



Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning Strategic Policy Committee

Minutes of meeting held at 3.00 p.m. on Thursday, 7 July 2022 via Video Conferencing.

- Cathaoirleach: Councillor Rob Power
- Present: Cllr. Pádraig McEvoy, Councillor O'Dwyer, Councillor Moore, Mr. Gerry Prendergast, Ms. Majella O'Keefe, Cllr Michael Coleman, Cllr Ivan Keatley
- Apologies: Cllr Kevin Duffy
- Also Present: Eoghan Ryan, Director of Services; Marion Higgins, A/Head of Enterprise, Gabriel Conlon, Senior Executive Officer, Jane O'Reilly A/Senior Planner, Conor Sweeney, Administrative Officer, Mark McLoughlin, Administrative Officer.
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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 31 March 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2022 were proposed by **Councillor Coleman**, seconded by **Councillor McEvoy** and duly adopted.

Mr. M.McLoughlin advised the Committee that Ms. Evonne Boland had resigned from the Committee and that he was in contact with Corporate Services to advise them of

the resignation and to request a replacement representative from the Environmental/Conservation pillar.

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

Ms. M. Higgins, Acting Director of Service gave an update on the Directorate [See Appendix 1].

The Director highlighted a number of areas of activity including:

- 45 applications for retail enhancement scheme
- Equine Innovation Centre – 14 tenants
- Funding application for Athy Food and Drinks hub was submitted

The report was noted.

4. To Receive a Briefing on the Draft Kildare Diaspora Strategy

Mr. Conor Sweeney gave a presentation on the Draft Kildare Diaspora Strategy.

He noted that a website would shortly be set up for this purpose and that a Committee would be required to monitor progress.

Councillor Moore welcomed the Strategy noting that twinning associations were ongoing for over 30 years although many twinning groups had downsized. He said that linkages to university hospitals overseas was an important potential connection.

Councillor McEvoy said that the genealogy service was a useful way to encourage links back to Kildare and that the availability of further datasets online would be helpful.

Councillor Coleman said that the birthplace of Arthur Guinness provided another potential opportunity.

Councillor O'Dwyer said that the St. Bridget 1500 commemoration was a significant event which should be included.

Ms. Higgins advised the members that a Diaspora Committee would be established with representatives from different Directorates. She said that they would look at

further digitization of historic records and that the St. Brigid 1500 Commemoration would be included.

On the proposal of **Councillor McEvoy**, seconded by **Councillor Moore**, it was agreed to forward the Kildare Diaspora Strategy to the corporate Policy Group for consideration.

Planning

5. 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:

- Draft Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 – 618 submissions. Chief Executive report would be presented to members in September.
- Maynooth Local Area Plan – memorandum of understanding and steering group with Meath County Council.
- Ongoing work in respect of Newbridge – transportation strategy.
- Northwest Quadrant – draft tender documents in preparation.
- Work ongoing on Collinstown Masterplan.
- Pre-planning for significant development in Newbridge area.
- Report due from Office of Planning Regulator (OPR) on pilot review of Kildare planning functions.

Councillor O'Dwyer asked for a timescale in respect of the Newbridge Local Area Plan (LAP).

Councillor Moore said that we should compile a comprehensive list of energy and energy sources, for example encouraging Bord na Mona and newer technology such as battery storage. He also asked when a meeting will be held with planning agents.

Councillor Coleman asked for an update on Collinstown and Confey Masterplan.

Councillor McEvoy said that the County Development Plan needed to look at the ranking of Clane and ensure it is in the correct hierarchy in view of the development in the area. He also said that the Historic Monuments Advisory Committee (HMAC) had not met and reported to this SPC and that it should be progressed. He said that

considering the time that was lost, when a new Council is convened, consideration should be given to retaining the same membership on the HMAAC.

Councillor Keatley said that the significant population increase in County Kildare reflected in the 2022 Census figures would need to be taken into account in the County Development Plan (CDP). Councillor McEvoy noted that the population increase in Kildare was greater than the entire population of Leitrim.

Ms. J. O'Reilly said that the Transportation strategies were ongoing at present.

Mr. E. Ryan advised the members that Eirgrid were very much focused on Kildare and that one area of interest at present was district heating ideas. He said that a Planning Agents' meeting will be held in October or November.

In respect of the Census figures, he said that it was important that development should be focused on where it should be rather than on what the census figures show. He acknowledged that the census figures would show significant growth rates in areas such as Newbridge and that infrastructure could not keep up.

The report was noted.

6.To Receive a Presentation on the Draft Development Contribution Scheme 2023-2029

Mr. M. McLoughlin gave a presentation to the members on the Draft Development Contribution Scheme 2023-2029.

A number of areas were highlighted including:

- Consolidation of banding to one rate of €62 per square metre of residential and non-residential development
- Reduced rates in respect of town and village centre zonings to encourage sustainable development.
- Waivers and reductions for certain developments in accordance with the guidelines.
- Clarification of rates for residential extensions, garden offices and ancillary buildings.
- Reapportionment of contribution expenditure to reflect the changing priorities of future capital programmes.

Councillor Moore said that community development contributions should be kept areas based. He said that data centres should be required to pay a special contribution and that concessions should be given to encourage retail development.

Councillor McEvoy said that some consideration should be given to addressing the ecological impact of development such as a contribution towards replacement hedgerows where removed.

Councillor Keatley said that the appeals submitted to An Bord Pleanála in respect of extractive industries were scandalous considering the damage they caused to local roads. He said that some consideration should be given to reducing development contributions for first time buyers.

Mr. E. Ryan said that he would give consideration to keeping community development contributions local. He said that no consideration was been given to reductions for data centres. He said that we could look at the policy in the County Development Plan in respect of hedgerows.

Mr. G. Conlon advised the members that there was no provision in legislation to refund or rebate contributions if this was being considered for first-time buyers.

On the proposed by **Councillor McEvoy** and seconded by **Councillor Duffy** it was agreed to forward the Draft Development Contribution Scheme on to the Corporate Policy group for consideration.

Any Other Business.

The meeting closed at 5.25 p.m. Next meeting scheduled for 29 September 2022.

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APPENDIX I

Progress Report – July 2022

Enterprise and Economic Development

Policy

- **Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan**

The Mid-East Plan contains five agreed 'Strategic Objectives' for enterprise development, accompanied by time-bound actions that deliver the objectives. The objectives focus on the regions areas of strength including on agri-food, screen content creation, equine sector, the regions acceleration to low-carbon and ensuring the enterprise ecosystem in the region is strong.

A new Programme Manager will commence in the role in early August and a steering committee will be convened shortly after under the Chairmanship of Owen Brennan.

- **Diaspora Strategy**

Through this strategic plan, Kildare County Council seeks to create linkages that establish and sustain relationships, share experiences, generate opportunities and deliver on further investment and economic activity for our County. In doing so, this strategy will celebrate Kildare, the place, Kildare, its people, its twinning relationships, as well as the arts and culture, the heritage, the music and the landscape that are uniquely of Kildare. The strategy will be formally presented to the SPC at this meeting before full council approval.

Economic Support Services

- **Retail Enhancement Supports Scheme for 2022**

The scheme includes the opening of applications for the Shop Front Improvement, Accessibility and Age Friendly Grant and Retail Window Merchandising Grant Scheme to financially assist business owners to improve the appearance of their shop fronts or commercial properties. The scheme, which has already approved over 45 applications this year, is aimed at increasing visibility for businesses and enhancing the streetscapes of towns and villages around the county.

The scheme provides for up to 50% of the cost of shop front refurbishment, depending on the work proposed with a maximum allowable contribution of €5,000 per applicant depending on the nature of the work. The scheme also incentivises applicants to incorporate accessibility and age friendly improvements to their shopfront with up to 75% of eligible costs covered under this measure. The scheme closes this Friday but a further Retail Window Merchandising grant will be launched in the Autumn

Along with the grant funding schemes, retail businesses can also avail of additional retail enhancement supports through our local enterprise office. There is also an opportunity to improve your online presence through the trading online voucher valued at €2500 and green your business and lower costs with the Green for Micro Programme, which has a value of €1800. In addition, you can also sign up via our website www.Localenterprise.ie/Kildare to attend dedicated training courses that are delivered by experts in retail, design, digital marketing sales and social media

Economic Capital Programs

- **National Equine Innovation Centre**

The NEIC currently has 4 tenants and 10 desks occupied on full time basis. A consultant will shortly be appointed to conduct a feasibility study to examine future expansion of the NEIC.

- **Athy Food, Drink & Skills Innovation Hub**

The team submitted an RRDF Category 1 funding application in April and a decision on capital funding is expected in September

Networks & Clustering

Food Network

The Flavours of Kildare Food network meets on a monthly basis and KCC & Kildare LEO are supporting the development of the network to ensure further promotion of the excellent food and beverage offering in the county.

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. Women In Business Entrepreneurs are invited to apply to join the cluster - <https://leokildare.submit.com//show/165>

Craft Network

Local Enterprise Office Kildare has launched the Craft and Creative cluster to ensure that Craft and Creative businesses in the region are aware of supports and have the opportunity to network. Craft and Creative businesses are invited to apply to join the network - <https://leokildare.submit.com//show/164>

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. KCC were recently awarded €181,000 under the Connected Hubs funding scheme to carry out upgrade works on the NEIC, MERITS and Athy Community Enterprise Centre,

A new Hubs Marketing Scheme Measure (up to €50,000) has been introduced, on a trial basis, to fund marketing campaigns targeted at attracting remote workers and mobile talent to individual counties, in line with the commitments under Our Rural Future. Kildare County Council are applying directly to the Department for this funding. The funding, if approved, will be administered by Kildare County Council and delivered in line with Pillar 4 (Hub Network Promotion) of the Kildare Hub Strategy.

Marian Higgins

A/Director of Services

