

**Minutes of the Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee Meeting
held in Áras Contae an Chláir on Monday, 15th June 2020 at 11.00am**

Present: Cllr Pat McMahon, Chairperson
Cllr P.J. Ryan
Cllr Johnny Flynn
Cllr P.J. Kelly
Cllr Gabriel Keating
Cllr Pat Daly
Mr Seamus Ryan
Ms Elaine d'Alton
Liam Conneally, Director of Service
Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise
Helen Quinn, Senior Executive Planner
Congella Maguire, Heritage Officer
Valerie Fleming, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies: Ms Emma Karran
Mr Pat Morris
Cllr Michael Begley

The Economic Development SPC meeting was delayed for 25 minutes as two members had advised they would be late joining the meeting and a quorum could not be reached until those members were present.

1. Minutes of Economic Development SPC meeting 9th March 2020.

The minutes of the Economic Development SPC meeting held on 9th March 2020 were proposed by Cllr P.J. Ryan, seconded by Cllr Gabriel Keating and agreed.

Cllr Gabriel Keating proposed that the Government should issue a 'family voucher' i.e. one voucher to be spent locally per family. He said this proposed voucher scheme would be very beneficial to small shops and to rural Ireland.

Liam Conneally requested that Cllr Keating present more detail concerning his proposal for a 'family voucher' to Padraic McElwee who will prepare communication to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on the proposed family voucher scheme.

2. Climate Change and Biodiversity presentation by Ms Congella McGuire, Heritage Officer.

Using a PowerPoint presentation Congella McGuire, Heritage Officer, presented on the Clare Biodiversity Programme 2020 including such areas as (1)Clare Biodiversity Management System, Gap Analysis, Best Practice Staff Manual and Training and (2)County Clare Demonstration Sites for Biodiversity Management 2020. Congella made available a number of publications to the meeting as follows: Gardening for Biodiversity; Local Communities: actions to help pollinators; Saving Swifts; Bumble Bees of Ireland and Raptor Workbooks.

Cllr P.J. Ryan thanked Congella for her very informative presentation and a discussion was held regarding Swifts.

Cllr Johnny Flynn thanked Congella for her presentation and said it was great to see the level of engagement and public awareness with regard to Biodiversity in the county.

Elaine d'Alton referred to the proposal to invite CARO to address the Economic Development SPC and asked that the Public Participation Network (PPN) with their membership of 250 groups be given advance notice of public consultation for the review of the County Development Plan.

Liam Conneally advised that Ms Sugrue of CARO was scheduled to attend this SPC meeting but her attendance was deferred due to the Covid-19 virus. It is hoped that Ms Sugrue will address the SPC either in person or remotely as soon as possible. Regarding the review of the County Development Plan Liam stated that the PPN will be utilised as an important communication tool for liaising with the community groups that make up the membership of the PPN.

3. LEO: An Economic Plan for Co. Clare

Using a PowerPoint presentation Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise, detailed the supports available to businesses in Co. Clare including Restart Grants; Business Continuity Vouchers; Trading Online Vouchers; Micro Finance Ireland Covid-19 Business Loans; Mentoring and Webinars.

Regarding Clare County Council's Capital Schemes Liam Conneally stated that if Clare County Council receives funding to carry out its planned Capital Schemes then this Council has the capacity to create 1,700 jobs.

Liam Conneally advised that a number of Clare based leaders in both the public and private sector have agreed to become members of the Clare Economic Task Force. The first meeting of this Task Force is scheduled for 26th June 2020 and it is envisaged that the Task Force will guide the delivery of short, medium and long term economic actions with Clare County Council. The membership of the Task Force will be publically announced once all members have confirmed their participation.

The work of the Clare Economic Task Force will be presented to the Economic Development SPC at a future meeting.

Elaine d'Alton enquired what part social inclusion and the environment would have in the newly formed Task Force and what the role of the Economic Development SPC will be.

Liam Conneally stated that the Clare Economic Task Force is an advisory body to the Council's Chief Executive and to Clare County Council which will act as a connection to the business community and assist in accessing private sector, Government & EU funding. He advised that as a Public Participation Network (PPN) representative it was open to Elaine to bring any aspect of social inclusion or the environment to the attention of the Task Force through this SPC. Liam added that any policies or plans stimulated by the Economic Development SPC will be brought to the attention of the Task Force for assistance with their delivery.

Elaine d'Alton enquired if there was a public participation aspect to the Task Force and Liam replied that a lot of projects being brought forward to the Task Force have already gone through the public participation process and anything new will be brought to the attention of the public through normal council statutory and non-statutory consultations.

Cllr P.J. Ryan requested there be more extensive communication to businesses detailing the supports available to them at this time as not all businesses are aware of the supports being provided. Padraic McElwee replied that getting the information to businesses is a challenge but the LEO is using social media widely where they currently have 3,500 followers.

Cllr Johnny Flynn recommended that the rates section of Clare County Council contact all businesses to advise them of the Restart Grant and Liam confirmed that this process has already commenced with rate payers being advised by letter from the Chief Executive of the full suite of government supports available to them.

Cllr P.J. Kelly stated that for clarity when referring to job creation the number of jobs should be described in terms of tertiary, temporary or permanent jobs.

4. Forward Planning Work Programme:

Using a PowerPoint presentation Helen Quinn, A/Senior Planner outlined the work programme of the Forward Planning unit including the Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy; the forthcoming review of the County Development Plan; Section 254 - the licensing of street furniture and the master planning of a number of strategic sites in Clare.

Cllr P.J. Ryan asked for an explanation of the 'tiering of land' which will become part of the new County Development Plan and for clarification as to how the public will be facilitated to contribute to the County Development Plan Review.

Helen replied that a number of options are currently being explored to facilitate the public's contribution such as virtual town hall meetings, Chatroom type forums, Twitter, Facebook etc. and a facility to engage in person where necessary.

With regard to the 'tiering of land' Helen explained that there will be a requirement to zone land for residential use as follows (1) fully serviced lands; (2) lands that are not fully serviced but have capacity to feed demand and (3) lands that don't have any services.

Cllr P.J. Kelly said that the plan must be creative, innovative and deal with the real issues and that people being deprived of a house because of where they live will not be tolerated.

Helen Quinn replied that the Department is expected to publish Development Plan Guidelines this year and the Council will implement these guidelines which should take account of the Flemish Decree. Liam confirmed that the Council will abide by all statutory requirements when reviewing the County Development Plan.

Cllr Johnny Flynn acknowledged the work done by Liam on the Ennis Data Centre project and highlighted that Data Centres use the same amount of water as a large town and that we need to ensure that Ennis reservoir capacity exists to serve all future development in Ennis.

Cllr Johnny Flynn also referenced the Joint Retail Strategy, the Wind Energy Strategy which he said was seen in Europe as being the gold standard for the harvesting of wind energy and the recent street furniture workshop which he stated was very positive. He suggested that a link from Ennis to the National Parks and Wildlife Service shuttle bus in Corofin be established.

Cllr P.J. Kelly enquired if there is an advisory body selected for the implementation of the Ennis 2040 Strategy and said it is important that elected representatives are part of any such

body. Cllr Kelly proposed Cllr Johnny Flynn to sit on any implementation body as he has been involved with the Strategy from inception.

Cllr Gabriel Keating seconded this proposal. He added that the lack of sewerage schemes and unsuccessful percolation tests are big problems for small villages. The answer to depopulation, he said, is to give planning to young people in West Clare.

Cllr Pat Daly supported the proposal for Cllr Johnny Flynn to sit on an Ennis 2040 implementation body. He recommended seeking an appointment with the new Minister for Transport once he/she is appointed for a delegation from this SPC to meet with the Minister to discuss the future of Shannon Airport. He also stated that the Chief Executive of Clare County Council should be a member of the Shannon Group Board. Cllr Daly also asked for an update on the Data Centre project.

Liam Conneally advised that as part of the Ennis 2040 implementation a legal governance structure such as a DAC will be established. The proposal to include Cllr Johnny Flynn in such a structure would need to be recommended by full Council at the relevant time.

Regarding the proposed delegation to the Minister of Transport Liam advised that any delegation to a Minister of State should be a function of full Council.

Liam advised that the Data Centre development company is currently in pre-planning discussions and has made considerable progress in preparing the projects due diligence and the planning application. There has been significant discussion on the power generating capacity at the site as there are a number of aspects to the proposed Ennis Data Centre development.

6. A.O.B.:

Cllr Pat McMahon, Chair, thanked everybody for their attendance and contribution to the meeting

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____
Cllr Pat McMahon
Chairperson

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____
Liam Conneally,
Director of Economic Development.