

Minutes of the Meeting of SPC1
- Economic Development, Enterprise Support and Tourism
held in County Hall on 16th March, 2017 at 11am.

Present: Cllr. Pat Millea (Chair), Cllr. Tomas Breathnach, Cllr. Patrick McKee, Mr. Phil Funchion, Ms. Theresa Delahunty, Mr. Mark Kennedy.

Apologies: Mr. Charles Wani, Mr John Bambrick, Cllr Patrick O'Neill, Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick, Ms Deirdre Shine, Cllr Michael Doyle.

In Attendance: Mary Mulholland, Martin Prendiville, Fiona Deegan, Brian Tyrrell, Stephen O' Connor, Brid Hynes, Aisling Hayes, Mary Walsh

The Chairman welcomed Mary Mulholland and wished her well in her new role as Director with responsibility for Economic Development and also welcomed Brid Hynes and wished her every success in her new role in the Economic Development department.

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 16th December, 2016

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th December, 2016 were proposed by Cllr. Phil Funchion seconded by Cllr. Patrick McKee and agreed.

2. Matters Arising

There was no Matters Arising.

3. Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Update

It was agreed to defer Item Nos. 3, 7 & 9 and take Items No. 6, 4 and 5 in that order, due to time restraints prior to a presentation on the South East Economic Monitor.

4. Tourism Development Update

Brian Tyrrell provided a report on the draft Tourism Strategy and Work Plan 2017 – 2022, referring to the community workshops being organised throughout the county and reported on the discussions and issues arising. He advised members of the recurring theme of imbalance in tourism development throughout the County, with a perceived weighting in favour of Kilkenny City and stated that one of the key themes that the strategy document would seek to address is this particular issue, by the creation of sub County hubs, which will be supported through the Municipal Districts. Members were also advised of the Action Plan which sets out the work programme to be undertaken by the newly formed tourism team under Director of Services Mary Mulholland. Mr. Tyrrell advised that the draft plan would be presented to the March Council meeting. Following a lengthy discussion, the draft plan was unanimously approved by the committee. The Chairman thanked Brian and the team for the work carried out to deliver the draft plan.

5. Update on Economic Actions of Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP)

Stephen O'Connor provided an update on the Economic actions of the LECP stating that 5 applications had been received under the Small Business Vacant Premises Scheme. Stephen further stated that a strategic development process for Castlecomer was ongoing with Callan & Ferrybank due to commence shortly. The Chairman thanked Stephen for his service to the SPC and wished him well in his new appointment to the Community Section of the Council.

A discussion took place around the LEO interventions in relation to financial supports to business over 10 employees. Ms. Deegan stated the LEO can support projects which are manufacturing or trading services internationally up to 10 employees and that Enterprise Ireland can support projects which are manufacturing or trading services internationally over 10 employees. Ms. Deegan stated that there is a gap in supports for businesses with greater than 10 employees who are not trading internationally and who are supplying the national market and stated that the Council for the past 3 years has provided funding from their budget to support these companies. Following a lengthy discussion, Cllr. Tomas Breathnach requested that a motion be brought to the Council members to raise this issue with Enterprise Ireland.

6. Update on the Abbey Creative Quarter

Martin Prendiville provided an update on the Abbey Creative Quarter, as follows:

The Riverside Garden Project

- The poplar trees along by the river have been cleared. The work was undertaken under Ministerial Consent.
- Archaeological test excavation work will commence on receipt of the Ministerial license.
- Work on the detailed design and preparation of tender documents will be completed by the end of March 2017.
- Consultation on the proposed youth space will commence in April 2017.
- Construction work on the park is expected to commence in Q3 2017.

The Brewhouse

- Structural investigation works on the building and site investigation works have been completed. The initial findings have found conditions to be favourable.
- The process of selecting a works contractor will be carried out in two stages. Stage 1 will result in the selection of a shortlist of approximately eight contractors.

The Mayfair Building

- Demolition works on the portion to be demolished have commenced.
- The Conservation team is working on the Archaeological test excavation strategy.
- Tenders for the new design team have been received.

Other Works

- An archaeological test excavation strategy has been prepared for the Masterplan Area and agreed with the National Monuments Service.
- Strategies for Energy and Utility services are being prepared.
- LOCI have been appointed to prepare Urban Design Criteria and a Development Code for the implementation of the Abbey Creative Quarter Masterplan.
- An assessment of the parking options is also being undertaken.

7. Presentation on the South East Economic Monitor

The Chairman welcomed Ray Griffin and Cormac O' Keeffe from the School of Business, Waterford Institute of Technology to make a presentation on the South East Economic Monitor. Ray & Cormac stated that the South East Economic Monitor was an independent report from the School of Business lecturers and highlights the economic priorities for the South East. They further stated that it was a one-stop overview of key economic data and that it gives a concise and accessible snapshot of how the counties Carlow, Kilkenny, South Tipperary, Waterford, and Wexford are performing and highlights the economic priorities for the South East. Published in June 2016, the report highlights the two trends that shape the South East's economy- the impact of the great national economic recession and recovery; which temporarily hid the longstanding economic malaise across the region. The report illustrates a region struggling to transition to a knowledge economy, built on high-quality jobs. Key points outlined were as follows:

- Unemployment in South East at crisis levels and rising (by 0.6% to 12.5% in Q1 2016); against the downward national trend (8.4%; down .02%); the South East has experienced an employment crisis since 2002. The quality of employment in the South East is dramatically lower than the national average, and continues to decline.
- The report makes two significant claims as to why the South East's economy is struggling - Lower educational attainment, a problem built up over a long-term by lower investment in higher education and that the South East is missing 7,260 higher education places; Lower activity by the IDA in the region over the past 25 years; the South East is missing 6,312 IDA supported jobs.
- Bright spots include the modest long-run improvements in unemployment rates, an improving property market and buoyant new car sales.

Following a lengthy discussion on the presentation, the Chairman thanked Ray & Cormac for the detailed information and invited them to present again upon completion of the 2017 report.

8. Any Other Business

There were no items for discussion under Any Other Business.

9. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the SPC would take place on Friday 16th June 2017 at 11am.

The meeting concluded at 01.15p.m.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

PAT MILLEA
Chairman