

Minutes of the Meeting Strategic Policy Committee (SPC1) Economic Development, Enterprise Support, Tourism, Planning & Development Policy

Held via MS Teams

Thursday 7th July 2022 at 3.30pm

Present: Cllr. Ger Frisby (Chair), Cllr. John Coonan, Cllr. Eugene McGuinness, Cllr. Maria Dollard, Cllr. Patrick O Neill, Eileen Moyles, Fiona O Neill, Brian Hamilton, Marion Acreman.

Apologies: Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Michael Doyle, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Paul Brophy, Deirdre Shine, Bill O Keefe, Martina Comerford, Nicolaas Louw.

In Attendance: Denis Malone, Martin Prendiville, Aileen McGrath, Catherine Myers.

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and advised of the recent staff changes in Kilkenny County Council. He advised, Ms. Fiona Deegan is now Acting Director of Services with the responsibility for the management of displaced Ukrainian Persons. Mr. Denis Malone is in the position of Acting Director of Services with responsibility for Planning, Environment, Building Control, Parks, LEO/Economic Development, Tourism Marketing & Veterinary Services. Ms Aileen McGrath has stepped into the role of Acting Head of Enterprise. The Chair wished all well in their various new roles.

Item	
1.	Declaration of Interest: Mr. Brian Hamilton declared that his solicitors (Kenny, Stephenson and Chapman) are in consultation with Kilkenny County Council's John Harte and Co. concerning a number of property and boundary issues between Mr. Hamilton's residence and the Island Mill, which is leased by Kilkenny County Council to the Kilkenny and Carlow Educational and Training Board and also for the granting of a license for the use of his private laneway for the purposes of recreational access to the River Nore.
2.	Confirmation of Minutes: The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 25 th March 2022 were proposed by Ms. Marion Acreman and seconded by Cllr. Eugene McGuinness and agreed.
3.	Matters Arising: None
4.	Progress Report: The Chair noted that the agenda and progress report were circulated and the report was taken as read. Mr. Denis Malone advised that the Targeted Rate Waiver Scheme which was agreed by Government on 12 th October 2021 to support certain sectors was extended to include the first quarter of 2022. The value of the waiver is the equivalent value of 25% of the annual rate bill for 2022 for eligible categories of business. With regards to the Abbey Quarter, Mr. Malone gave the following update: Glanbia and O'Neill Foley Accountants had taken tenancies in the Brewhouse and two further businesses were close to finalising agreements, meaning the building will then be fully occupied. He noted further works on the public realm are due to commence in Q1 of 2023.

As part of the phase 2, a design team is now in place to progress the further development of the areas adjacent to the Brewhouse.

The temporary car park, which will include 120 parking spaces and 7 coach parking spaces, is nearing completion.

Mr. Malone gave an update on the North Quay SDZ, noting that the main construction tender for the public realm and infrastructure elements of the development had a return date of 17th June and are these submissions were currently being accessed. The upgrade of the approach roads to the North Quays and the delivery of the link road are currently at design stage and should go for planning at the end of this year. Mr. Malone noted that in this case a Part 10 planning application to An Bord Pleanala will need to be prepared.

Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Update:

Ms. Aileen McGrath gave an update from the Local Enterprise Office, noting that with regards to financial assistance, 50% of budget approvals capacity has been approved to date. Ms. McGrath also noted that the first Agile Innovation Grant had been approved to a Kilkenny based business. This is a relatively new grant fund aimed at supporting small business to carry out research and development on their products or services.

Ms. McGrath mentioned two other programmes which are currently available at the Local Enterprise Office (subject to eligibility criteria).

Digital Start - This is a pilot scheme which is free and offers up to 4 days business specific advice and technical support to help small businesses prepare and implement a plan for the adoption of digital tools and techniques across their business.

Green for Micro – This programme is designed to help prepare small businesses for the low carbon and more resource efficient economy of the future. This scheme offers two days of businesses specific advice and technical support which is free of charge and is available for businesses up to ten employees.

Tourism Update:

Ms. McGrath provided the following update on Tourism activities.

The Kilkenny Cat Walk ended in May 2022 with an auction of the Cats.

The South East Food Stories Initiative was launched on 13th June to help promote the wide variety of food producers, providers and makers delivering quality foods directly from source to plates across the South East. This pilot programme is a collaborative project of the 5 local authority based Tourism Officers (Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford) and is supported by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Kilkenny experiences included in this initiative are Highbank Orchard, Mount Juliet, Jerpoint Glass and Jerpoint Park Experiences.

At the recent Horizon Irish Open in Mount Juliet, Kilkenny Tourism showcased Kilkenny as a destination, while Made In Kilkenny and Taste Kilkenny were represented at this event.

Questions:

Ms. Fiona O'Neill requested an update on the Changing Places facility for the Abbey Quarter to which Mr Malone replied that the matter is a priority. He noted that the new Mayfair Library building is not suitable location with at location at Sweeney's Orchard is a possibility. Ms. O'Neill noted that the Changing Places facility must be accessible at all times, not just 9-5pm.

	<p>Cllr. Eugene McGuinness queried who is responsible for the cost of the temporary car park to which Mr. Malone advised that the Abbey Quarter Partnership were funding it. Mr. Martin Prendiville added that €250K had been received as part of URDF funding and the costs for the temporary car and coach parking need to be finalised. Mr. Prendiville, will in due course, work out the percentage of costs to be paid by Kilkenny County Council and will advise on same.</p> <p>Cllr. John Coonan and Cllr. McGuinness sought an update on St Canice's Campus, to which Mr. Malone advised that an initial workshop has been conducted with the HSE. Kilkenny County Council have signed off on a proposal on the general use which will be a mix of recreational and HSE use. Cois Nore will fall under the HSE umbrella. He advised that the planning and road design was expected to be signed off in the coming weeks which will then go back to the HSE and then to public display in September. Further to amendments and public display, it is envisaged that it will be signed off by the end of the year. Cllr. Coonan went on to say that a park and ride is badly needed and the campus would be an ideal location. Mr. Malone agreed to keep the Elected Members updated on this matter.</p> <p>Cllr. Maria Dollard had a query with regard to the review of the Abbey Quarter Masterplan. Mr. Malone advised that it would be a public process. Social Housing was originally planned for Sweeney's Orchard (30-35% of the land use is to be residential) but housing is difficult to progress at the moment. Mr Malone also added that with regards to the Mobility Hub, a consultant may be asked to look over it, if needed.</p>
5.	<p>LECP 2023 – 2028:</p> <p>Ms. McGrath advised that consultants, Turley & Co have been appointed to assist with the delivery of the LECP were working on an agreed timeline for project closure by April 2023. A meeting of the Advisory Steering Group which is made up of Mr. Declan Gibbons, Ms. Marion Arceman, Ms. Annette Fitzpatrick, Ms. Mary Mullholland, Mr. Malone and Ms. McGrath, took place on June 9th.</p> <p>Ms McGrath advised, at this meeting there had been general discussion on the vision for the LECP. Turley & Co. had outlined the information that they required, which they are now in receipt of, and there was general consensus that the new LECP represents an opportunity to create a more concise, user-friendly and accessible document with a need to avoid and overly technical feel of the document.</p> <p>Turley and Co. are currently drafting the higher-level goals of the LECP which needs to be agreed by the end of July to ensure the tight timeframe is maintained. Ms. McGrath added that it is proposed to hold a joint meeting of this SPC1 and the LCDC via MS Teams on the morning of July 21st to receive a presentation on and agree these draft high-level goals for the public consultation process.</p>
6.	<p>Consideration of Policy Issues:</p> <p>Mr. Malone advised that following on from the adoption of the City and County Development Plan 2021-2027 and before it came into effect on the 15th October, the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) wrote to the Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage recommending a Draft Ministerial Direction in relation to Sections 11.4.1, 11.5.1 and Figure 11.4 of the Development Plan (relating to Wind Energy). The Minister issued a draft direction to the Council on the 15th October and this went on public display and the Chief Executive prepared a report, which was considered by a special meeting of the Elected Members on the 6th December. It was then delivered to the OPR and the Minister. The OPR considered the report and made further recommendations to the Minister. The Minister has yet to agree on the OPR recommendations and there is no time limit on the Minister's decision.</p>

	<p>Mr. Malone advised that there has been a slight drop off in planning applications over the last 6 months and added that applications are down 20% on last year (June 2021 v June 2022).</p> <p>With regards to Vacant sites, Mr Malone noted that there are currently 29 sites on the register. The 2021 vacant sites levy is currently due and the planning department are chasing payments. Mr. Malone added that owners have the right to appeal the payment demands to An Bord Pleanala and a total of 9 appeals have been lodged to date.</p> <p>Mr. Malone advised that there are currently 13 sites on the Derelict sites register at the moment. The Planning Department will target city sites first, then the town sites and finally rural sites. The Council has 42 active taking in charge applications at the moment which are at various stages of progression.</p> <p>Mr Malone advised that there are 2 grant schemes; Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) and the Historic Structures Fund (HSF). The planning department through the Conservation Officer continually works with applicants to deliver the projects by the deadline set by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.</p> <p>Four conservation grants have been awarded for 2022 as follows: Old Ennisag House - €50,000 Kells House - €38,000 St Canice’s Cathedral - €27,820 Balief Farmhouse - €10,000</p>
8	<p>Any Other Business:</p> <p>Ms. O Neill proposed that the notice, agenda and minutes of the meetings should be electronically sent and no longer be posted in hardcopy to the committee. Ms. O Neill further noted that this proposal is from an environmental, sustainability and cost saving perspective. The Chair advised that the committee would be contacted to survey which method they would prefer – electronically only or by letter and electronically.</p> <p>Cllr. Dollard sought an update on the Centre for Design to which Ms. McGrath advised that it was an initiative which had been awarded funding under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) and the project was a partnership approach with partners including; Kilkenny County Council, South East Technical University, DCCoI, Enterprise Ireland, KIDCO, Kilkenny Leader Partnership and local industry. Ms McGrath noted that the Centre for Design aims to promote design and design led thinking across the Community. Recently a consultant had been appointed to review the business plan for the project and this work was ongoing.</p> <p>Ms. O Neill requested an update on the Council’s review of the Disability Implementation Plan 2008. Cllr. Dollard noted that Ms. Mary Mullholland and Mr. Tim Butler are meeting with her to discuss the National Disability Inclusion Strategy which is due to be updated in the next few months. Mr. Malone added that he would bring a full update to the group at the next scheduled meeting.</p>
9	<p>Date of Next Meeting:</p> <p>The Chair advised that the next SPC 1 meeting which was due to take place on Thursday 8th September will now be rescheduled to a later date in September. Ms McGrath to advise the committee on when the September meeting will take place.</p> <p>The meeting concluded at 4.35pm</p>

Signed: _____

Date: _____

CLLR. GER FRISBY
Chairman