**Minutes of Meeting of SPC 1 – Economic Development, Enterprise Support & Tourism**

**Held in County Hall on 13th February 2015 at 4.00pm**

**Present:** Cllr Pat Millea (Chair), Cllr Tomas Breathnach, Cllr Peter Cleere, Cllr Michael Doyle, Cllr Patrick McKee and Cllr Patrick O’Neill.

**Apologies:** Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick.

**In Attendance:** Martin Prendiville, Head of Finance; Sean McKeown, Head of Enterprise; Bryan Tyrell, Senior Executive Officer; Aisling Hayes, Administrative Officer; Stephen O’Connor, Administrative Officer.

1. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of meeting held on 11th December, 2014 as circulated were agreed.

1. **Matters Arising**

RE: External members of the SPC: It was noted that the PPN is not expected to be in situ until the end of April at the earliest and that some of the nominating organisations have not confirmed their nominees for the SPCs to the Council.

RE: Small Towns and Villages: Cllr Breathnach confirmed he had approached Minister Phelan about the concept of Living Villages.

1. **Update on Preparation of Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)**

The Head of Enterprise provided an update. It was noted:

* briefing document circulated with the minutes was a summary of the latest guidance circular issued by the Dept of the Environment on the preparation of the LECP.
* a Project Team of relevant executives from the Council has been established to assist the SPC and LCDC prepare the Plan.
* a Project Plan has been prepared outlining the main steps to be undertaken in completing the LECP, along with target dates for completing each of the 4 phases, including target of end of October, 2015 for finalising the Plan. Copy was circulated for discussion. It was noted the LCDC at their meeting earlier that day had approved the timelines for completing the LECP.
* the Project Team will undertake the bulk of the work outlined in the Project Plan. However, it was noted that outside expertise will be required on specific elements of the Plan and that the costs involved have been provided for in the Council budget.

The Project Plan and timelines were agreed by the SPC.

1. **Update on Local Enterprise Office (LEO)**

The Head of Enterprise referred to the LEO Metrics Return for 2014/2015 (circulated to members in advance.) There followed a discussion. In particular, it was noted:

* 250 client companies on the LEO Annual Employment Survey (AES) portfolio at the end of 2014 accounted for a combined total of 1,033 full time job equivalents, a net increase of 159 jobs compared to the AES in 2013.
* LEO Kilkenny had the 6th highest grant approvals figure nationally in 2014.

The Head of Enterprise indicated that while the LEO is awaiting notification of budget allocations from the Dept Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation for the current year, the pipeline of projects so far is very encouraging. He circulated a draft service delivery plan for 2015 comprising details of the outturn for 2014 and targets set for 2015 under each of the main programme actions delivered by the LEO. It was agreed that this template will be used by the SPC to monitor the performance of the LEO in implementing its strategic objectives in the current year.

1. **Update on Economic Development Unit (EDU) Work Programme**

Stephen O’Connor circulated a copy of the service delivery plan for the unit. There followed a discussion. In particular:

* Head of Finance provided an update on the acquisition of the brewery site. He said that the projected timelines will coincide with other developments, such as the expected call for proposals under the ERDF Urban Development Fund.
* There was a discussion on the spread of community enterprise centres in the County.
* The need for targeted support for identified industries with latent potential.
* Attracting FDI and role of IDA. It was noted that the EDU staff had already been liaising with the new IDA regional manager.

1. **Update on Tourism Development**

Brian Tyrell updated the Committee on the stakeholders involved in promoting Kilkenny, namely Kilkenny Tourism, Destination Kilkenny, Kilkenny County Council and the voluntary sector. He stressed that it was necessary to continuously refresh the marketing theme and PR strategy. There followed a discussion. In particular:

* Aisling Hayes outlined the value of being a member of Kilkenny Tourism and the membership fee structure.
* Cllr McKee highlighted the untapped potential of Kells Priory.
* Cllr Breathnach stressed that it would be important that the SPC in its work would not lose sight of the critical importance of the tourism sector to the local economy.

1. **Rates Incentive Scheme – Strategic Directions**

Stephen O’Connor circulated a discussion paper on commercial rates and a summary outline of supported business incentive schemes in other local authorities. The concept of a business incentive scheme for Kilkenny was discussed and comments made, in particular:

* Vacant premises should be a priority for re-use,
* Special consideration should be given to crèche facilities.
* There is a complex matrix of issues involved in such schemes and unintended consequences need to be avoided a best outcome for all concerned needs to be achieved.

Cllr McKee circulated a paper on proposed rates/business incentive scheme and it was agreed that this matter should be placed as an item for further discussion at the next meeting of the SPC.

1. **AOB**

It was agreed the next meeting of the Committee would take place in mid/late April. It was agreed to revert to members for a suitable date, time and venue for the meeting.

The Chairman concluded the meeting at 5.30pm.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

CHAIRMAN