based resources
- Building a new Moneypoint
- 4/5 transition towns throughout the County

He concluded by outlining that the role of the SEO was to :

- Lead on the Plan
- Engage with members
- Further develop actions in the Plan to ensure best outcome for the MD

**Mr. P. McElwee, Head of Enterprise, Local Enterprise Office**

He outlined the current supports available to the value of €1.6 m namely:

Trading On-Line Voucher

Business Continuity Vouchers

Micro Finance Ireland

Covid-19 Business Loans (first 6 months interest free with no repayments for first 6 months)

He also highlighted the Enterprise Ireland Supports available

**Ms. Trina Rynne, Financial Accountant, Finance**

She discussed the Restart Grant Scheme. She outlined that it was a form of grant available for commercial ratepayers post Covid-19. She explained that there was a minimum grant of €2,000 and a max grant of €10,000. She added that the application was submitted on the basis of a self declaration and that the closing date for the receipt of applications was 31/8/2020. She added that 863 applications had been received to date by Clare Co Council.

**Ms. Bernadette Haugh, A/SEO, Rural Development**

She outlined that there was €30m available in the Project 2040 Rural Investment Programme broken down as follows:

Town & Village 2020 €15m

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme €10m

Clár €5m

She added that there was a focus on immediate interventions that could be delivered in the short-term to assist towns and villages to adapt to COVID-19

**Ms. Deirdre O Shea, A/ Head of Tourism, Rural Development**

She discussed the Tourism Strategy and post-Covid Marketing. She showed a video on the promotion of Clare. She added that the Council had shaped the Marketing approach of the Tourism Strategy in response to Covid-19. She further highlighted the profile of the tourists likely to visit Clare in 2020. She continued that the focus would move from 'Share Clare' to 'Refresh your Spirits' in Co. Clare. She concluded by going through the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 Short, Medium & Long Term Plans.

**Mr. Urban McMahon, Head of Information Systems, Digital & Broadband.**

He outlined how Clare Co Council staff were set up to be able to work from home by investing in the necessary infrastructure. He also went through how remote working could be facilitated in the Digital Hubs spread throughout the county. He further added that the Digital Hubs were re-opening with effect from 15<sup>th</sup> June .He concluded by adding that Clare Co Council were engaging with National Broadband Ireland regarding the National Broadband Plan.

L. Cleary opened up the discussion to the Elected Members who thanked all for their Presentations. Some of the points made by the Members were :

- Could Town Halls be used as pop-up digital hubs?
- The season for domestic visitors would be July, August & September and a focus was needed to maximise domestic tourism during this period.
- Clár funding should be used for community Hubs
- There was a huge potential for remote working
- The importance of festivals in bringing money to the local economy
- The importance of supporting local enterprise
- The importance of promoting walks and Greenways in enticing domestic visitors to Clare
- The importance of Elected Members having a role in projects being selected for Town & Village funding etc.
- The huge potential out there in the promotion of Wellbeing
- The importance of a list of projects that Clare Co Council were involved in, in the West Clare MD, being put together for the Elected Members
- Clarification being obtained on any flexibilities which might exist regarding street furniture & licencing of same to facilitate businesses
- The importance of having reps from the West Clare MD included on the tourism & Economic Task Forces.
- Cllr. Murphy indicated that both himself & Cllr Lynch had given a lot of thought to the importance of having a Centre of Excellence for Traditional Building & that same could be managed from the Vandeleur Walled Garden. He delivered a short presentation on this

proposal. He added that there could be huge potential for the West Clare economy from such a project.

It was agreed that J. O Malley would pull together a list of projects that Clare Co Council were involved in, in the West Clare MD, and that as soon as such a list was pulled together that a further Workshop could be arranged with the West Clare MD Members to discuss strategic priorities.

L. Cleary thanked everyone for their Presentations & the feedback received. He added that the meeting had been a very positive meeting. He indicated that there was a huge amount of positive energy between the Members and the staff of Clare Co Council to deliver on the key strategies to enhance the economic development of West Clare. It was agreed that following consideration of submissions from the Members on projects to be considered as part of the Strategy for the economic development of West Clare MD that another Workshop would be arranged to progress further.

The meeting then concluded and the Cathaoirleach thanked all for attending.

**Signed :**

**Cllr. B Chambers**

**Cathaoirleach**

**Signed :**

**J. Corry**

**Meetings Administrator**

**Dated this the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of June 2020.**