

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

**Council Chambers, County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny**

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 11.00am**

**Present:** Cllr. Ger Frisby (Chair), Cllr. Maria Dollard, Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Michael Doyle, Cllr, John Coonan, Cllr. Eugene McGuinness, Mr. Brian Hamilton, Mr. Jimmy Duggan, Ms Fiona O'Neill.

**Apologies:** Cllr. Patrick O'Neill, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Ms. Deirdre Shine, Ms. Eileen Moyles, Ms. Marion Acreman, Mr. Martin Prendiville, Mr. Bill O'Keeffe.

**In Attendance:** Mr. Sean McKeown, Mr. Denis Malone, Ms. Aileen McGrath, Ms. Martina Comerford, Mr. Conor Sweeney, Ms. Catherine Myers.

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

Item	
1.	<b>Declaration of Interest:</b> Mr. Brian Hamilton wished to acknowledge that the matter concerning some of the 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 has now been resolved, however, there still remains the issue of the recreational use of the land and historic bridge to the Thomastown Swimming Area. Mr. Hamilton advised that the lane is in a bad state due to traffic and water from the public road.
2.	<b>Confirmation of Minutes:</b> The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 21st September 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Michael McCarthy and seconded by Cllr. John Coonan and agreed.
3.	<b>Matters Arising:</b> There were no matters arising.
4.	<b>Progress Report:</b> The Chair noted that the agenda and progress report were circulated and that the progress report was taken as read.  <u>Abbey Quarter Regeneration:</u> Mr. Sean McKeown updated on the Abbey Quarter Regeneration Project, which is a 10-15-year project and a flagship project for the City. He noted, the Mayfair building, which will be the new City Library, is due to be open in Spring 2024.  <u>Planning:</u> Mr. McKeown noted that applications through E-Planning are continuing to increase. The feedback from the public and agents is that the E-planning service is quick and easy to use.  <u>Local Enterprise Office:</u> Mr. McKeown gave an update on LEO and economic development activities including the following: <b>Design Kilkenny Event</b> – Kilkenny County Council hosted a Design Week event in the Parade Tower on Friday 17 <sup>th</sup> November. The Conference examined the global impact and continuing influence of the Kilkenny Design Workshops on business, academia and entrepreneurship.

	<p><b>Careers Kilkenny 2024</b> – Careers Kilkenny will take place in St Canice’s Cathedral on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2024. This event aims to showcase the many jobs on offer in Kilkenny and allow attendees to engage with representatives from top employers in Kilkenny.</p> <p><u>Project Office and Parks:</u></p> <p>Mr. McKeown gave an update on the following:</p> <p><b>South East Greenway</b> - Lot 5A (Ferrybank to Curraghmore) is the next phase of the Greenway and the works contract was awarded to Glas Civil Engineering. Works have commenced on the 5.5km section. With regards to the Interpretation, Wayfinding and Orientation Plan for the Greenway, a public consultation open day took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November. The Paul Hogarth Company have been appointed by Failte Ireland to develop the plan which will be used to apply for funding for the animation of the Greenway.</p> <p>The following contributions were noted:</p> <p>Cllr. McCarthy enquired when Abbot were due to open to which Mr. McKeown answered they are due to open in August 2024. They plan to have upwards of 800 people employed. Mr. McKeown also added that there were no issues with recruiting staff, however, housing availability was challenging.</p> <p>Cllr. Maria Dollard enquired as to the timeline of commencement of the housing construction in the Abbey Quarter to which Mr. McKeown replied that the topography of the Sweeney’s Orchard site is a challenge. It is planned to have upwards of 55 residential units in Sweeney’s Orchard.</p> <p>Mr McKeown further added that there are now 28 vacant sites on the vacant site register. Residential Zoned Land Tax has been deferred till 2025. Kilkenny County Council has reactivated sites in Castlecomer and Kenny’s Well Road.</p> <p>Cllr. Dollard enquired about a vacant site on the Castlecomer Road, as the Men’s Shed were looking to use it. Mr. Denis Malone advised that the vacant site is not suitable as there is an issue with access. Mr. McKeown further added that if Men’s Shed are looking for a site, they should submit an EOI.</p>
5.	<p><b>Consideration of Policy Issues:</b></p> <p><b>(1) Night Time Economy Pilot</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed Mr. Conor Sweeney to the meeting.</p> <p>Mr. Sweeney gave a brief background on how the Night-Time Economy Taskforce was established in 30 July 2020, noting that it was one of the priority actions for the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and in line with a commitment in the Programme for Government. Taskforce membership includes a range of Government Departments and agencies whose remit covers aspects of the Night-Time Economy and who had valuable input to contribute from a legislative and/or policy perspective.</p> <p>Kilkenny is one of 9 City/Towns in the country that has been selected as a pilot. The Vision is to "Develop Kilkenny City as the foremost evening and night time destination which offers a sustainable vibrant, cultural and diverse experience"</p> <p>Mr Sweeney outlined the draft pillars for the Night Time Economy Scheme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placemaking, Mobility &amp; Accessibility</li> <li>• Safety &amp; Security</li> <li>• Evening and Night-time activity</li> </ul>

- Marketing and promotion

There are a number of high-level objectives and actions under each of the above pillars.

Mr. Sweeney also went through the proposed action plan

- **January 2024:**  
Facilitated Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Consultation.
- **February - March 2024:**  
Drafting of Kilkenny Night Time Economy Action Plan which will be presented to this SPC1 Committee for approval at the next meeting on 28th March 2024.
- **April 2024:**  
Launch of Kilkenny Night Time Economy Action Plan
- **April 2024 – September 2025:**  
Implementation Phase

The Chair thanked Mr. Sweeney for his presentation.

Cllr. Eugene McGuinness voiced a concern as he has sat on many committees previously that were trying to improve the night time economy for Kilkenny but it had not been successful to which Mr. Sweeney answered this is a focused pilot, which may lead to more sustainable action plan in the long term. Funding has been received from the Department and Mr. Sweeney added that there is also more interaction with the Department.

Cllr. Coonan welcomed the focus on the improvement of the Night Time Economy and advised that it should be promoted at all stages, advising people of what is taking place in the City and also to get support from the retailers.

Ms. Fiona O'Neill advised that the Kilkenny Access Group would like to be involved in this as it is important to ensure that there is a sufficient information with regards to access to venues etc. Mr. Sweeney to speak to Ms. O'Neill with regards to this.

Cllr. Dollard voiced a concern with regards to the noise levels from pubs for people that are living in the city. Mr. Sweeney added that a funding scheme is in place by Govt to support venues carry out improvements including noise proofing.

Mr. Hamilton had a question with regards to transport to take people in and out of Kilkenny City at night time and Mr. Sweeney added that he would be liaising with the NTA and Local Link with regards to this. Mr Sweeney also advised that the plan is for 2 years for Kilkenny City only at the moment but after the two years, the towns in the county could be looked at.

## **(2) Adoption of the Kilkenny County Council Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan, 2023 to 2028**

The Chair advised that the Action Plan had been circulated to the committee prior to the meeting and Ms. Martina Comerford had given a detailed presentation to the committee at the September SPC 1 meeting. Ms. Comerford gave details with regards to the amendments following the public consultation, which was on the consult.ie platform. A total of 7 submissions were received:

Ms. Comerford advised Ms. O'Neill that with regards to the submitted feedback received from the Social Inclusion and Access Group around the wording in the document, had been actioned and have been reflected in the final document.

Following a query from Ms. O'Neill with regards to Changing Places Facility in the City, Ms. Comerford noted that there will be one in the new Water Based Activity Hub which will be located on the grounds of County Hall, there are also Changing Places Facilities planned for the Abbey Quarter and Kilkenny Castle.

The Adoption of the Kilkenny County Council Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan – 2023 to 2028 was proposed by Cllr. Ger Frisby (Chair) and seconded by Cllr. McGuinness.

**(3) Update on the Monitoring of the LECP Implementation Plan 2023- 2024.**

Mr. McKeown advised that the LECP Advisory Committee met on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November to discuss and propose an approach to the monitoring and evaluation of the LECP implementation plan 2023-2024.

A monitoring report will be prepared on the KPIs and on any identified challenges that need to be addressed. This report will be presented at the next SPC1 meeting, taking place on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024. Following this, the implementation plan for the following two years will be looked at.

This was proposed by Cllr. Dollard and seconded by Cllr. McCarthy and agreed.

**(4) Forward Planning Update**

Mr Denis Malone provided an update on Forward Planning:

Loughmacask Masterplan:

This Masterplan which was adopted in June, will go before the Elected Members in the coming months to be incorporated into the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021- 2027.

Urlingford Master Plan:

The Masterplan for Urlingford was adopted on the 18th September 2023 at the Castlecomer Municipal District Meeting.

Ballyragget/Paulstown/Kilmacow Master Plan:

The Masterplans for these towns are currently in draft stage and will be presented to the respective Municipal Districts at their respective Meetings in the coming months.

Local Area Plan for Ferrybank/Belview:

The review of the Local Area Plan for Ferrybank/Belview is going out for tender on the 8<sup>th</sup> December and public consultation will take place in Q1 2024. It is envisaged that it will be delivered by the end of 2024. Mr. Malone also noted that there are two cross boundary projects in progress with Waterford City and County Council, namely (a) The Joint Economic and Retail Strategy and (b) The Blue/Green infrastructure strategy.

**(5) Update on Kilkenny County Council's Digital Strategy.**

Ms. Aileen McGrath gave a brief update on Kilkenny County Council's Digital Strategy, noting that funding had been received from the Department of Rural and Community Development for the appointment of a Broadband Officer. Ms. Rita McGarvey has been recently appointed into this role and she will support the roll out of digital technologies, Broadband Connection Points (BCP's) and will ensure that communities will benefit from improvements in digital service.

	<p>This 3-year Digital Strategy will outline Kilkenny County Council's strategic goals and objectives for the period 2024-2026. It will align with both National and EU Digital Programme, the roll out of the National Broadband Plan and other plans and strategies. Ms. McGrath also added that the Digital Strategy will include 4 pillars: (1) Digital Infrastructure, (2) Digital Skills (3) Digital Transformation of Business and (4) Digitalisation of Public Services.</p> <p>Ms. McGrath outlined the timelines and noted that a digital audit will be carried out in Kilkenny City and County and the draft findings of same would be discussed at the next SPC 1 meeting, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024.</p>
6.	<p><b>Any Other Business:</b></p> <p><b>Shop Kilkenny Christmas 2023 Campaign.</b>  Ms. McGrath gave an update with regards to the activities planned to market the retail offering and experiences available in Kilkenny to locals and visitors while also supporting local businesses and local jobs. #shopkilkenny has a social media following of 200k.</p> <p>Cllr. Dollard and Cllr. McGuinness wished to pass on their thanks to all involved in Yulefest. Cllr. Dollard had received some very positive feedback from both visitors and traders.</p>
7	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting:</b></p> <p><u>The Chair advised of the proposed 2023 meeting dates for adoption:</u>  Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024 – 2pm to 3.30pm  Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024 – 2pm to 3.30pm  Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2024 – 2pm to 3.30pm  Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024 – 2pm to 3.30pm  The meetings will be held in Council Chambers and Ms. Catherine Myers will send a calendar invite to all the committee with the dates.</p> <p>Both the Chair and Mr. McKeown offered their thanks to all Committee members for their work during the year and wished all in attendance a Happy Christmas.</p> <p>The meeting concluded at 12.45pm.</p>

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

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

CLLR. GER FRISBY  
Chairman