

**Minutes of the Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee Meeting
held remotely on MS Teams on Monday, 6th December 2021 at 11.00am**

Present: Cllr Pat McMahon, Chairperson
Cllr Michael Begley
Cllr P.J. Ryan
Cllr P.J. Kelly
Cllr Gabriel Keating
Cllr Johnny Flynn
Cllr Pat Daly
Mr Pat Morris
Mr Pat Keogh
Ms Emma Karran
Mr Seamus Ryan
Liam Conneally, Director of Service
Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise
Bernadette Haugh, A/SEO
Congella McGuire, Heritage Officer
Valerie Fleming, Assistant Staff Officer

Press: Paraic McMahon

1. Minutes of Economic Development SPC meeting 20th September 2021.

The minutes of the Economic Development SPC meeting held on 20th September 2021 were proposed by Cllr Gabriel Keating, seconded by Cllr Michael Begley and agreed.

2. LEO Update (end of 2021).

Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise, Local Enterprise Office, gave an overview of the work of Clare LEO for 2021. He outlined such areas as investment figures, Trading on Line vouchers, training provided and mentoring assignments.

Cllr Gabriel Keating asked if Clare LEO have any role to play regarding apprenticeships.

Cllr Johnny Flynn stated that he is aware that many third level students are finding it difficult to secure their required work placement and asked if SME's could have a role to play in this. He also asked if the training modules provided through Clare LEO are accessible online.

Cllr Pat Daly asked how many businesses have closed permanently as a result of the pandemic.

Cllr Michael Begley asked if LEO has any role in childcare.

Cllr P.J. Kelly asked for a breakdown of engagement between rural and urban areas.

Padraic replied that Clare LEO has no role in apprenticeships but that he is Chair of the Mid-West Regional Skills Forum and apprenticeships are very much on the agenda of that group. It was proposed that Joe Leddin, Manager, Mid-West Skills Forum be invited to address the next Economic Development SPC meeting.

Padraic advised that third level placements are not something he is involved in with the SME sector but he will advise the Mid-West Regional Skills Forum and Explore Engineering of the difficulties in this area and again this area can be pursued with Mr Leddin.

Training programmes are not recorded and some providers only make course detail available to participants.

Clare LEO has no figures for the number of businesses closed permanently due to the Covid pandemic and has no involvement in the childcare sector.

Padraic stated that there is strong engagement of SME's across the county and he doesn't sense any urban/rural divide.

3. OPW Biodiversity Action Strategy 2022 - 2026

Congella McGuire, Heritage Officer, outlined the OPW Biodiversity Action Strategy 2022 – 2026 which is a detailed document outlining how the OPW will engage with biodiversity and nature going forward. The strategy has 5 strategic themes, 48 associated actions and a monitoring and evaluation element.

Emma Karran stated that some economic development frameworks can be at odds with the natural world and made reference to a new conservation group in Loop Head and asked how they might feed into conservation at a county level.

Cllr Gabriel Keating requested an update regarding coastal erosion.

Cllr Johnny Flynn asked if the position for Clare Biodiversity Officer has been filled.

Cllr Pat Daly asked if the Council would consider lighting up Clare Abbey at nighttime.

Cllr Michael Begley is to discuss the issue of bats present in a church building with Congella following the meeting.

Congella responded that she is interested in liaising with the Loop Head biodiversity group and will provide support where possible.

With regard to coastal erosion Congella stated that the OPW has conducted a major study and they will be working closely with Clare County Council's Capital Projects Office.

The recruitment of a Biodiversity Officer is expected to be commence shortly.

Congella has been engaging with the OPW regarding Clare Abbey and a bat report has to be completed before lighting in this area can be considered.

4. County Development Plan Review update

Helen Quinn, A/Senior Planner, outlined the County Development Plan review process and stated the draft plan will be available for public viewing from Friday, 10th December 2021.

Liam Conneally thanked Helen Quinn and her team for their dedication to date and for 30 workshops that they hosted and he also thanked the elected members for the time and effort they put into the draft County Development Plan. Liam encouraged all Economic Development SPC members to promote interest amongst the public on the Draft County Development Plan.

Cllr P.J. Ryan stated that a huge effort will be required in order to entice the public to engage with the process.

Emma Karran asked if there were particular focus groups involved in the preparation of the draft plan.

Cllr Pat Daly asked if there was any indication yet as to how much land is proposed to be zoned.

Cllr P.J. Kelly said the members are awaiting a legal opinion and asked if this can be provided to the public when received. He asked for clarification if the draft County Development Plan is conforming to EU legislation and referred to the rights of people to freedom of movement.

Helen Quinn responded that all avenues will be explored with regard to engaging the public such as social media campaigns, the development of a County Development Plan online portal, local press and other media, engagement with schools etc.

Helen advised that there were no specific focus groups engaged but all environmental assessments are contained in Volume 10 and that the amount of zoned land will be available for public viewing on the 10th December.

Helen advised that the legal opinion will be circulated to members in the coming days and that she is fully confident that the objectives of the draft County Development Plan are in line with National and EU legislation.

Liam Connelly concurred with the legality of the document and added that while there are certain property limitations the plan for the most part does not restrict freedom of movement. He added that the Department have taken account of the Flemish Decree in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and in other guidance documentation.

5. LECP Guidelines

Liam Conneally advised that he was part of the national Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) Advisory Group responsible for updating the Local Economic and Community Plan guidelines. The purpose of LECPs is to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of a local authority area. The Advisory group considered the importance of at Climate Adaptation and its impact on all of the LECP objectives and processes. In accordance with these guidelines each LECP must be reviewed at least once in its lifetime with work plans to be carried out on an annual basis.

Liam then introduced Bernadette Haugh, A/SEO and Chief Officer of Clare Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). Bernadette gave an introduction to the work of Clare LCDC which includes delivery of the community elements of the LECP. The next steps in compiling the Clare LECP are to engage a consultant in Q1, 2022; request timelines from the Department and seek further clarification on the provision of socio-economic data resources.

Cllr Johnny Flynn referred to the 2018 Clare research which provides important data sets and said he hopes these results can be used as a means of determining what communities really want. Cllr Flynn also referred to the Regional Assembly research work which showed that Clare is the 5th most impacted county in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic and he hopes that the economic aspect of the LECP will refer to that study.

Cllr P.J. Kelly stated that rural areas do not appear to receive as much investment as more urban areas.

Emma Karran invited everybody to the Anti-Poverty Strategy Webinar hosted by Clare PPN and being held on Friday, 10th December 2021.

Liam Conneally advised that a Minister of State was scheduled to visit Clare on 10th December so neither he or the elected members would be in a position to attend the Anti-Poverty Strategy Webinar but he would be happy to receive any feedback from the event.

Liam requested that the Economic SPC be kept involved in the development of the new Clare LECP.

6. 2022 Schedule of Meetings

The 2022 Schedule of Meetings was proposed by Cllr P.J. Ryan, seconded by Cllr G. Keating and agreed.

7. AOB

Pat Morris referred to the recent announcement that Shell and Simply Blue Group are partnering to develop a floating wind farm off the Clare coast. Pat requested that Simply Blue Group be invited to give a presentation on this project to the Economic SPC early in 2022.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____
Cllr Pat McMahon, Chairperson

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Liam Conneally,
Director of Economic Development.

Date: _____