



Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning Strategic Policy Committee

Minutes of meeting held at 3.00 p.m. on Thursday, 12 November via Video Conferencing.

Cathaoirleach: Councillor Ivan Keatley

Present: Cllr. Pádraig McEvoy, Cllr. Seamie Moore, Cllr Kevin Duffy, Cllr. Peggy O'Dwyer, Mr. Gerry Prendergast, Ms. Majella O'Keefe, Ms. Evonne Boland; Cllr Robert Power, Cllr Michael Coleman

Also Present: Eoghan Ryan, Director of Services; Sonya Kavanagh, Director of Services; Jacqui McNabb, Head of Enterprise; Mairead Hunt, Senior Executive Officer; Fiona Millane A/Head of Finance, Emer Ui Fhatharta; Caroline O'Donnell, A/Senior Planner; Sharon O'Gara, Executive Architect; Mark McLoughlin, Administrative Officer.

1. Conflict of Interest Declarations

The Cathaoirleach advised the members that it was a requirement at all strategic policy committee meetings for members to declare any potential conflicts of interest for items under discussion at the meeting. The item was noted.

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 10 September 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2020 were proposed by Councillor Moore and seconded by Councillor Duffy and duly adopted.

3. To receive a briefing on the Commercial Incentive Scheme

Ms F. Millane outlined the details of the scheme [see Appendix 1] and advised the Committee that the scheme would be brought to Council in November with the aim of implementing from January 2021.

Councillor Moore said that he would hope that the Scheme would not disadvantage an existing business that might be struggling and that it should not impinge on MERITS. Councillor O'Dwyer asked if charity shops etc were included and how would the scheme be promoted. Councillor Power asked if it was a grant or a rebate of rates and how was the vacancy period of 24 months monitored. Ms. E. Boland said that it was important that the scheme should encourage the establishment of businesses that would fill gaps in the market. Councillor McEvoy said that it would be important to continue public health checks to access the difference between towns in the intervening period to see if the scheme worked.

Ms F. Millane noted that charity shops already receive a waiver of rate and that the scheme would be promoted on the Council's website and through social media. She stated that the aim was to encourage long-term investment rather than 'popup' shops. She advised that the Council could keep track of vacancy periods through irrecoverable rates reconciliation and that there would be quick turnaround of grants in respect of the scheme to help cashflow for businesses.

Ms. J. McNabb advised that this scheme was important as business were always seeking incentives to set-up, especially in retail. She advised that the scheme would not work in isolation and that the Local Enterprise Office would help where necessary.

Ms. S. Kavanagh advised that there would be a bespoke approach to matching vacant units to appropriate businesses and that there were some other national and international examples that the Council were examining.

4. To receive an update from the Director of Service, Economic, Community and Cultural Development

The committee members took this item as read.

5. To Consider the Draft Economic Strategy for Kildare

Ms. S. Kavanagh, Director of Service circulated a summary document in respect of the Economic Strategy and asked that any feedback from the committee should be returned by 19 November. She advised that the final document would be submitted to the Economic Forum for signing off before going back to the members for approval.

She noted that many of the actions in the plan were already being implemented and that priority was given to ensuring that the plan addressed issues associated with BREXIT and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ms. J. McNabb advised the committee that the Economic Strategy included stakeholders in both the private and public sectors. She would expect that all strategic policy committees would be informed by the actions outlined in the Strategy.

6. To receive an update from the Director of Planning and Strategic Development.

Mr. E. Ryan, Director of Service highlighted a number of issues in respect of Planning. He advised that work was progressing on the Athy and Naas local area plans with draft plans issued in December and January respectively.

He advised that there were ongoing discussions with Irish Rail in respect of DART + and DART+ South West. The Forward Planning team were working on the issues paper for the Review of County Development Plan and would present a document to the next meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Coleman asked for an update on progress on the Maynooth Local Area Plan and was advised by Mr. Ryan that the Team were expecting to commence work in January.

Councillor Power asked if the issue in respect of the Naas Local Area Plan crossing into the Kildare-Newbridge Municipal District was addressed and Mr. Ryan advised the committee that the draft Naas Local Area Plan was contained within the Naas Municipal District area.

7. Referral from Clane-Maynooth Municipal District CM31/1219 (7 February 2020)

'That the Council carry out a review of childcare provision in Maynooth to assess if it meets the current and projected demographic growth of the town.' Councillor Feeney

Mr. M. McLoughlin advised the Committee that Councillor Feeney had accepted the report prepared by the Planning Department and the report was duly noted.

8. Referral from Full Council 26/0620 (29 June 2020)

“That the Planning Department outlines the new measures it will implement to ensure that the highest standards are set for environmental assessment and protection in all planning applications and conditions that are applied, including methodology where appropriate, to ensure that all legislation protecting hedgerows, trees, native forests, wildlife and habitats, is upheld.” Councillor Liston

Councillor Liston was in attendance at the meeting to discuss the issue. Mr. E. Ryan said that there were a broad range of skills required. He advised that the Senior Planner had agreed to include a section in future planning reports on biodiversity. He noted that an appropriate assessment screening is carried out for all applications and that Environmental Impact Assessment Reports were submitted where appropriate.

Ms. E. Ui Fhatharta, Senior Planner reiterated the position in respect of biodiversity and said that this was considered in respect of all planning applications.

Councillor Liston requested that the matter should also be considered during future local area plans should also consider

The report circulated was noted.

9. Referral from Full Council 32/0626

“That the council investigates and implement a system similar to the internationally recognised Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) scheme, ensuring that they involve all relevant stakeholders in its development including members of An Garda Síochána and the local community.” Councillor Pender

Mr. M. McLoughlin advised that Councillor Pender requested that this item be adjourned to the next meeting which was agreed.

10. Referral from Full Council (September 2019)

“That the council review the policies around public parking in the context of urban renewal, cycling and pedestrian amenity with associated benefits to health and wellbeing, changing economic models and the transition towards carbon-neutral societies.” Councillor McEvoy

Councillor McEvoy acknowledge the report and said that the changing environment, particularly this year was demonstrating the need for new spaces for walking and cycling.

Ms. S. O’Gara advised that historically towns were designed for cars although some of the better streetscapes still had space for carparking and that there was a balance to be struck to make liveable streets.

Mr. E. Ryan said that the County Development Plan gave minimum standards rather than maximum and that cars took up a large amount of space despite the relatively short space of time that they were in use. He said that the Public Realm team were doing considerable work in improving Market Square, Kildare, Emily Square, Athy and Poplar Square, Naas which were examples of what could be done. He advised that the review of the County Development plan was an opportune time to look at the issues.

Ms. M. O’Keefe noted that Access Strategy will be launched in Naas on 5 December and that funding should be directed towards a transport disability officer.

Councillor McEvoy said that a mindset change was needed and he requested that policies be put in place in the County Development Plan to address the issues.

11. Any Other Business

A draft schedule of meetings for 2021 was circulated and noted as follows:

25 March, 24 June, 23 September and 16 December and

12. Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for 10 December 2020.

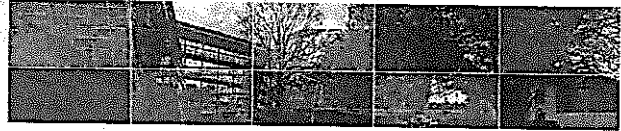
The meeting closed.

Councillor Ivan Keatley

Chairman

APPENDIX 1

Report from Ms. Fiona Millane, A/Head of Finance – Commercial Incentive Scheme



Kildare County Council
Commercial Incentive Grant Scheme 2021

Draft

Introduction

Kildare County Council proposes providing an incentive scheme to encourage the use of vacant commercial premises in town and village centres in the County. An attractive, vibrant commercial area contributes positively to a location's retail and economic growth, boosting footfall and street activity, thereby encouraging a longer stay by shoppers and visitors, resulting in increased consumer spending in local businesses.

As a complement to the highly successful Shop Fronts Grants Scheme already available through Economic Development Unit, Kildare County Council has developed a mechanism to address the issue of vacant units in the village and town centres. The Commercial Incentive Grant Scheme has been designed and developed with the aim of reducing the number of vacant town centre units. This scheme provides an additional support to entrepreneurs wishing to start-up businesses in our town and village centres.

Objectives of the Scheme

The scheme has a number of objectives including:

- To reduce the number of ground and first floor vacant properties in the town and village centres by encouraging new businesses to occupy commercial premises that were previously occupied and have since been vacant over 2 years (5 years in the case of new, and never occupied commercial premises);
- To encourage the provision of commercial ventures in the locality;
- To assist in job creation and ongoing employment;
- To reduce the negative visual impact of empty commercial properties;
- To increase the rates collection in order to maintain local services.

Grant Details:

A grant will be payable to successful applicants over a period of up to 3 years, based on the commercial rates payable for the premises, subject to a maximum of grant of €7,500 based on rates of €10,000, as follows:

- **End of Year 1**
Grant payable equivalent to 75% of rates paid for the relevant year, subject to a maximum of €7,500 (ie 75% * €10,000)
- **End of Year 2**
Grant payable equivalent to 50% of rates paid for the relevant year, subject to a maximum of €5,000 (ie 50% * €10,000)
- **End of Year 3**
Grant payable equivalent to 25% of rates paid for the relevant year, subject to a maximum of €2,500 (ie 25% * €10,000)

The grant is in respect of commercial properties, in town and village centres, that were previously rateably occupied and which have been vacant for over two years, and is now rateably occupied by the claimant.

The grant applies to the extent that there is a net increase in occupation in the county, ie relocation from one property to another does not qualify. The rates payable on the property from time of occupation must be fully discharged before any grant is payable. Actual occupation of less than 1 year will not qualify for the scheme.

Applications for the grant must be submitted in the year for which the rates are liable.

Commercial Incentive Grant Scheme Payment

The payment to the successful applicant under the Commercial Incentive Grant Scheme will be based on a rates/calendar year and must be for sequential years.

The applicant may choose to apply in the year they commence, or in the following year which would be the first full calendar year they are in business. (ie if the business commences in September, then the applicant is only liable for rates for September-December in the year of commencement. If these rates are paid in full, they can supply details with their application and choose to apply for the grant in the following calendar year in order to maximise the grant available. All rates due must be paid before the grant will be paid.)

Eligibility:

- The scheme will be available to new businesses or those expanding into a new location;
- The scheme is applicable to the use of previously rateably occupied commercial properties, which have been vacant for a minimum of 24 months at date of occupation, and which met the Council's criteria to be treated as a vacant property for rates purposes for the period

Or

To the use of new premises which were developed in the Town or Village Centre, were never occupied, and met the Council's criteria to be treated as a vacant property for rates purposes for a period of five years or more;

- Three years is the maximum allowed for the grant regardless of the time the premises was vacant;
- Rates must be paid in full each year in order to qualify for the grant;
- In year 4 the full amount of rates due must be paid in that financial year;
- The grant applicant must be the rateable occupier of the property. There can be no outstanding rates or other charges due to the council, owing by the applicant in respect of any property.
- Actual occupation of less than 1 year will not qualify for the grant;
- The use of the property should comply with appropriate Planning guidance;
- The Applicant must be able to submit a copy of their Tax Clearance Certificate.

A list of non-qualifying activities is set out below:

Charity Shops	Betting Shops
Amusement arcades / premises with gaming machines	E-Cigarette Shops
Adult Shops	Cash for Gold / Cash for Clothes Shops
Nightclubs / Private Members Clubs	Banks
Moneylenders	Off-licences
Takeaways	Pop-up Shops
End of lines/Closing down / Euro or Discount Stores	
Multiples and/or franchises where the owner has > 3 units	Any premises where there is unauthorised development or which are subject to enforcement proceedings

In all cases, Kildare County Council reserves the right to refuse the application if there are concerns that the use is not consistent with the type of use usually seen in town and village centres. Kildare County Council's decision on applications is final.

Applications

Applications will only be accepted electronically through the Council's On-line Application Portal.

The initial application must be accompanied by:

- Evidence of payment of contributions (if applicable) and rates.
- Copy of current Tax Clearance Certificate
- Evidence of ownership of premises (eg Land Registry Certificate/Auctioneers letter) or minimum 12 month lease agreement;
- Statement confirming the business is new and not just relocating;
- Evidence that the business is active

APPENDIX 2

Report in Respect of Economic Strategy for Kildare



Draft Economic Development Strategy 2025

8 Key FOCUS AREAS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x 1 Strategic Objective x 12 Principal Actions x Annual departmental Implementation Actions 	<p>1. Indigenous Industry / SMEs - Page 7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x 5 Strategic Objective x 13 Principal Actions x Annual departmental Implementation Actions 	<p>2. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) - Page 11</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x 4 Strategic Objective x 7 Principal Actions x Annual departmental Implementation Actions 	<p>3. Knowledge economy - Page 14</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x 5 Strategic Objective x 8 Principal Actions x Annual departmental Implementation Actions 	<p>4. Equine Industry - Page 17</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x 5 Strategic Objective x 9 Principal Actions x Annual departmental Implementation Actions 	<p>5. Agri food Sector - Page 20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x 8 Strategic Objective x 7 Principal Actions x Annual departmental Implementation Actions 	<p>6. Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure - Page 25</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x 3 Strategic Objective x 8 Principal Actions x Annual departmental Implementation Actions 	<p>7. Retail - Page 29</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x 4 Strategic Objective x 8 Principal Actions x Annual departmental Implementation Actions 	<p>8. Climate Action & Green Economy - Page 32</p>
<p>Underpinned by 2 ENABLING ACTIONS</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invest in place - Place-making, Quality of Life, Enabling Infrastructure, Digitally Supported Communities 2. Invest in people - Education, Training & Skills 			