

**Minutes of the Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee Held on
7th May 2024 at 10.30am in Thurles MD Office and by Zoom.**

| Members of Council in Attendance | Sectoral Interests in Attendance | Staff in Attendance: |
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| Cllr. Imelda Goldsboro Chairperson | Mary Spillane, PPN | Kathleen Prendergast, Economic Development Officer |
| Cllr. Seamus Hanafin | Seamus Hoyne, TUS | Deirdre O'Shea, Senior Staff Officer |
| Cllr. Peggy Ryan (Zoom) | Pat Carroll, Farming Pillar (Zoom) | Kieran Ladden, Senior Executive Engineer |
| Cllr. Mairín McGrath (Zoom) | Conor Mulcahy, Development Construction Pillar (Zoom) | Mairead Winters, EU Just Transition – Tourism Activator |
| Cllr. Phyll Bugler (Zoom) | Laura Jones, Business Pillar (Zoom) | Noelette O'Dwyer, Staff Officer |
| Cllr. John Fitzgerald (Zoom) | Tom McGrath, Business Pillar (Zoom) | Donough Leahy, Clerical Officer |
| Cllr. John Crosse (Zoom) | | |

Apologies: Brian Beck (Director of Services), Anthony Fitzgerald (Head of Enterprise & Economic Development), Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose, Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan, Theresia Gruschlbauer (PPN)

Absent: Cllr. Tony Black, Cllr. Joe Hannigan, Cllr. John Fitzgerald, Cllr. Seamus Morris

1. Welcome

Cllr. Imelda Goldsboro, Chairperson, opened the meeting. She welcomed everybody to what would be the final Economic Development & Enterprise SPC meeting of the 2019 to 2024 Committee.

2. Adoption of the Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The Minutes of the last meeting were considered. The adoption of same was then proposed by Mary Spillane and seconded by Pat Carroll. There were no matters arising.

3. EU 'Just Transition' Tourism Fund Activation

Mairead Winters, EU Just Transition – Tourism Activator gave a presentation on the EU Just Transition Fund Regenerative Tourism & Placemaking Scheme for Ireland's Midlands. Mairead informed the meeting that the regeneration tourism scheme's aim is to support the tourism trade within the Carrick on Suir and Thurles MD's and these two districts were chosen by the Government. The purpose of the scheme is to re-purpose the existing trails and tourism attractions/activities within the area and is aimed at start-ups or expansion of tourism climate. Mairead then laid out the objectives of the EU JTF which is 1). To foster the economic diversification of the territory by supporting productive investments in micro-enterprise, SME's and economic stakeholders in key sectors. 2). To support the regeneration and repurposing of peatlands and related land within the Just Transition area.

The overall the aims of the JTF is to address employment, economic, social and environmental impacts.

Mairead gave a breakdown of the various schemes available under the overall EUJTF regenerative and placemaking scheme which include; Trail Network Development scheme, Investment Grant-Aid scheme for private and Community SME's, Strategic Partnership scheme, Tourism Activators scheme and Tourism Learning Networks.

She gave a breakdown of all the schemes and the criteria involved in what is required in order to apply for funding for each scheme. Mairead advised that there are supporting guidelines available on the Failte Ireland website - www.Failteireland.ie/justtransition

Chairperson Imelda Goldsboro thanked Mairead for the very informative presentation and asked if it was possible to circulate the slides to the committee. She then opened it up to the floor for questioning.

Councillor Seamus Hanafin wished Mairead the best of luck in her new position and mentioned that the first part of the trail in Littleton will be open in the coming weeks. He advised that the Littleton trail project came from a meeting which took place in Thurles with Bord na Mona in 2016 and highlighted the length of time that project has taken to get to the opening of the first part. With this in mind, Cllr Hanafin questioned the deadline of 2026 for projects under this scheme as he feels this timeframe is un-realistic based on the experience in Littleton.

Cllr Hanafin discussed the category 2 projects, such as the building of cabins and treehouses and wanted to know if they are consistent with the County Development plan and if there would be difficulties in the planning process for non-permanent structures which would then cause a delay in the process.

Mairead responded by advising that the short time frame has already been fed back to Failte Ireland. She also stated that under the County Development Plan, they do welcome sustainable accommodation and she has arranged a meeting with the planning team regarding this specific application.

Laura Jones thanked Mairead for the fantastic presentation and congratulated her on the new role. Laura asked if there is any crossover with the tourism strategy for the county, especially in the area of accessibility. Mairead advised the main crossover would be with the Tourism Development plan/accessibility in terms of the Littleton bog area and improving visitor experiences within the Carrick on Suir Municipal District.

Mairead mentioned the accessibility piece within the tourism development plan is not fully identified and advised this was a fairly new area for Failte Ireland, so it will eventually start to filter down at county level. She advised that there has been a great uptake in category 5 for existing tourism business', using Holycross as an example who are trying to make the Abbey more accessible.

4. Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF Projects) in County Tipperary

Kieran Ladden, Senior Executive Engineer and Deirdre O'Shea, Senior Staff Officer gave a presentation on the Rural Regeneration Development Fund which is a €1 billion funding provided to the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund which was established in 2018.

The fund is restricted to towns with a population of less than 10,000 people and The RRDF seeks to provide investment to support rural renewal/regeneration and strengthen and build resilience in rural communities in order to enable towns, villages and outlying rural areas to grow sustainably and support the delivery of the strategic objectives of the National Planning Framework, Our Rural Future and Town Centre First and there are two types of applications which are considered by the department in funding.

Deirdre O'Shea explained the process around the applying and what kind of funding applications can be considered. She advised there is a maximum of 3 applications permitted from each local authority or state funded body.

She explained every funding call that has come out to date has key priorities under the call, using call 5 as example, with the priorities being addressing vacancy and dereliction, location of libraries and community hubs. Deirdre advised they have submitted a maximum of 3 applications under every funding call in categories 1 & 2 and have been successful in every application with the exception of one of the category 2 application which was in the very early stages. The applications are assessed by an independent project advisory board which is set up by the Department of Rural & Community Development and their recommendation then goes to the Minister of Rural & Community Development, who takes their consideration into account but with whom the final decision lies.

In terms of Tipperary County Council's prioritisation of projects, each of the 5 MD's feed project concepts into a steering group which has been established at County level to oversee the planning, development and delivery of the projects. Deirdre then explained the various steps involved in delivering the projects throughout the initiation and concept phase, development phase and delivery phase which includes a governance piece which has to be complied with. Deirdre spoke about match funding being a key issue when applying for funding with the different calls having different percentage requirements. Deirdre displayed the status of a number of approved projects currently completed and in progress throughout the County. She also showed that Tipperary is currently on top of the list of counties who have received the funding under the RRDF.

Kieran Ladden explained the complexity of the projects and showed the structure of how Tipperary County Council delivers these projects. This involves the steering group which is directed by the chief executive and management team and within each district there is a project manager. He advised there is a project management system in place, which allows delivery these large-scale complex projects. A specific filing system has been adopted and includes project charters, schedule of meetings, checklists, financial trackers, design trackers, etc. The systems are audited by Kieran and Deirdre to ensure they are populated and kept up-to-date. The council has to ensure they are following the Public Spending code and the Terms & Conditions issued by the Department for each project. He also explained that in-depth examination of tender documents and detailed design drawings are undertaken to minimise errors/omissions for the construction stage.

Kieran then went through the various projects which have already been or underway, including the delivery of the Market Yard and River Ara walkway in Tipperary town; Templemore town hall Cultural and Enterprise Centre with Civic Plaza which is currently in progress and due to be completed by September; Fethard town park has now been fully delivered and it was a flagship project that allowed TCC to show the department their ability to deliver. This project allowed them to work closely with the stakeholders in Coolmore and the benefits of the project can be seen by the whole community; He advised that they are currently working through the Nenagh Historic & Cultural Quarter and it comprises a plan to regenerate specific existing buildings and civic spaces of distinction and value within Nenagh; A phased approach is currently on-going in Carrick on Suir which comprises of developing a journey from the Suir Blueway to Ormond castle; Other projects they are working on include a pathway to develop Cahir town centre and the regeneration of Thurles Market Quarter.

Chairperson Councillor Imelda Goldsboro thanked Deirdre and Kieran for the insightful presentation and advised it was great to see Tipperary on top of the list for money received, which highlights the great work they have done, along with the districts. She then opened it to the floor for questions.

Mary Spillane thanked them for the amazing presentation and asked if it was European or National funding, which Deirdre advised it comes under Project Ireland 2040 and the RRDF

and while it is managed by the Department of Rural and Community Development the fund does predominantly come from the EU. She advised that they do have to come up with match funding. Mary asked if there was a cap for county, with Deirdre advised that it is capped at 3 in each fund opening. She advised it gets harder as time goes on as finding viable projects which align with what the national call is for - it more difficult for Tipperary County Council as they currently have submitted 17 successful projects.

Councillor Seamus Hanafin highlighted the commendable competence of Tipperary County Council who have delivered such a large number of projects and sit at the top of the list of counties to receive the most funding. He stated that this success points to the ambition of Tipperary County Council and this ambition was matched by the members who have come up with the tough decisions to deliver the match funding which is important to recognise. He asked if there is any proposal to look at bringing projects like the Rialto in Nenagh to Thurles.

Deirdre advised that under call 3 of the URDF, which only applies to towns of Thurles, Clonmel and Nenagh, the focus is on addressing vacancies and dereliction in town centres. The call is for the council to acquire properties that they identify can be brought back into residential units. She explained it would be up to the 5 Districts to identifying those properties. She advised that if there was any project that you might be aware of, to bring it forward to your District Administrator, as they sit on the steering group and can put these forward for consideration.

Seamus Hoyne advised he is on the Board of the Roscrea Enterprise and Community Hub (REACH) which is funded through RRDF and advised that the Council has been amazingly supportive in the whole process.

5. A reflection on the Economic Development and Enterprise SPC 2019 – 2024

Kathleen Prendergast, Economic Development Officer discussed the various topics covered and actions carried out by this Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee. Kathleen advised the role of the committee is to consider different policy relating to economic development and enterprise and to influence the policy direction before final decision by Tipperary County Council.

Kathleen mentioned the wide representation on this SPC which include the farming pillar, business, commercial & tourism, development & construction, PPN and TUS. She advised the Chair for this committee was originally Cllr John Hogan, which was then handed over to Cllr. John Crosse and now Cllr. Imelda Goldsboro who is the current chair. There was a total of 23 meetings in the 5-year period which looked and considered different elements of work. A large number of topics were covered which included items such as economic development, enterprise, digital, tourism, the bio-economy, town centres and their role in the county development plan, shop local, URDF & RRDF, educational training, commercial vacancy incentive scheme and many more. Other items which the committee was asked to do included the review of the casual trading by-laws across the county and also the Covid 19 response which this SPC continued to work through. Overall a large number of important strategies have come through this committee who had a say and input in to. The sharing of views has created a rich debate within the SPC and thus it has successfully covered important areas in economic development and enterprise under its remit.

6. Any other Business and Close of Work Program

Chairperson, Imelda Goldsboro thanked Kathleen and her team for their hard work through the term of this SPC. Imelda highlighted the informative presentations which were delivered throughout a number of topics over the 5 years. She thanked the all members of the committee for the contributions they have made and stated this SPC has achieved an awful lot throughout its term. She wished all members the best of luck going forward and acknowledged all the people who delivered presentations over the various topics. She wished Cllr. Seamus Hanafin the best of luck in his future endeavours as he retires from the Council.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____

Date: