

Minutes of the Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee Meeting

Monday, 7th March 2022 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 Patrick Keogh
Ms Emma Karran
Mr Seamus Ryan
Ms Rosaleen O'Reilly
Ms Elaine D'Alton
Liam Conneally, Director of Service
Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise
Candace Ingram, A/Senior Executive Planner
Congella McGuire, Heritage Officer
Mr Joe Leddin, Manager, Mid-West Regional Skills Forum
Mr Paraic Rattigan, Programme Manager, Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan
Valerie Fleming, Assistant Staff Officer

Press: Paraic McMahon

At the outset Cllr Pat McMahon proposed a minute's silence to demonstrate solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

1. **Minutes of Economic Development SPC meeting 6th December 2021.**

The minutes of the Economic Development SPC meeting held on 6th December 2021 were proposed by Cllr P.J. Ryan, seconded by Pat Morris and agreed.

Pat Morris referred to his request that *Simply Blue* to be invited to present to the Economic Development SPC regarding the recent announcement of their partnership with *Shell* to develop a floating wind farm off the Clare coast.

Liam Conneally recommended that Pat Keating, CEO, Shannon Foynes Port Company be invited to speak at the June Economic Development SPC meeting as he is best placed to outline the offshore renewable energy (ORE) development potential of the Shannon Estuary.

Emma Karran enquired if a consultant has been engaged for the LECP, if a timeline is available and if a sub-group has been formed. Liam Conneally advised that the Clare LECP review is being led by the Rural Directorate and that this SPC will be contributing on the economic element of that plan.

2. Presentation by Joe Leddin, Manager, Mid-West Regional Skills Forum.

Joe Leddin outlined the work of the Mid-West Regional Skills Forum and spoke specifically about the benefits for both employees and employers of participating in an apprenticeship programme.

Elaine D'Alton asked what the current uptake of women in apprenticeships is, what drive is there for the future uptake of women, how/who is being targeted e.g. members of the travelling community and what supports are in place to encourage the participation of women. She added that the reason the uptake of apprenticeships by women is low is because of obstacles such as availability of childcare, transport etc..

Joe advised that the €2k grant to employers increases to €4k for female apprentices and the local Education and Training Board has the remit to create awareness of all apprenticeships on offer and will work to address the issues of the more marginalised members of society.

Cllr Gabriel Keating recommended an apprenticeship awareness programme for secondary schools and this was supported by Patrick Keogh who outlined the difficulties experienced by the construction industry in offering apprenticeships to employees.

Pat Morris asked if there were any apprenticeships being offered in the area of green energy. Cllr Johnny Flynn suggested incentives be provided for apprenticeships related to the construction industry in order to ensure a skilled workforce is available to deal with the housing crisis. He also recommended that short pre-apprenticeship courses be offered to students.

Joe Leddin responded that a Mid-West apprenticeship awareness programme targeting parents and senior cycle students was offered before the Covid pandemic and similar programme will be organised again this year.

Regarding apprenticeships related to green energy Joe advised that some courses are being modified to take account of new skill requirements in this area and there is currently a steering group appointed to look at the area of sustainability/green energy.

Joe stated that his office is working closely with Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board to plan pre-apprenticeship courses.

3. Climate Change and Biodiversity

- Clare County Council Biodiversity Manual

Congella McGuire, Heritage Officer, outlined the Clare County Council Biodiversity Manual which brings biodiversity information, resource material, legislation and procedures for Clare County Council work activities together in one place as a guidance document. The Biodiversity Manual is designed to be a live document with new information and additional topics to be added on an ongoing basis.

- *Rights of Nature* and opportunities for Councils in Ireland

Emma Karran outlined the *Rights of Nature* document which was circulated with the Agenda. A working group on this topic will be formed in conjunction with the Public Participation Network (PPN).

4. County Development Plan Review update

Candace Ingram, A/Senior Executive Planner, provided an update on the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029 which is on public display until 28th March 2022. She indicated that the SPC will be updated on the different stages of the CDP making and looked forward to inputs from the SPC.

5. Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan

Paraic Rattigan, Programme Manager gave an overview of the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan which was launched on 18th February last. He stated that the previous plan attracted investments of €16m to the Mid-West region and there is €180m funding available nationally towards the implementation of actions in all Regional Enterprise Plans.

Cllr Pat Daly stated that no major industry has located in Ennis in the last 20years.

Paraic Rattigan acknowledged that Ennis is a town that will be considered positively in the MWREP and added that the work the IDA do is outside of his remit. He said he is happy to meet stakeholders in order to help progress projects for the town and Co. Clare.

6. Town Centre First

Liam Conneally stated that the *Town Centre First* initiative is a priority commitment in the *Programme for Government*. It is a new Government policy that aims to create town centres

that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit. National Government has requested that local authorities manage the rollout this initiative.

Cllr Pat Daly asked if there was a policy relating to big employers located on the outskirts of towns.

Cllr Johnny Flynn asked if this will be broken down to towns over and under 10,000 people and Liam Conneally responded that the towns were being categorised according to larger towns - greater than 20,000 people; medium towns - 5,000 to 20,000 people and small towns 400 to 5,000 people and that over time as many Clare towns as possible will benefit.

7. LEO

Padraic McElwee referred to the programme of events for Local Enterprise Week 2022. He also advised that there were 278 jobs created in Clare in 2021 with 125 job losses resulting in a net increase of 153 jobs.

8. AOB

Cllr P.J. Ryan referred to the forthcoming Census and said it was very important to appeal to all members of the public to complete Census forms in order to provide decision making data for Government as many national grants are awarded on the basis of population figures and other data collected from the national Census.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____
Cllr Pat McMahon, Chairperson

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Liam Conneally,
Director of Economic Development.

Date: _____