



## Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning Strategic Policy Committee

Draft Minutes of meeting held at 2.00 p.m. on Thursday,

13 February 2025, in person in Arás Chill Dara.

**Cathaoirleach:** Councillor Ivan Keatley

**Present:** Councillor Mark Leigh, Councillor Claire O'Rourke, Councillor Pádraig McEvoy, Councillor Evie Sammon, Councillor David Trost, Mr. Evan Arkwright – Business/Commercial Pillar, Mr. Patrick (PJ) Fagan – PPN Social Inclusion, Mr. Colm Kenny – PPN Environmental/Conservation.

**Apologies:** Councillor Tom McDonnell, Mr Anthony Neville, Development Construction Pillar, Amy Granville, Senior Planner.

**Also Present:** Alan Dunney, Director of Services, Gabriel Conlon, Senior Executive Officer; Andrew Gaynor, Economic Development Officer, Stephen Willoughby, Senior Executive Planner, Joanne Farrell, Staff Officer.

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The Cathaoirleach welcomed the Members of the inaugural Economic Development, Enterprise & Planning Strategic Policy Committee meeting of 2025 and once the attendees briefly introduced themselves, the Cathaoirleach outlined the purpose of the SPC.

### 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 or pecuniary or beneficial interests under section 177 of

the Local Government Act 2001, as amended for items under discussion at the meeting.

The item was noted.

## **2. Minutes of Meeting held on 28 March 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2024 were proposed by Councillor McEvoy, seconded by Cathaoirleach Keatley and duly adopted.

## **3. To receive an update on progress of the Local Economic Community Plan (LECP)**

The Cathaoirleach advised the Members that the LECP briefing will be an ongoing item on the agenda. Mr A. Gaynor, Economic Development Officer, gave an update on the LECP highlighting a number of areas of activity relating to the following 6 Key Sections;

- 3.1 Hub Developments and Activities
- 3.2 Training & Client Engagement and Cluster Development
- 3.3 Tourism Activation
- 3.4 Inward Investment and Economic Development (including EU-funded programmes)
- 3.5 Retail Support Programme (SPC Agenda Item #4)
- 3.6 County Kildare Skills Audit (SPC Agenda Item #5)

A. Dunney, Director of Services, Planning, provided a briefing on the policy and legislative items planning are working on and areas of activity which included;

- Maynooth JLAP which is at Adoption stage and set to be finalised by Kildare County Council at a special meeting of Clane/Maynooth MD on Monday 17.02.2025 and Meath County Council on Wednesday 19.02.2025.
- Kilcullen Settlement Strategy

- Newbridge LAP which will be at Draft Stage within the next couple of months.
- Naas Canal Quarter Masterplan which is ongoing.
- Naas Northwest Quadrant Masterplan which is at the options stage progressing towards a draft masterplan circa Q3 of 2025.

During the briefing, the Members were advised that Officials were working with the Minister in respect of the enacting of the various sections of the new Planning & Development Act, that training will be required and elected members would be updated accordingly.

A discussion followed where the following queries and comments were raised, addressed and noted:

- Clarity provided that the Strategic Employment Plan is based on identifying strategic landbanks around the country for employment and will fall under Variation 3 of the CDP. Confirmation provided that the discussion regarding same will take place at the next SPC meeting.
- Is the interaction with Failte Ireland on the LECP at Kildare Level or a higher/wider level: It is at a separate/wider level to that of Kildare and the interaction aims to provide a transition piece to enable the identification of other methods to engage projects.

#### **4. Retail Support Program 2025 and amendments to existing scheme.**

Mr A. Gaynor, Economic Development Officer, advised that the amendments will be put forward to the next SPC and confirmed that within the next few weeks grant aid will be opening up to applicants.

The Cathaoirleach reminded the Members that there would be no adopting of documents during this initial meeting of the SPC.

#### **5. Preliminary review of Draft Skills Audit**

Mr. A. Gaynor, Economic Development Officer, provided a summary briefing of the Skills Strategy 2024-2030 Report; outlined the process involved in

creating the report and the role of AIRO and KPMG in the process. The Members were directed towards the area of the plan specific to funding, were advised that the report was underpinned by the LECP and the Corporate Plan and that the Final Report is published and will be signed off within the next week or so.

A discussion followed where the following queries and comments were raised, addressed and noted:

- Mr. Kenny noted the Plan was broke down into sections and queried the absence of a Medical & Healthcare section: Mr. Gaynor clarified that the 6 sections put forward were considered in line with existing policies and in doing so sections within healthcare were engaged.
- The Cathaoirleach enquired if the Plan was formulated by purely looking at National Strategy: Mr. Gaynor confirmed that in working with the ETB the LECP is a driver for skills training through collaboration with stakeholders and referenced that Maynooth University took up their own study identifying mismatching between industry's.
- The Cathaoirleach enquired if the report would be received at full council or progress through public consultation: Both Mr. Gaynor and Director Dunney confirmed that the report would be published and asked the Members to reach out for any clarity or query they may have in respect of the report and not to wait until the next meeting.
- Mr. Arkwright advised of challenges within the equine sector specific to skillsets and staffing: The Cathaoirleach confirmed that the list within the report is not exhaustive or exclusive and all suggestions are welcome, further confirming that the SPC will look at the merits of including any suggestions.

## **6. Draft Work Programme 2025**

A discussion took place where the following queries and comments were raised, addressed and noted:

- Mr. Fagan enquired as to what works are to be carried over from last year. Director Dunney confirmed that there was no outstanding works being

carried over from last year but works ongoing from last year were being evolved this year and proceeded to mention that the adoption of the recent CDP triggered more work re policies within the CDP and referenced the Serviced Sites Scheme being an example of national policy that Kildare County Council has to localise for the county of Kildare.

- Cllr. McEvoy enquired if an issues paper could be fed into the SPC to trigger awareness around objectives: Director Dunney supported Cllr. McEvoy's suggestion as a good idea to assist in making SPC members aware of works and request their thoughts and the Cathaoirleach also agreed that it would be a good way to flag work coming to the SPC.
- Cllr. McEvoy enquired if the reporting structure is fed through LCDCC: The Cathaoirleach confirmed that it was.

The Cathaoirleach went through the Work Programme, providing a briefing on the 5 headings and subheadings; explained the idea of a work programme and outlined that the work programme is a 5 year programme that is subject to ongoing review to identify where targets have or have not been met. The Cathaoirleach further explained that item 3 is a result of a motion that came from full council and is a work in progress.

A further discussion took place where the following queries and comments were raised, addressed and noted:

- Cllr. Sammon questioned if the Work Programme would change due to variations created by the enacting of the new Planning Act: The Cathaoirleach and Director Dunney both confirmed that the Work Programme would change and that training would be provided accordingly.
- Cllr Trost enquired as to what the Members could do to assist/benefit the SPC: Director Dunney clarified that when bringing items from the SPC to the Chamber that the SPC Members would have reached out to their parties to pre inform them which will assist in easing the passage of the policy through the chamber. Director Dunney also advised that the new core strategy figures will go through the SPCs and the SPC Members are required to pre inform their Parties, which will help ease the variations through the Chamber.

- Cllr. McEvoy outlined the process behind the National Planning Framework for the benefit of the new Members. The Cathaoirleach advised that on foot of the enactment of the new Planning Act, it is to be established what KCC's role is and how KCC fits into the Planning Framework in addition to figuring out the projected population growth and challenges. Director Dunney also advised that further clarity would be required as to how towns are tiered and how population gets distributed across the county.

The discussion on the Work Programme closed by way of the Cathaoirleach clarifying that the role of the SPC is that of a sounding board responsible for influencing policy by way of giving other sectors/constituents a chance to have their views considered.

## **7. Any Other Business**

The request of PJ Fagan for receipt of the Minutes and Agenda at the earliest possible time i.e. 3 weeks prior to the next meeting was noted and agreed.

The next meeting dates of the 15<sup>th</sup> of May at 3pm, 4<sup>th</sup> September at 3pm and 18<sup>th</sup> December at 3pm were set and agreed by the Members.

The Cathaoirleach confirmed that requests to attend future meetings online can be addressed at each meeting and accessing the meeting remotely can be facilitated in the case Members find themselves in the position that they are unable to attend in person.

Mr. Conlon advised that huge changes were ahead due to the enactment of the new Planning Act. Mr. Conlon advised that Q1 saw changes to the establishment of An Bord Pleanála (ABP) and Q3 will see significant changes to the entire plan making process, which will be followed by changes to the principal decision making process in Q4. Mr. Conlon impressed on the Members that it was opportune for the new SPC as they will see all the new changes happen.

Cathaoirleach Keatley confirmed conclusion of the inaugural SPC Meeting.