



Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning Strategic Policy Committee

Minutes of meeting held at 3.00 p.m. on Thursday, 3 December 2021 via Video Conferencing.

Cathaoirleach: Councillor Ivan Keatley

Present: Cllr. Pádraig McEvoy, Cllr Kevin Duffy, Mr. Gerry Prendergast, Ms. Majella O'Keefe, Cllr Michael Coleman; Cllr Rob Power, Cllr Seamie Moore.

Apologies: Councillor O'Dwyer, Ms. Evonne Boland

Also Present: Eoghan Ryan, Director of Services; Marian Higgins, A/Director of Services; Jacqui McNabb, Head of Enterprise, Amy Granville, Senior Planner, Conor Sweeney, 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 23 September 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2021 were proposed by **Councillor Duffy**, seconded by **Councillor Moore** and duly adopted.

3. To receive an update from the Director of Service, Economic, Community & Cultural Development

Ms. M. Higgins, Acting Director of Service gave the members an update [See Appendix 1] in respect of the following:

- Shopfront Grants
- Town Village Renewal - Street Enhancement Scheme - 9 completed
- Outdoor Seating and Accessories for Tourism and Hospitality - 126 applications with €387,000 in grants approved.
- MERITS – First tenants in place and officially opening due in January 2022.
- Equine Tech Innovation Hub – scheduled to open in January 2022.
- Athy Food, Drink & Skills Innovation Hub – prequalifying tenders received.

Councillor Keatley asked if the LEO staff are now working from the MERIT building. Ms. McNabb advised him that they are working from the new building.

Mr. Prendergast asked if there was any progress in keeping Horse Sport Ireland in Kildare. Ms McNabb advised that the matter was still being investigated.

The report was noted.

4. To Approve the Kildare Remote Working Hub Strategy

Mr. Conor Sweeney outlined the details of the draft Strategy which was already circulated to the committee members.

Councillor Keatley said that the strategy was welcome in keeping people working locally and off of the roads. He asked if the Strategy will now go to Full Council.

Councillor Duffy asked that the gap in coverage in respect of the west of the county should be examined.

Ms. McNabb said that that there were also private market facilities in operation or proposed which would give greater coverage.

It was proposed by Councillor Keatley and seconded by Councillor McEvoy that the Draft Kildare Remote Working Hub Strategy be approved and put forward to Full Council for approval.

5. To receive a briefing on the Draft Industrial Estate Enhancement Scheme

Mr. Sweeney circulated a discussion document on the Scheme and outlined details of the Scheme. Ms. McNabb advised that the Scheme would help build brands by enhancing streetscapes and landscaping in areas where there was often no clear ownership. She expected to pilot the scheme in 2022 with a view to operating a more enhanced scheme in 2023.

Councillor Power advised that he was somewhat sceptical about aspects of the scheme where planning conditions should have covered the issue and where developers could be rewarded after making no effort at maintenance.

Councillor Moore said that the idea behind the scheme was good but that it would have to be managed carefully.

Councillor Duffy said that he supported the idea and saw the benefit of relatively small investment for longer-term gain.

The report was noted.

Planning

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

Mr. Eoghan Ryan, Director of Service update the Committee on a number of issues including:

- Office of the Planning Regulator review completed.
- Preparation of Town Centre masterplans for Clane, Kilcock and Prosperous.
- Workshops will be held early in the new year with the Council members. In respect of the Draft County Development Plan.
- Naas Local Area Plan adopted.
- Request for additional staffing resources sent to Department.

Councillor McEvoy suggested that the members be surveyed in respect of workshops that they would like on the County Development Plan.

Ms. Granville, Senior Planner advised that they were looking at a number of podcasts and 'virtual consultation rooms' which had worked in other local authorities but would go to venues around the county if Covid related restrictions permitted.

The report was noted.

7. To receive a briefing on the Kildare Housing Needs Demand Assessment

Mr. Jim Egan outlined details in respect of the Housing Needs Demand Assessment (HNDA) which is now required to be undertaken by each local authority to correlate and accurately align future housing requirements in accordance with the National Planning Framework. He advised that the HNDA would inform the Housing chapter of the Draft County Development Plan.

He advised that the HNDA would include analysis of housing market drivers, housing stock, the estimate of future demand and need and the policy objectives required to deliver the housing strategy.

Councillor Keatley asked if the 2022 Census figures, when available, would be used to inform the Strategy.

Ms. A. Granville, Senior Planner advised that the HNDA will be capable of adjustment to reflect changes.

Councillor Moore said that this should have been done years ago and needs to go to municipal district level.

Councillor McEvoy said that areas where towns crossed administrative borders such as Maynooth and Blessington would have to be dealt with appropriately.

The report was noted.

8. To agree a Work Programme for 2022

Mr. E. Ryan highlighted a number of areas in the work programme and asked the committee members to consider a potential work programme for 2022.

- Development Contribution Scheme: Planning Department potentially progressing a Section 48 Scheme and a Section 49 special contribution scheme for certain infrastructural projects.
- Signage Policy: dealing with the proliferation of signs and public realm related issues in this area.

Councillor McEvoy noted that the Historic Monuments Advisory Committee reports to this committee.

Any Other Business.

The Cathaoirleach advised the Committee that this would be his last meeting as chair of the Committee as the chairmanship and a new Chair would be in place for the next meeting. It was agreed that the next meeting may be brought forward to February. Mr McLoughlin agreed to liaise with the new Cathaoirleach on the matter.

The meeting closed at 5.15 p.m.

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APPENDIX I

Director's Report - Economic Development

GRANT SCHEMES

Shopfront Grant Budget Remaining

<i>Kildare/Newbridge</i>	-
<i>Athy</i>	€8,659
<i>Naas</i>	-
<i>Clane Maynooth</i>	€14,239
<i>Celbridge Leixlip</i>	€20,789

Town Village Renewal - Street Enhancement Scheme

	Applications	Value
Completed Applications	9	€35,148.47

Outdoor Seating Grant

	Number	Value of Approvals
Applications Approved	126	387,272
Applications Paid	122	374,947
In Progress	4	12,325

Christmas Merchandising Grant

	Number	Value of Approvals
Applications Received	10	4,006
Applications Paid	8	3,092
In Progress	2	

LEO Supports

54 businesses approved funding for feasibility, priming or expansion grants to a total of €1,017,040.

3 businesses were provided with investment through the Agile R&D Fund totalling €214,725.

To date:

- 112 businesses funded to enhance their ecommerce capabilities and drive online selling to a total of €199,000
- 9 businesses received Micro Finance funding €105,000.
- 150 clients provided with 1-1 export guidance and 7 clients currently undertaking strategic export development programme to aggressively grow export sales – Approx. Cost - €50,250

- 65 Clients availed of Green for Micro Programme - Approx. Cost €117,000
- 61 clients availed of LEAN Programme in 2021 (including both LEAN for Micro and LEAN Digitisation) - Approx. Cost €263,781
- 604 sessions of 1-1 expert mentoring support provided to businesses - Approx. Cost €105,700
- 1,000 students participated in the Student Enterprise Programme, our 1st intervention in inspiring entrepreneurial talent in our county Approx. Cost €22,850
- 396 individuals completed a Start Your Own Business Programme shows ambition for start-ups in the county – Approx. Cost €109,690
- 3,844 clients availed of Training Programmes in 2021 Approx. Cost - €515,860

Economic Support Services

MERITS – Innovation & Incubation Centre

First commercial tenants now in-situ. RETS spend of €716,00 in order to drawdown €573,00 (80%) submitted by 17th November. EI have confirmed that there will be no auditing of REDF or RETS projects until Q1 2022 and official opening now deferred until 28th January 2022.

Equine Tech Innovation Hub

Construction commenced on site on the 31st May at the Irish National Stud. The works were completed at the start of October and the team is engaging with the potential tenants in advance of a formal opening in January.

Ministers of State with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Robert Troy TD and Damien English TD announced the successful applicants under the Government's Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme (RETS) Feasibility Fund.

Our proposed Feasibility Study to investigate the regional and national demand for the expansion of the National Equine Innovation Centre (NEIC) at the current footprint in the Irish National Stud Co Kildare was approved funding of €30,000 at 50% grant rate.

Athy Food, Drink & Skills Innovation Hub

The final design has been completed and the tender package for the construction contract is currently being prepared. The prequalifying tender for the panel of suitable construction teams launched on Monday 18th October and closed on Monday 15th November. The expressions of interest received are currently being assessed for suitability/qualification for a full tender process. The team are currently awaiting the opening of the next stage of the RRDF and will prepare an application for capital funding for the project once the fund launches. The team will be pursuing other funding streams once they reopen in the coming weeks.

Kildare Hub Strategy

The final draft has been completed and sent to the SPC for their consideration. It is intended to then send the strategy for final design before full publication before the end of the year.

Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan 2024

The final draft has been agreed between all stakeholders including Kildare LEO and Kildare County Council and submitted to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. It is expected that the plan will be formally launched by Minister English in January 2022

NETWORKS & CLUSTERING

K-Hub Network

Hosted by Kildare County Council The public and private co working and innovation space owners/managers have been meeting monthly and have formed the K-Hub network. The network leverage economies of scale in research, collaboration, training and funding applications and is supported by the economic development unit in Kildare County Council

Food Network

Flavours of Kildare Food Network - Recruitment Webinar due to take place on 30th November.

Women in Business Network

To foster and support female entrepreneurship, harness the power of the collective and provide a space for collaboration, development and business opportunities. Networking meetings take place once a month and feature a focus on different areas of business development.

Craft Network

A unique training programme to develop a craft network in Co Kildare was launched in September 2019. The project was funded by County Kildare LEADER Partnership in association with the Kildare Local Enterprise Office.

The training programme enabled local craft entrepreneurs to learn the skills needed to establish and operate an independent craft network. The aim of the network is to bring exciting opportunities to the many talented craft entrepreneurs in Co Kildare to develop a common brand and home for craft.

Following the delivery of the programme, the Kildare craft network was established and their brand new website originalkildare.ie. was launched.

Cluster Facilitator

Engagement with Clodagh Barry of the Cluster Centre to explore opportunities, scope and potential for a business cluster with international significance/global expertise in Kildare.