

**Minutes of the Meeting of Strategic Policy Committee (SPC1)
Economic Development, Enterprise Support, Tourism, Planning & Development
Policy**

held via MS Teams

Friday 5th March 2021 at 3.30pm

Present: Cllr. Ger Frisby (Chair), Cllr. John Coonan, Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Michael Doyle, Cllr. Maria Dollard, Cllr Eugene McGuinness, Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick, Cllr. Patrick O Neill, Marion Acreman, Paul Brophy, Eileen Moyles, Brian Hamilton, Fiona O Neill

Apologies: Deirdre Shine, Bill O’Keeffe, Martin Prendiville

In attendance: Sean McKeown, Fiona Deegan, Denis Malone, Martina Comerford, Catherine Myers.

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

Item	
1.	Declaration of Interest: There were no Declarations of Interest.
2.	Confirmation of Minutes: The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 th December 2020 were proposed by Cllr. Michael McCarthy, seconded by Ms. Eileen Moyles and agreed.
3.	Matters Arising: Mr. Sean McKeown advised (on behalf of Mr. Martin Prendiville) that the current Rates Waiver Scheme is in place until the end of March and the Government has further agreed to extend same to the end of June. The eligibility criteria will be more restrictive and Mr. Prendiville will advise further. Another similar scheme is being developed by the Government and Mr. Prendiville will advise when further information is obtained.
4.	Progress Reports: <u>Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP)</u> An update on the strategic level actions of the LECP had been circulated in advance of the meeting and taken as read and questions were welcomed on same. Under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, Mr. McKeown advised that the LECP is a 6-year strategy document and covers the social and economic services of Kilkenny County Council. The preparation of the new plan is due to commence in June and will take 12 months to complete. Minister Humphries is currently going through the guidelines for the LECP with both Local Authorities and Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs). Mr. McKeown advised that the economic elements of the Plan will be under the umbrella of SPC1 and the social and community elements will be provided by the LCDC. Ms. Fiona Deegan outlined one action from each of the 9 goals: LECP GOAL 1 : Support the Enterprise Economy Action 1.6: Build on Kilkenny’s strength as a hub for craft businesses and develop centres of excellence for ceramics and jewellery. This action will also include the introduction of a bursary scheme to support start-up craft businesses. LECP GOAL 2: Facilitate Innovation and Entrepreneurship Action 2.9: Provide a Pathway to Self-employment & Social Entrepreneurship. LECP GOAL 3: Visitor Experience Enhancement Action 3.2:

Improve the visitor experience and business capability of outdoor activity providers active in tourism. Initiatives to include analysis of the potential for: linking activity hubs and amenities; protection and management of the county's Green Infrastructure and the development of the County's river assets for fishing, boating and blueway trails. This will include engaging with the Ireland's Ancient East team to identify opportunities with the highest potential.

LECP GOAL 4 : Enhanced Educational Attainment and Skills Development

Action 4.4:

Undertake to ascertain potential job opportunities in Kilkenny and assess skills requirements and qualifications. Respond through education and training initiatives working closely with business community, Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board and 3rd Level sectors. This action will include the potential of training across a broad spectrum from traditional building skills to digital media/film production and will also involve proactively engaging with third level institutes to further enhance and develop 3rd and 4th level education provision, based on Kilkenny's strengths and emerging opportunities.

LECP GOAL 5 : Develop the Rural Economy

Action 5.2:

Utilising previous learning continue to build on experience in rolling out initiatives such as

- Town & Village Renewal Scheme
- Town Centre Renewal Process
- Community & Culture Facilities Capital Grant Scheme
- Social Enterprise Development Workers

Work with local businesses and representative organisations to support the regeneration / development of rural towns and their hinterlands by developing strategic development plans for key towns in each Municipal

District. These plans will look at job creation and the provision of potential services into local communities. They will also include an examination of co-op type community shops selling local produce in rural villages.

Provide access to a range of social enterprise supports and services and design tailor made support structures to suit both urban and rurally based social enterprise initiatives.

LECP GOAL 6 : Improve Access and Communications Infrastructure

Action 6.4:

Undertake a Broadband Needs

Analysis and facilitate the rollout of high speed broadband across the county, in particular in rural areas. This action will include supporting small-scale pilot projects and local providers to enhance their networks and include more rural households and businesses in accessing broadband.

LECP GOAL 7 : Leadership and Local Capacity

Action 7.4:

Develop an investment strategy for Kilkenny city in preparation for funding opportunities under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.

LECP GOAL 8: Natural, Cultural and Built Environment

Action 8.2:

Support community-led and farm-based initiatives to raise awareness about and conserve biodiversity and natural capital.

LECP GOAL 9: Regional Growth and International Potential

Action 9.1:

Support industry-led fora and strategic collaborations at regional level, with a view to contributing to the overall development of the South East Region. In particular, Kilkenny County Council will proactively support the implementation of the South East Enterprise Action Plan for Jobs. This will include collating baseline data to contribute to the actions in the South East Action Plan for Jobs.

Following a lengthy discussion on the various actions, Cllrs. E McGuinness & J Coonan both asked why Kilkenny Castle could not be used to host banquets in the evening, similar to Bunratty Castle. Mr. McKeown advised that the OPW were previously asked this and had responded that as the Long Room in the Castle is open to visitor tours during the day, they are not in a position to host an event in the

evenings also. Mr. McKeown advised that Kilkenny County Council had a very good working relationship with the OPW and he is happy to invite them to the next meeting of the Committee to discuss same.

Local Enterprise Office (LEO) 2020 Key Performance Indicators

Ms. Deegan took the committee through the 2020 Outcomes for LEO (which had been circulated prior to the meeting), noting that the SPC provide a monitoring role on the KPIs of the LEO. Ms. Deegan advised that it had been a very busy year for the staff and funding for two additional temporary staff had been provided by Enterprise Ireland to assist with the increased workload.

Some key points from the 2020 outcomes were as follows:

- €513,459 in direct financial assistance to a total of 28 businesses (Business Expansion Grants, Priming Grants, Feasibility/Innovation Grants, Grad Start Funding and TAME Grants).
- €274,889 paid to 56 Business under the LEO Covid-19 Client Stimulus Fund. This was an initiative that came from LEO Kilkenny and was rolled out across the other LEOs.
- €694,643 was approved to 302 business through the Trading on line Voucher Scheme.
- 1,676 clients participated in 119 Training and Management Development programmes.
- 1,133 clients availed of one to one mentoring.

5. Consideration of Policy Issues:

City and County Development Plan

Mr. Denis Malone gave a brief overview on the Draft City and County Development Plan, noting that that there is one Plan with two volumes – City and County and the plan will also have 12 appendices. The draft is still under public consultation until the 12th March and there is a dedicated consult website <https://ourplan.kilkenny.ie/>

Mr. Malone advised that there were 4 public events which were held virtually and 272 people registered to attend. Submissions from the public can be made in writing or by email and to date 80 have been received.

Following a question from Mr. Brophy, Mr. Malone, advised that all submissions received must be addressed in a report by the Chief Executive to the Members on the Draft. Any material amendments to the Draft will be subject to a further period of public consultation before the Plan is finally adopted. Mr. Malone further added, that the whole process will continue to mid-summer.

Mr. Malone also advised that there are targets set out in the Draft Plan with respect to climate change and reducing the County's Carbon Footprint.

Cllr. Frisby acknowledged the great work/engagement done by both Denis and his Team in Planning. There followed a number of contributions, in particular, from Mr. Hamilton; Cllr McGuinness; and Cllr. Maria Dollard as follows:

- Kilkenny County Council should acquire land for access/walkways. Mr. Malone advised that there would be a right of way issue.
- Walking and Cycling Areas to remain protected space. Mr Malone advised that the plan does not cover walkways in great detail.
- Parking access and parking is important near walking amenities.

Decarbonization Zone (DZ):

Mr. McKeown advised that a circular had been received from the Department stating that under the Government's Climate Action Plan 2019 (action 165), Local Authorities are required to identify and develop plans for a Decarbonising Zone. A recommendation will be made to the Department by the end of April on where the DZ should be. Noted that If the DZ is to be in an urban area, there must be

	<p>a population of over 5,000, and if the DZ is in a rural location, the area must be greater than 4km in area.</p> <p>An implementation plan has to be developed by the end of this year to include the projects and initiatives aimed at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electricity sourcing; • Heat Management; • Public Transport; • Buildings to be more energy efficient; • Soft Bio Diversity measures; and • Reduce Co2 emissions – encourage cycling and green spaces. <p>The target is to have a 7% decrease in greenhouse gases per annum, 50% decrease by 2030 and to be Carbon Neutral by 2050. Noted that on the case of the Portlaoise demonstration town, Laois County Council have estimated that overall investment of €150m will be required to achieve the targets set.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Any other business:</p> <p>Ms Fiona O Neill spoke about the Changing Place initiative and explained that there was a need for a Changing Places Facility in the City and the lack of same, could have an impact on Tourism as Kilkenny could be perceived to be not accessible. This Changing Places facility would need to be of a minimum space of 12 square metres and be fitted with a hoist along with the other facilities required. Ms. O Neill asked if there was a possibility that this could be put in the Abbey Quarter. Mr. McKeown advised that he would refer to Mr. Jason Clerkin of the Abbey Quarter.</p> <p>Ms. Marian Acreman advised Ms. O Neill that there was a Changing Places Facility in McDonagh Junction Shopping Centre.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting:</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting.</p> <p>The next meeting of SPC1 will take place on Friday 25th June 2021 at 3.30pm.</p> <p>The meeting concluded at 5.00pm.</p>

Signed: _____

Date: _____

GER FRISBY

Chairman