

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

**held via MS Teams
on Friday 3rd July 2020 at 3.30pm**

Present: Cllr. Ger Frisby (Chair), Cllr. John Coonan, Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Eugene McGuinness, Cllr. Michael Doyle, Brian Hamilton, Deirdre Shine, Paul Brophy, Eileen Moyles, Marion Acreman

Apologies: Cllr. Maria Dollard, Martin Prenderville

In attendance: Sean Mc Keown, Fiona Deegan, Martina Comerford, Denis Malone, Catherine Myers

The Chair welcomed the members to the meeting.

The Chair extended congratulations to Malcolm Noonan, TD, former member of SPC 1, on his recent appointment as Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

Item	
1.	Declaration of Interest: There were no Declarations of Interest.
2.	Confirmation of Minutes: The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th March 2020 were proposed by Cllr. Michael Mc Carthy and seconded by Cllr. John Coonan and agreed.
3.	Matters Arising: There were no Matters Arising.
4.	<p>Progress Report by the Director of Service:</p> <p>Mr. Mc Keown stated that since the previous meeting, there had been huge changes due to the impact of Covid-19, acknowledging the challenges for the local economy and noting that the main focus at present was on supporting those businesses, outlining a range of supports available from the Local Authority including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 months Rates Waiver Scheme for Business that have had to close their doors due to Covid-19, from March to May; • The Restart Grant which provides funding to rateable businesses to help with the costs of reopening following months of closure, the equivalent to the rates bill for 2019, with a minimum payment of €2,000 and a maximum payment of €10,000, stating that to date, 800 businesses had submitted applications, 500 of which have been processed and paid, with the average grant amount being €3,800. <p><u>Economic Development:</u></p> <p>Mr. Mc Keown stated that the core objective is to continue to promote Kilkenny as an attractive location for investment with the assistance of the IDA and Enterprise Ireland. He stated that UPMC had recently announced the opening of an operation in Kilkenny, which was very positive news in the current climate, leading to the employment of approximately 60 people.</p>

Mr. Mc Keown stated that 2 applications had been submitted under Phase 2 of the URDF which supports regeneration in Urban Areas and agreed to provide an update on same at a future meeting.

Tourism

Ms. Martina Comerford outlined the work of the newly established Kilkenny Tourism Recovery Taskforce and stated that tourism has been very badly affected by Covid-19. Kilkenny County Council in partnership with Failte Ireland had set up the Taskforce at the beginning of June which is an operational working group comprising many stakeholders, local state agencies and members of the tourism industry. The Recovery Action Plan will focus on 3 phases of tourism recovery in Kilkenny :

- Destination Readiness
- Destination Restart
- Destination Resilience

Ms. Comerford stated that a re-opening Kilkenny Survey was produced by the Local Enterprise Office and from the responses received it showed that people are happy to go back shopping in Kilkenny. Over 90% of locals surveyed indicated that they would be happy to welcome visitors back to Kilkenny, noting that the temporary one-way system is one of a number of early measures introduced in Kilkenny City Centre in order to support the re-opening of businesses and attractions in the City and to instill confidence in visitors returning to Kilkenny in terms of social distancing measures.

Ms. Comerford stated that Kilkenny Tourism had launched its local Campaign – *“More to Explore” - More to Explore, More to Excite, More to Amaze or More to Enjoy, you will find it in Kilkenny this summer* stating that a media campaign would run across the following radio stations – KCLR, WLR and Midlands 103 FM from 13th July, 2020.

Ms. Comerford also stated that they are working with Festival and Event organisers to keep alive the Kilkenny Festivals by cross promoting the events on the visitkilkenny.ie.

Local Enterprise Office

Ms. Fiona Deegan stated that businesses were struggling with the impact of Covid-19 and the Government was quick to react with various supports through the Local Enterprise Office. The range of supports included:

- Business Continuity Voucher – Businesses, employing up to 50 staff, were eligible to apply for a Business Continuity Voucher to the value of €2,500 towards third party consultancy costs to assist with developing short-term and long-term strategies to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic - 311 applications were submitted, 285 were approved to the value of €684,00
- Trading Online Voucher - This voucher is a financial incentive to small businesses to develop or enhance their ability to trade online. Under the scheme a qualifying business may apply for funding to a maximum value of €2,500 or 90% of eligible expenditure (exclusive of VAT), whichever is the lesser - 152 applications were submitted, with 121 approved to the value of €289,460.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Training Programmes and Webinars – 544 clients logged onto a variety of different courses from Start Your Own Business Course to IT to Webinars which were provided free-of-charge. <p>Ms. Deegan stated that a <i>#shopkilkenny</i> campaign was due to commence in the coming days in conjunction with Carlow County Council which would be promoted in conjunction with KCLR96fm. The initiative is aimed at allowing retailers to promote their businesses and to encourage people to shop local, through a number of outside broadcasts in Castlecomer, Thomastown, Piltown and Kilkenny City.</p> <p>Ms. Deegan advised that the prize money from the NETA (National Enterprise Town Awards) will go towards funding the Kilkenny Welcome Team, which will consist of volunteers out and about on the streets of Kilkenny, assisting visitors with questions they may have and providing a warm Kilkenny welcome.</p> <p>Ms. Deegan stated that a Request for Quotation had issued to engage a Consultancy to develop an umbrella brand for Kilkenny, which was a priority for the City Centre Task Force. This would result in a new Kilkenny.ie website and a co-ordinated brand for Kilkenny. Ms. Deegan stated that threesixty marketing had been appointed to work on the project.</p> <p>Cllr John Coonan commended the work of the Local Enterprise Office and he said that feedback he received from business was hugely positive. Mr. Brophy thanked the Local Enterprise Office for their work in particular to get local businesses trading on line.</p>
5.	<p>Consideration of Policy Issues:</p> <p>Mr Denis Malone provided an update on the commencement of the City and County Development plan and the next steps, stating that Covid-19 has impacted the timelines, however the process had recommenced as of 11th May 2020. Mr. Malone stated that step 5 of the plan had now been drafted with the Core Strategies – Wind Energy, Housing etc. stating that the draft is due to be finalised in September 2020 and will then be sent to the Elected Members for approval. It will then be published for public consultation in November/December 2020 with the plan will due to be adopted in July 2021.</p> <p>Mr. Malone referred to the Graiguenamanagh/Tinnahinch Local Area Plan 2020, which is a joint plan with Carlow County Council stating that the plan would be available for public consultation in September 2020.</p> <p>Mr. Malone referred to other plans in process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loughmacask – This is not ready for Public Consultation. - St Canice’s Campus – Stalled due to Covid-19, but due to recommence soon. - Fairgreen – This may not recommence till 2021. <p>Mr. Malone compared planning applications in 2019 versus 2020, stating that in February and March of this year the number of applications is in line with the same period last year. However, he said that in April and May this year the number of applications is down slightly compared to last year but that applications for June are up slightly on 2019. Mr. Malone stated that the Planning Office</p>

	had been open to the public since 23 rd May by appointment only, with 26 visitors to date and he stated that planning files are also available on line for viewing.
6.	Consideration of position papers prepared for the Committee: There were no position papers for discussion.
7.	Correspondence: There was no correspondence for consideration.
8.	Future Work Programme: Further Stimulus Packages required. Next Phase of the Development plan.
9.	Any other business None
10.	Date of Next Meeting: The next meeting of SPC1 to take place on Friday 18 th September 2020 at 3.30pm. The meeting concluded at 4.30pm

Signed: _____

Date: _____

GER FRISBY

Chairman