



Comhairle Contae Thír na nÓg
Tipperary County Council

Minutes of the Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee Held on 6th of May at 2.30pm in County Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Clonmel and by Zoom.

Members of Council in Attendance	Sectoral Interests in Attendance	Staff in Attendance:
Cllr. Marie Murphy Chairperson	Pat Carroll, Farming Pillar	Brian Beck, Director of Services
Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose	Sean O Farrell, Environment North Tipp Association	Anthony Fitzgerald, Head of Enterprise
Cllr. Liam Browne	Michelle Aylward, Business Pillar	Mark Connolly, Director of Finance
Cllr Kay Cahill Skehan	Thomas Cooke, Development Construction Pillar (Zoom)	Kathleen Prendergast, Economic Development Officer
Cllr. Declan Burgess	Mary Spillane, PPN (Zoom)	Donough Leahy, Clerical Officer
Cllr. Tom Acheson	Seamus Hoyne, TUS (Zoom)	Marlena Pettigrew, Clerical Officer
Cllr. Annemarie Ryan (Zoom)		
Cllr. John Carroll (Zoom)		
Cllr. Eddie Moran (Zoom)		

Apologies: Adrien Barlett, Business Pillar; Sean Reidy; Development Construction Pillar and Cllr. Louise Morgan Walsh.

Absent: Cllr. Joe Hannigan, Cllr. Roger Kennedy,

1. Welcome

Cllr. Marie Murphy, Chairperson open the meeting. Marie welcomed and introduced everybody, both those in attendance and online, to the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC meeting. It was noted that there was no declaration of a conflict of interest and Maire also welcomed Cllr. Tom Acheson who has joined the committee since the last meeting.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were considered. The adoption of same was then proposed by Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose and seconded by Michelle Aylward. There were no matters arising.

3. Lisheen Bio Economy Centre Projects

Eamonn O'Flynn, Senior Project Manager, gave a presentation on the Lisheen Bio Economy Centre Projects. He outlined the two major projects they are being undertaking which are the Lisheen Masterplan located at the National Bio-economy Campus in Lisheen and the Templemore Masterplan located at the Light Industrial Park in Templemore. Both projects are funded through the Just Transition Fund. Eamonn explained that Lisheen looks specifically at the Bio-economy and circular economy and the relationship between the two, as well as also looking at Industrial scale processes. Lisheen is a 10-acre site with a core building and core facilities for scale of activities and machines. The whole area on the old Lisheen site covers 1100 acres which has the potential to encourage future development for Bio-economy businesses. On the other hand, Templemore will provide a supporting role on Industrial development. With the development in Templemore, it is located on the Roscrea road and is a 50-acre site. It is a related development to Lisheen, whereby light industrial units can go into the facility as well as other economic activities which are supportive of the activities of Lisheen.

Eamonn then broke down the main list of stakeholders based at Lisheen, outlining Tipperary County Council and the Irish Bio-economy as the key stakeholders involved. He

is employed by MKO and they have been appointed as Tipperary County Councils project managers and his role is to oversee the development activities and to liaise with Tipperary County Council and Design team and ensuring costs and objectives that have been set are being met. Place+U are the design lead for the project.

Both Tipperary County Council and Irish Bio-economy are key stakeholders for the project in Templemore but they have also included the "Community" due to the close proximity of the location to the town. MKO again are the project managers of this project and they are working with Deaton Lysaght / IRLA (Design lead), as well as other partners.

Eamonn discussed the Circular Bio-economy and explained the activities under this umbrella that they would be targeting for both projects - primarily taking items categorised as waste and seeing how they can be recycled back into the economy. Eamonn finished by going over the progress summary for both Lisheen and Templemore, highlighting the stakeholder engagement through numerous different bodies and areas. They are currently on track to make application for statutory consent in Q4 2025 for Lisheen and Q1 2026 in Templemore.

Chairperson Marie Murphy thanked Eamonn for his presentation and opened it up to the floor for questioning.

Cllr. Kay Cahill Skehan said being from Thurles, she was always very interested in what was going to take over when the mines closed in Lisheen, highlighting it as an obvious site to use for bio-economy activity and is delighted to see it progress.

Sean O Farrell, PPN, said being a farmer living in the rural landscape, he would be curious to know the potential/opportunity for the farming community. He mentioned that farming is at cross-roads with an aging population and younger people reluctant to go into farming full time. He would like to see potential for alternative farming diversification, growing different crops and the potential to generate bio-gas. He asked would considerations be given for upcycling of furniture, etc., as was in the SMILE Resource Exchange Platform, in either location. Eamonn responded by highlighting that these areas can certainly benefit from the projects as there is a large output from farming that can be recycled back into the economy. He advised that from speaking to the Irish Bio Foundation (IBF), there is huge potential to modernise farming and create jobs on the back of it. Eamonn stated that circular economy has a fit for the projects too as they will attempt to reduce waste and show how they can be used as resources.

Cllr. Marie Murphy mentioned both projects are being co-funded by the Irish State and the EU Just Transition Fund and enquired about the amount of funding received for both projects.

Brian Beck, Director of Services advised that the total funding received by Tipperary County Council to date under the Just Transition Fund in both the Thurles/Templemore/Roscrea MD and the Carrick on Suir MD is almost €10 million. For these two projects, he has advised that Lisheen has received €1 million and Templemore has received €365,000. He advised that Lisheen is within the decarbonisation zone as well, so they are looking at options there for additional funding. In Templemore they are aware of indigenous companies finding it difficult to expand, so that is the industry they are trying to support there while also linking into the Bio-economy.

Thomas Cooke, Development Construction Pillar asked what kind of costing they would be looking at in terms of sales of units in Templemore or are they just looking at sale of sites. Brian advised that's a decision they have not made currently as they are looking at planning permission to see what is needed on the ground and best fit for the potential companies that will occupy the site. Once the planning permission is through they will be able to determine pricing with the goal to create jobs in Tipperary.

Cllr. Eddie Moran asked if it was possible to have a public meeting in Templemore to allow the public know of the project and the potential it may have. In terms of a public meeting, Eamonn advised there are plans to engage with the committee of Templemore Community Development and as they progress, it would be beneficial to have a public meeting to show their plans to the public and acquire feedback from them.

4. Tipperary – An Economic Briefing

Michelle Aylward of the County Tipperary Chamber of Commerce and also representing the Business Pillar gave a presentation "Tipperary – An Economic Briefing" to look at the County of Tipperary as a whole and analyse how it is performing, particularly in terms of credit/debit card spend in the towns and to provide research for the Love Tipperary card.

Michelle provided a breakdown of Credit and Debit card expenditure in Tipperary, November 2022 - January 2025, which is available to all from the central bank and then highlighted the Annual change in credit and debit card expenditure in Tipperary vs State Average. This showed that Tipperary is just slightly below the state average and in terms of our neighbouring counties, Tipperary is performing quiet well. This shows us according to the 2022 census that Tipperary has a 3.3% share of the population and our credit card expenditure was 1.6% of that in 2024, with €1.3 billion spent using card in 2024. Out of that €1.3 billion, there was €639 billion spent using contactless payment. It is important to note, that this does not include inward tourism spend, as only people registered in Tipperary are included in the data.

In terms of Commercial Market Trends in Tipperary, the county is trending slightly above the national state average in terms of vacancy rates for commercial properties. Michelle showed that this trend is also seen in many of our neighbouring counties. She provided a breakdown in terms of the towns in the County with Thurles and Clonmel showing high levels of vacancy compared to the national average. Michelle also spoke about employment in the County, advising that according to the 2022 census, Tipperary showed an unemployment rate of 8%. She highlighted that agriculture and manufacturing, public administration and construction being the main sources of employment in the county. She highlighted that in 2024, jobs supported by state agencies accounted for 12,321 jobs in the county which is a huge contributor to the workforce. The Economic outlook shows some of the factors which can cause issues on the economy and they include, Economic impact of global trade war, potential energy market disruption, housing shortages, infrastructure deficits and public finances. Michelle concluded by advising that there was a total of 487 new dwellings completed in 2024 and the average disposable income per person in Tipperary is €29,209 according to 2023 figures.

Chairperson Maire Murphy thanked Michelle for her comprehensive presentation and asked if there was anyway of capturing the Tourism spend in the County as this would capture a fully perspective of the spend in the County. Michelle advised they will be able to information at a later date and this would give an overall perspective of what is being contributed to the economy.

Mary Spillane asked if she could define what she means by state agencies? Michelle advised that they would have received this information from the IDA and Enterprise Ireland in terms of the business sectors and the jobs that would have been created on the back of that.

Tommy Cooke said that the unemployment figure of 8% in 2022 seemed really high and asked if there was more of a breakdown on that? Michelle advised that these figures were

2022 and the latest figures are a lot lower and show that Tipperary as a county is at full employment. She highlighted the housing issue as one of the contributing factors to the level of unemployment in the county.

Councillor Liam Browne stated that contactless payment €639 million and cash payments at €405 million, with the over all spend €1.3 billion, so he enquired was it a credit card payment that make up the remaining €250 million and if that is on the rise as he wanted to know if consumers are using credit more in comparable to previous year? He also asked about the 487-dwelling completed, stating that less than 10 new houses per week which is far lower than the demand that is there. Cllr Browne also questioned the disposable income figure of €29,209 with the minimum wage currently at €14 an hour which equates to €28,000 a year, so if this figure is correct, is it being subsidised by high earners, as it is not true reflection of the vast majority of people.

Sean O Farrell and Pat Carroll also queried the disposable income figure and asked how it compares to the National average as well.

Cllr Annemarie Ryan asked how the information on the Commercial Vacancies was gathered and if the PowerPoint presentation could be shared. Chairperson Marie Murphy advised Kathleen Prendergast would respond to the Commercial Vacancy later in the meeting and invited Michelle to respond to the remaining questions.

In response Michelle advised that economist John Daly put the report together so she would not have the answers to everything but will come back at a later time to advise. She advised that the spend for this year so far is up on the 2024 figures to an amount of 4.4% in February. In terms of the disposable income, Michelle showed the breakdown of all counties with Tipperary's figures quite high.

5. Consultation and Input Session on the Review of the Commercial Vacancy Incentive Scheme

Kathleen Prendergast gave a presentation reviewing the Commercial Vacancy Incentive scheme where she provided an update on the scheme and looked for input from the committee on the direction they should go with the scheme. Kathleen provided information on the retail economy for 2022 such as almost a quarter of a million of people are working in the retail trade, which include food and beverages services activities and also the motor trade. A key statistic shows that there were 48,451 enterprises employing 373,189 people in the Retail Trade Sector in 2020 and the turnover of these show 4.7 billion for food and beverages and €13.8 billion for the motor trade which highlights the importance of these areas. The retail sector is a critical part of Ireland's economy which can be seen with the amount of overall spend it has in the economy of which the business exists. It is important to note that 70% of retail sector jobs are based outside of Dublin thus the sector plays a critical role in regional development.

Tipperary County Council recognises the value of the retail sector and have many schemes in place to support that sector which includes the Commercial Vacancy Incentive scheme which is all about ensuring we support vibrancy in town centres by targeting buildings which are closed and vacant.

In response to Cllr. Ryan earlier query, Kathleen showed a breakdown of the GoDirectory Commercial Buildings Report Q4 2024, which broke down the levels of vacancy across the major towns in county Tipperary and how that information was gathered.

Kathleen then gave a breakdown of the businesses that have previously applied for the scheme, citing only one application was ever refused due to the business being in a production facility. We also saw that 28% of applications came from the Clonmel MD, 32% Tipperary MD, 11% Thurles MD, 26 % Nenagh MD and 3% Carrick on Suir MD. The total sum of grants that was made was for the sum of €48,230 which equates to an overall average grant of 40% for the rate payers. Of the 88 applications, the total sum of annual rates that would have to be paid without any grant being in place equated to €119,407. Equally this provided an income of €71,777 to the council for properties that could have remained vacant.

88% of respondents felt that priority areas of Main streets and areas of the town centre should be targeted in a new scheme. There was strong support for finding a different method to categorise applications so we could target different forms of business into different areas of town, (e.g. attract restaurants or coffee shops etc.). There was also a view was also shared that Ground floor units for office-based businesses and services, unless existing permitted development, should be removed from the list of ineligible businesses. Kathleen then discussed idea and innovations which may help businesses, such as offering free parking permit in a county council car park for the first year for PRA premises or having an incentive put in place with family business that will assist generational transfer of businesses.

Kathleen finished by asking the committee to complete a survey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/P6ZNDLR>) which would allow them to provide feedback and an opinion which will help improve the scheme for the future.

Cllr. Liam Browne asked if planning is having an effect on vacancy rates, enquiring if protected structures in the centre of towns is limiting the availability of these buildings. He also asked if there was a reason why the Carrick MD has such a low take up rate of the grant compared to the other MD's, asking maybe if it is a communication issue and finally he asked about parking and equalising parking across all towns in the county. Cllr. Burgess advised that that car parks are longer than 1 hour and he wouldn't like to see on street parking any longer than an hour as it is form of turnover which businesses feel it is more beneficial for them. Cllr. Annemarie Ryan asked if parking was discussed in the working group for the commercial vacancy scheme and in what capacity.

Kathleen Prendergast responded advising in relation to planning having an effect on applications, stating it is based on the applicant advising they comply with the planning permissions and they accept that, so there is no communication with planning. Kathleen also advised, as there are a large number of vacancies within the majority of towns, protected buildings isn't really an issue as there are other buildings available within the same areas. In terms of Carrick on Suir, she stated that take-up of the grants scheme could be to do with the vibrancy of a particular town and the likelihood of new businesses opening at a particular time. The scheme was promoted very well throughout the county, and the new scheme being developed will have a brand-new marketing plan being delivered once the new scheme is finalised. In relation to parking it is not addressed under the scheme as it pulls the scheme out of focus of what is trying to be achieved and moves the discussion away.

6. Presentation on the Economic Activity Aspects of Chairman on the Tipperary Delegation to New York

Councillor Declan Burgess gave a presentation on the on the Economic Activity Aspects of Chairman on the Tipperary Delegation to New York which took place over Saint Patrick weekend in March. He highlighted the main purpose of the Visit which included;

- Promote County Tipperary on the international stage during the St. Patrick's Day Parade. (Led the Tipperary section of the parade)
- Engage with strategic partners to foster economic growth, tourism, and diaspora connections.
- As Chairperson he joined the CEO of Tipperary County Council in New York for meetings with key stakeholders & agencies.
- Attended meetings with IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Tourism Ireland, and the Irish Consulate, ensuring that Tipperary's voice was heard at the highest levels.
- A valuable opportunity to increase collaboration, which is essential for the continued development of our county was a lesser visible element of the delegation.

Cllr. Burgess informed the committee that the trip was really important to promote County Tipperary on an International stage and engage with the successful Tipperary people in business in the United States. He also stated it was really important to foster relationships with the different partners out there. Throughout the visit, they held meetings with the IDA & Enterprise Ireland, where they discussed support for Tipperary-based companies and job creation initiatives and they also promoted investment opportunities within the county. They also had very important meetings with Amneal Pharmaceuticals which highlighted Tipperary's connectivity and skilled workforce.

While in New York, they used this as an opportunity to promote Tipperary's tourism assets and also spoke to a number of different tourism providers. He advised that Tourism Ireland informed them that there is a huge level of AI being used to develop itineraries for both individuals and groups when visiting regions, highlighting the importance of businesses being online and having a strong online offering. He also discussed Global Partnerships and Meeting with NYC Mayor & Officials where they discussed collaborating on municipal projects.

Overall, he highlighted the Strategic Benefits for Tipperary of the trip which include:

- Enhanced visibility of Tipperary as a destination for investment, tourism, and talent.
- Strengthened institutional ties and opened channels for future collaboration.
- Reinforced support for innovation, sustainability, and community engagement in line with Enterprise Ireland's priorities.

Chairperson Cllr. Marie Murphy thanked Declan for the presentation and opened to the floor for questions. Michelle Aylward said that the County Tipperary Chambers of Commerce supported the trip. She asked in relation to the IDA, if they discussed the Ballingarrane site and the Nenagh IDA business park. Cllr. Burgess confirmed both were discussed and informed her that they were well briefed on both. Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose thanked Declan for his presentation and highlighted the importance of making contacts through trips like this. Finally, Anthony Fitzgerald, Head of Enterprise reiterated the importance of making direct contact with Tipperary and Executives of such organisations.

7. Tipperary County Council Finance Overview

Mark Connolly, Director of Finance of Tipperary County Council gave a presentation on Work place trends and insights. Mark highlighted that Financial planning in Tipperary County Council remains challenging with the Council continuing to manage the financial impacts and uncertainties relating to energy prices and inflation, while trying to maintain all existing services at current levels and enhance services. He also highlighted the opportunities available as Tipperary County Council continues to progress our active capital

programme under the Ireland 2040 initiatives and other programmes. Mark went through some of the financial highlights of Tipperary County Council with a Revenue Budget of €250 million, with the organisation having a very strong income collection performance and balance sheet. It is important to note that Tipperary County Council has strong financial controls have ensured that Tipperary has generated a small financial surplus in recent years despite very significant challenges. In terms of Local Property tax, Tipperary received the greatest funding of any county with a figure of €27.45 Million received. It was noted that LPT charges will increase by between 5-6 per cent for properties valued under €1.26 million nationally. Local Authorities will now be able to vary LPT upwards by up to 25 per cent. The maximum they may choose to vary LPT downwards by will remain at 15 per cent which will have no impact on Tipperary as it has already committed our LPT upwards by 15% for the next 3 years.

Mark advised they are very aware of the rising costs of doing business which has been very evident over the last number of years and he went through the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) which Tipperary has the lowest rate of all our neighbouring counties and discussed the commercial rates only being increased in Tipperary twice since 2014. Mark mentioned that it is a tough decision but Tipperary County Council should be increasing its commercial rates in line with inflation every year. Such funding would be used to cover the ongoing increases in operational costs associated with day to day running of the council. Tipperary County Council's rates multiplier is almost 12.5% lower than the average level across the country. He then showed where the additional funding from last years increase went to, which included; Public lighting, Operational Costs, Road Maintenance, CCTV and the Town and Village Development fund which amounted to €1.9 million. Mark also showed where additional funding in the future would go and highlighted Road Maintenance and used an example where doing 1km strengthening of local regional roads went up by 38% from 2019 to 2024 and local roads went up 50% which highlights the challenges being faced by the council to ensure they make the money go as far as possible.

In relation to climate action, Tipperary County Council is committed to a 51% reduction of non-electrical emissions. Investment of €11m required – 50% of funding to come from SEAI. Remaining monies to be provided by Tipperary County Council. Fleet Decarbonisation is another area which they are looking to employ but with this comes major investment of which no match funding is currently available. With commercial rates, A 1% increase in commercial rates in Tipperary would generate an additional net income of €350,000 per annum. Every additional 1% increase would generate additional income of €350,000 per annum. He stated that in his view, going forward, Commercial Rates should be increased by at least the annual rate of inflation (CPI) over the lifetime of this council.

Mark also spoke about government supports such as the Increase Cost of Business grant and the Power Up grant. He also mentioned the Rate Payment Incentive scheme which offers an Early Payment Reduction of 6% to which in 2023, 1929 customers benefitted from the Early Payment Scheme. In conclusion;

- Future Budgets will be very challenging due to the impacts and uncertainties of energy prices and of general inflation on all costs faced by Tipperary County Council.
- Tipperary County Council will need to grow its income stream going forward in order to maintain and grow service offerings
- Any specific new spending asks / requirements in future years will also need to be funded by further increases in Council Income. Budget decisions for future years must be made on a prudent financial basis.

Chairperson Cllr. Marie Murphy thanked Mark for his presentation and said she welcomed the early engagement from the finance section which was something she requested at the budget meeting held last December. She then opened to the floor for questions.

Cllr. Tom Acheson stated that until we achieve rejuvenating the town centres, it will be very difficult to go back to the small businesses to inform them that we are increasing their commercial rates.

Cllr. Liam Browne queried the large surplus National government have, yet the money being distributed to Local Authorities to provide services is either static or falling.

Mark responded by advising that the Council has to grow its income but this doesn't necessarily have to come from our commercial rates and there are other areas of income we can try and grow. He advised we do continue to go back to central government seeking additional monies to which they are successful at times. He advised a lot of the grants they get are very specific and have to be spent in the designated area of the grant stream. Mark stated that TCC is limited to how it can grow its income - the main areas the Council received revenue from are through commercial rates, property tax, equalisation of LPT and specific grants, with the first three giving flexibility of where the money is spent.

Tom Carroll of the Farming Pillar said that there is a very significant number of rates coming from wind and solar farms now and the money generated from these enterprises should be reinvested back in the areas where these projects are.

Mark responded that the rates being received for wind and solar farms is based on a model whereby all commercial rates are received into the same pot and dived out accordingly. It would be very difficult to change this but what they can do is look at supporting particular projects in areas as is already being undertaken.

Michelle Aylward of the Business Pillar enquired about a Digital taxation, where online businesses are not paying a rate contribution.

Finally, in terms of Digital taxation, Mark advised it is a very valid point, that the current commercial rates & ARV model is based on bricks and mortar. He agrees that a model has to be developed and it is where it has to go to, with this having to be a nationally developed model.

8. Any Other Business

Chairperson confirmed there was no other business to discuss.

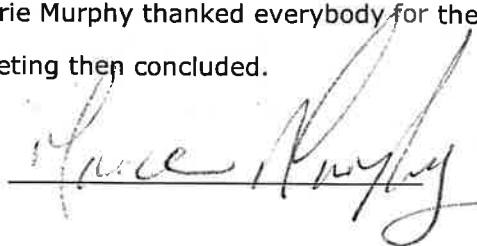
9. Date of next Meeting

Cllr. Marie Murphy proposed moving the date of the next meeting from Tuesday 09/09/2025 to Tuesday 02/09/2025 at 11 am. This was proposed by Cllr. Tom Acheson and seconded by Pat Carroll.

Cllr. Marie Murphy thanked everybody for their attendance.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed:



Date:

2/9/25