

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

In the Chamber Kilkenny County Council Thursday 27th March 2025 at 2.00pm

Present: Cllr. David Fitzgerald (Chair), Cllr. Maria Dollard, Mr. Brian Hamilton, Mr. Brian Crowdle, Mr. Sean Cummins.

Apologies: Cllr. Michael Doyle, Cllr. John Coonan, Cllr. Brian Cleere, Annette Fitzpatrick

In Attendance: Mr. Tim Butler, Ms. Aileen McGrath, Mr. Denis Malone, Ms. Rita McGarvey & Ms. Marion Fennelly.

Item	
1.	Declaration of Interest: None
2.	Confirmation of Minutes: The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 5 th December 2024 were proposed by Cllr. Maria Dollard and seconded by Brian Hamilton.
3.	Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.
4.	Progress Report The Chair noted the progress report had been circulated in advance of the meeting and opened the floor to any queries relating to the matters raised in the report. Cllr. Maria Dollard raised the matter of making available public toilets in the City and at the temporary carpark at the Abbey Quarter. Mr. Tim Butler advised that a Changing Places facility and toilets would be included in the new water sports Activity Hub at County Hall and that monitoring of anti-social behaviour is critical around public toilets. Mr. Brian Hamilton added that the steel trusses of the old structure at the Abbey Quarter could provide a new structure for toilets.
5.	Consideration of Policy Issues: (1) Kilkenny County Council Draft Digital Strategy 2025 to 2027 Ms. Rita McGarvey, Broadband Officer, delivered a presentation on the Kilkenny County Council draft digital strategy 2025 to 2027 and noted the draft strategy had been circulated in advance of the meeting by email on the 24 th March. The presentation of the draft strategy followed on from a previous presentation by the Broadband Officer to SPC 1 during 2024 setting out the plan and approach to developing the digital strategy. Ms McGarvey noted that this was the first digital strategy for Kilkenny County Council and the strategy addressed four strategic pillars which align with national digital policies. The following contributions were made by members arising from the presentation:

Mr. Brian Hamilton sought an explanation for the meaning of 'citizen journey mapping experience to which Ms. Rita McGarvey noted that citizen journey mapping is a process whereby each step carried out by the website user is documented to ensure the process is clear and logical for users. The goal is to provide a seamless user-friendly digital experience that improves access to online information for the citizen.

Cllr. Maria Dolled raised the matter of online Council meetings – with open public viewing. Mr Tim Butler noted meetings were not currently available to view online and that it was a matter for the CPG to consider this.

Mr. Brian Hamilton asked if there will be use of AI by the Planning Department in future. Mr Denis Malone noted that they may in the future consider using AI in the consultation process.

Cllr. David Fitzgerald enquired if that plan could address the broadband black spots across the County to which Ms McGarvey responded that blackspots will be dealt with by Open Eir as part of the Ireland Fibre Network (IFN) scheme. Development of the infrastructure build is on-going throughout the county.

Cllr. David Fitzgerald went on to acknowledge the importance of in person customer service and enquired if the plan allowed for this. Ms. Rita McGarvey responded customers will continue to be able to access services via direct contact with staff through telephone, in-person along with the option of online information and services and that it was not the intention of the plan to create a digital barrier or divide for the citizens.

Cllr. Maria Dollard enquired about plans to mitigate the consequences of storm damage in future on communication and broadband infrastructure. Ms Rita McGarvey answered the DECC is preparing a plan to address current and future risks posed by changes in the weather due to climate change and implement measures to mitigate this risk in future.

Adoption of the draft Digital Strategy 2025 to 2027 was proposed by Cllr. Maria Dollard and seconded by Mr. Sean Cummins and thereby adopted.

2) LECP Draft Implementation Plan 2025 / 2026

Ms. Aileen McGrath updated the group on the process that had been undertaken in seeking feedback on the 2023 to 2024 LECP Implementation plan and to develop the new 2025 to 2026 LECP Implementation plan.

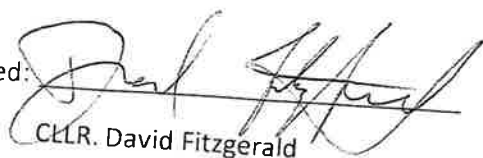
A joint meeting of the LCDC and SPC1 had been held on the 7th March and Ms McGrath thanked Members who were able to attend, she noted at this meeting, new and amended actions were presented and there was an opportunity for further feedback provided. The revised draft template for the 2025 to 2026 Implementation plan had been circulated to SPC1 members on 21st March.

Cllr. Maria Dollard noted her apologies that she could not make the joint SPC/LCDC meeting and asked if an Access Officer had been appointed in Kilkenny County Council.

Mr. Tim Butler responded that Mr. Eamon Tyrrell had been appointed as the Access Officer and he could address any questions on access issues and send to the appropriate section within Kilkenny County Council for feedback.

	The LECP Draft Implementation Plan 2025/2026 was proposed by Mr. Brian Crowley and seconded by Cllr. Maria Dollard and thereby adopted (3) Ferrybank Local Area Plan. Mr. Denis Malone provided an update on the new Local Area plan of Belview/ Ferrybank. He noted that matters of housing density, housing construction and the URDF funded activities taking place in the area. (4) Update on new planning legislation. Mr. Denis Malone circulated a written summary of the key points of note around the new legislation- planning and development act 2024 and explained when it will commence. Mr. Brian Hamilton queried how robust existing maps were. Mr. Denis Malone stated that mapping zoning on natural boundaries do not go to the extent of property ownership and that the core principle of planning is to make the decision in common good. Cllr. Fitzgerald added all systems should be robust and fully tested and the planning process had significant impacts on real people's lives. Mr. Sean Cummins noted the personal impacts that the complaints and appeals process under the old planning legislation had and went on to note the high costs for business and farmers that appeals can have. In conclusion to the conversation Mr. Tim Butler noted that everyone will have an opportunity to voice their opinion on the forthcoming development of the new County development plan.
6.	Any Other Business: Ms. McGrath advised the group of the upcoming IPA training for SPC members module. It was agreed to circulate the content of the training by email and for those interested members to revert.
7	Date of Next Meeting: The next SPC 1 meeting will be held on the 19th June 2025 from 2.00pm – 3.30pm in Council Chambers in County Hall. Dates for the remaining SPC 1 meetings in 2025: • 25th September 2025 from 2.00pm – 3.30pm in Council Chambers in County Hall. • 4th December 2025 from 2.00pm – 3.30pm in Council Chambers in County Hall. Cllr. Fitzgerald thanked all committee members for attending, The meeting concluded at 3.30pm.

Signed:


Cllr. David Fitzgerald

Date:

19/06/25

