

Minutes of meeting of the inaugural Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC post the local elections, 2019, held on Monday 21st October, 2019 in the Board Room, Clermont House, Wicklow County Campus, Rathnew, Co. Wicklow.

Present : Councillor Gerry Walsh Chair
Councillor Mary Kavanagh
Councillor Tom Fortune
Mr. Huw O Toole
Mr. Michael Allen
Mr. Michael Ryan
Ms. Ruth Donnelly

In Attendance: Mr. Tom Murphy, Director of Services
Ms. Lorraine Gallagher, Senior Executive Officer
Ms. Susan Nichols, Administrative Officer
Ms. Deirdre Whitfield
Mr. Brian Gleeson, Head of Finance

Apologies Councillor Avril Cronin
Councillor Pat Kennedy
Councillor Irene Winters
Mr. Kilian McGreal
Ms. Christine Flood, Senior Executive Officer
Ms. Vibeke Delahunt, Head of Enterprise

Welcome

At the outset of the meeting the Chair welcomed all to the inaugural meeting of the EDES SPC post the local elections and in particular new committee members.

ITEM 1

Minutes of meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC held on Monday 25th March, 2019 (copy circulated).

On the proposal of Cllr. T. Fortune, seconded by Mr. Michael Allen the minutes of SPC meeting held on Monday the 25th March, 2019 as circulated were agreed.

ITEM2

Matters arising

There were no matters arising which would not be covered under the agenda.

Item 3 Role of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support (EDES) SPC

Update LECP Process

Mr. T. Murphy gave an overview of the SPC Scheme which was adopted by the elected members post the June local elections and that there were 6 SPCs

1. Economic Development and Enterprise Support
2. Community, Cultural and Social Development
3. Housing and Corporate Estate
4. Roads Transportation Water and Emergency Services
5. Planning and Environment
6. Climate and Biodiversity Action.

He explained that SPCs play a major role in assisting and advising the Council in relation to functions of a strategic nature, and that it is the task of each SPC to assist the Council in the formulation and development of Policing, with the final decision resting with the Council Members. He advised that the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC has specific functions in relation to developing and supporting enterprise, overseeing the implementation of the Economic Actions in the Local Economic Plan and job creation initiatives in the Council generally. The chair of the committee is Cllr. G. Walsh for the first 2.5 year period and Cllr. T. Fortune for the second 2.5 year period.

Item 4

Proposed new business rates incentive scheme (Brian Gleeson, Head of Finance)

Mr. Brian Gleeson, Head of Finance circulated report dated the 21st of October, 2019 to the committee on the proposed new business rates incentive scheme and responded to queries from the committee.

The New Business Rates Incentive Scheme will provide a grant on commercial rates for the first two years of a new business when it re-occupies a property that has been vacant for a long period of time. Wicklow County Council wants to encourage thriving and diverse business centres and wants to see the number of vacant retail/ commercial properties decrease. This grant is intended to incentivise and encourage reoccupation of vacant retail/commercial properties.

Objectives of Scheme

- To reduce the number of vacant properties in County Wicklow.
- To encourage new commercial ventures.
- To assist in job creation and ongoing employment.
- To provide rates income to Wicklow County Council that otherwise may be written off
- To facilitate the development of commercial activity, with the aim of helping to enhance the vitality, vibrancy and the economic welfare of the County.
- To demonstrate the Council's commitment to the economic development and regeneration of County Wicklow.

Scheme Criteria

- 2 Year Incentivised Scheme
- 50% reduction in rates liability in Year 1, 25% reduction in Year 2, Full rates are due for payment in Year 3
- Applicable to premises which have an annual rates liability of no more than €20,000 per annum
- Available to new businesses that have not traded in the county during the previous 12 months
- The unit must be rated or rateable
- Property must be vacant for a minimum period of 12 months
- Excluded are fast food outlets/arcades/bookies/nightclubs/private member's clubs/head shops/money lenders (except recognised financial institutions) etc.
- There can be no outstanding commercial rates or any other local authority charges due on the subject premises.
- Must sign up for a Standing Order for minimum of 12 months

The committee very much welcomed the rates incentive scheme and made the following contributions

- Noted that the scheme will extend beyond the main street and will cover small industrial units
- Discussion around the detrimental effect online shopping is having on retail business and that the broader challenges in this area needs to be looked at.
- Reference made to high rents being charged by landlords for premises and that this can deter business
- Query that the provision of outstanding monies on a property would be unfair to a new tenant/ratepayer

Item 5

Update: Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) process

Mr. T. Murphy DOS gave an update on the LECP process to date in that there are 10 high level goals, 21 objectives and some 100 actions to be implemented over the lifetime of the plan. He advised that there was an advisory group set up to monitor the progress of implementation jointly chaired by Cllr. G. Walsh and now Cllr. P. Kennedy, Chair of the LCD. He advised that in the absence of Ms. C. Flood, SEO, Ms. S. Nichols would give an update to the committee under Item 6.

IDA lands and WCC lands, Greystones: In relation to the IDA lands at Greystones he indicated that a meeting had taken place between a delegation of Wicklow Officials lead by the Chief Executive F. Curran and the CEO of the IDA, to discuss the future development of the IDA lands at Greystones. He advised that the IDA were at an advanced stage with

negotiations with a 3rd party and that the IDA hoped to be in a position to make a positive announcement in the near future in relation to the development of the lands.

Item 6

County Wicklow Economic Think Tank (CWETT): Implementation Stage

Ms. Susan Nichols, gave an update on the work of the CWETT covered in the report circulated:-

UPDATE ON COUNTY WICKLOW ECONOMIC THINK TANK IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS

Report to the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC 21st October 2019

FILM

Wicklow County Council has submitted an application for Regional Enterprise Development Funding for the Development of a Screen Content Enterprise Hub at Wicklow County Campus. This will feature refurbishment of part of the existing Courtyard buildings, a new 2 storey building, refurbishment of the 2nd floor of the main building into high end private office space refurbishment of the Chapel to provide high tech meeting/ conference/ sound recording and screening facility.

The proposed development of the Hub is in response to the demand for content creation arising out of the growth of streaming and new forms of media consumption. The Hub will develop the potential of entrepreneurs, emerging and established businesses. Support growth and internationalisation of established businesses. Liaise with the various colleges and training agencies to ensure a skilled workforce.

The Council has appointed Bluett and O'Donohoe Architects to prepare the Part 8 application and to develop the plans for the Hub; this will be put before the elected members late 2019/early 2020.

RETAIL

Progression of Bray Town Centre

Work continues on the Florentine Site and it is on target for practical completion by December this year. The developer is at an advanced stage of negotiation with the main anchor tenant.

TOWN TEAMS

Some of the many and varied works carried out by each Town Team is included below.

Arklow

- Flower baskets
- Town Centre Health Check
- Destination Town Audit
- Design and Development of Parade Ground/ business hub
- Ronnie Delaney Commemorative Statue
- Halloween Spooktakular

- CCTV
- Arklow to Shillelagh Greenway
- Shop Front Painting Scheme
- Applying for charitable status
- Considering Purple Flag application

Blessington

The Town Team was built on the success in being selected as Leinster's Most Enterprising Town in 2017. It shows a strong collaboration between Blessington & District Forum and WCC/Blessington MD.

Phase 1 of a Health Check has been carried out which focused on infrastructure and the public realm, with Phase 2 focussing on retail currently being undertaken. Following the completion of Phase 2, the process will lead to a Vision Statement and Action Plan for Blessington.

A comprehensive application has been submitted for Community CCTV.

As part of the Town Team, a number of Working Groups have been established:

- Blessington Greenway and Tourism
- Public Realm and Tidy Towns
- Planning and Infrastructure
- Healthy Blessington
- Business
- Culture and Heritage

Bray

Built on the success of the Purple Flag Team achieving accreditation for Town Centres offering improved evening /night time environment, Bray also participated in an Age Friendly Business Recognition Programme.

The Town Team have worked on a number of projects including:

- Production of a guide to doing business in Bray.
- Applied for Failte Ireland Destination Town Funding
- Working on a Town Centre Health Check

Greystones 2020

Greystones 2020 was initiated by local business leaders and have worked on numerous projects including:

- Christmas Lights/Festival
- Greystones Train Station – plans to landscape the exterior and both platforms and to exhibit portraits of famous Greystones residents
- A New Website for Greystones
- Public Realm Plan

Wicklow

Established following the “Kickstart Wicklow” report prepared by Wicklow & District Chamber of Commerce. Some projects include:

- Improvement of public realm
- Town Centre Health Check
- Working to develop a Digital hub to attract start up businesses to Wicklow.
- Proposals to develop a Greenway/Blueway from Greystones to Wicklow.
- Development of a park and ride facility close to the M11 aimed at reducing commuting times.
- Development of a high quality Heritage Trail
- Online retail survey /retail plan for the town
- Parking survey

National Enterprise Town Awards

Ashford and Rathdrum entered in to the Bank of Ireland Enterprise Town Awards with judging taking place on 30th September. The communities of both towns got together and with the support of Wicklow County Council showcased their towns, their community, local businesses and the unique features of their areas. The results are eagerly awaited.

URDF Funding

In 2018 Wicklow applied for funding for 9 projects under the Urban Regional Development Fund. The following projects were awarded funding in the first round:

Arklow Historic Town Core	€1,645,000
Wicklow Library and Fitzwilliam Square	€1,626,000
Bray Public Transport Bridge	€3,450,000

Wicklow Library is underway, Council officials are engaging with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in advance of awarding contracts for the remaining projects.

RRDF Funding

Applications were submitted for projects worth over €10 million for Glendalough, Baltinglass and Blessington Greenway.

TOURISM

Wicklow Tourism and Bray Tourism Staff are now employed by Wicklow County Council. Wicklow Tourism Alliance has been established and a number of working groups have been formed to roll out Wicklow’s Tourism Strategy and Marketing Plan.

- Accommodation
- Towns as Visitor Hubs
- Thematic Experiences
- Marketing /Developing a common narrative
- Glendalough

Wicklow is awaiting a report on accommodation by Crowe Howarth commissioned by Fáilte Ireland.

MARITIME

The blue economy is an important pillar of Wicklow's economic development strategy. With this in mind WCC engaged Gavin Doherty Geosolutions to carry out a Maritime Strategic Review.

The final version of the Maritime Strategic Review will be available in November and can be circulated to the members of the SPC once it becomes available.

The Review will:

- Identify maritime issues which have a remit in spatial / land use planning to allow better planning and management of the coastal / maritime area.
- Help WCC integrate planning policy and strategy.
- Provide WCC with a clear picture of its maritime area so that it is in a position to respond and / or provide input to higher level policy where / when necessary.
- Identify and focus stakeholders by engaging with them in an iterative process.
- Identify ways the economic base of County Wicklow could be strengthened through its ports and harbours.

Interest in the development of Offshore Wind Farms is increasing there are potentially 4 offshore wind farms at various stages of planning off the Wicklow Coast starting with the Dublin Array (Bray), the Codling (Greystones) The Arklow Bank (Arklow) and Kilmichael (North Wexford/Arklow).

The Maritime Business Development Group has formed a sub committee to examine ways to ensure that Wicklow is well placed to benefit from these developments in terms of investment, training and jobs.

Aquaculture

The Maritime Business Development Group has formed an aquaculture sub group with a view to reinvigorating aquaculture off our coast. WCC has been awarded FLAG funding towards investigating the feasibility of redeveloping Wicklow's oyster banks and is working with a local company in this regard.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE STRATEGY

Wicklow County Council in partnership with County Wicklow Partnership successfully applied for LEADER funding for the implementation of the Food and Beverage Strategy. Jonathan Birnie Associates have recently been appointed to work with the Food and Beverage Steering Group to implement the Food & Beverage Strategy. One of the key tasks under action 5 Business Supports will be to develop a feasibility study for the development of a Food Hub.

Item 7

Update: Proposed Blessington Greenway Project

The committee noted that the Blessington Greenway has been approved grant aid of €5m, the balance of €3.5 mill to be match funded and that an application for funding has been submitted for €3m. Due to commence work in March of next year with an approximate period of 12 months to complete.

It was agreed to take Item 8 and 9 together.

Item 8

Update: (a) LEADER/LAG (b) SICAP

Item 9

Update: Town and Village Renewal Scheme

Ms. Deirdre Whitfield, CCSD, circulated a report to the committee. In presenting the report she advised that the committee would see the links between the Community element of the LECP and the Economic elements and how they compliment each other.

The report covered the following areas:-

Goal 1: Develop Community Capacity in Disadvantaged Communities and Engage in Urban Regeneration and Rural Development

- Rural Regeneration Development fund 2019 – applications submitted and decision awaited: Glendalough, Baltinglass and Blessington
- Town and village 2019 – Applications submitted and decisions awaited: Redcross, Aughtrim, Avoca, Dunlavin, Coolkenno, Delgany, Laragh, Barndarrig, Kilcoole, Shillelagh and Roundwood
- CLAR 2019 – Projects approved: Knockanna and Rathcoyle.
- Outdoor Recreation – Applications submitted and awaiting decision, Maintenance and upgrade County Wicklow, in Kilcoole, Baltinglass, Arklow, and Greystones

Goal 2: Promote Active Citizenship Underpinned by Good Governance and Participation in Decision Making

Ms. D. Whitfield updated on

- An Comhairle na nOg
- Age Friendly initiatives

Goal 3: Develop High Quality Integrated Services Available to all Communities - in Particular Disadvantaged Communities and Vulnerable Groups

Ms. D. Whitfield updated on

- Healthy Wicklow Strategy
- Food Strategy
- Digital Strategy

- RSES adoption

<p>Goal 4: Develop a vibrant and innovate community and social enterprise sector</p>

Ms. D. Whitfield updated on

- The National Social Enterprise Strategy
- National Supports
- LECP – 2016 – 2022 – Guidelines to issue soon on the review of the LECP. There is no point in a full review at this stage but an internal review is to be carried out as part of the planning for the new LECP.

Item 10:

Update: Wicklow County Campus: EI Funding Application.

Mr. T. Murphy, DOS updated on the Wicklow County Council EI Application in that the Council has submitted an application for Regional Enterprise Development Funding for the Development of a Screen Content Enterprise Hub at Wicklow County Campus. This will feature refurbishment of part of the existing Courtyard buildings, a new 2 storey building, refurbishment of the 2nd floor of the main building into high end private office space refurbishment of the Chapel to provide high tech meeting/ conference/ sound recording and screening facility.

The proposed development of the Hub is in response to the demand for content creation arising out of the growth of streaming and new forms of media consumption. The Hub will develop the potential of entrepreneurs, emerging and established businesses. Support growth and internationalisation of established businesses. Liaise with the various colleges and training agencies to ensure a skilled workforce. A pitch will be made to EI, being the second pitch, tomorrow, Tuesday 22nd October, by 2 Industry Reps, Ms. Suin Ni Raghallaigh, Mr. Morgan O Sullivan, the Chief Executive, Mr. Frank Curran, the Head of Enterprise, Ms. Vibeke Delahunt and SEO Enterprise and Corporate Services, Ms. C. Flood. The total cost of the project is €3m including salaries and overheads for a 3 year period and grand aid of €1.9m is sought leaving a balance of some €1.1m.

Item 11

Update: Mid East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020.

The apologies of Ms. Vibeke Delahunt, Head of Enterprise were again noted. It was agreed to invite Mr. Conor Sweeney, Programme Manager, Kildare/Meath and Wicklow, Mid East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020, to the next meeting of the Committee

Item 12

Wicklow County Council Draft Corporate Plan 2019 – 2024

L. Gallagher advised that WCC was currently in the process of preparing the 5 year Corporate Plan, 2019 – 2024, required by statute, post the local elections, 2019 which had to be adopted by the 6th of December. She advised by way of background that the Council is obliged to take an organizational wide strategic approach with regard to the preparation of the plan, linking key elements such as policy, organization, operational activity, governance

and performance management. County Councils are asked to identify a limited number of strategic objectives that they wish to deliver on during the timeframe of the plan, which will translate into more detailed supporting strategies and activities to be identified in the Council's Annual Service Delivery Plans, which are prepared annually flowing from the Corporate Plan. She advised that the council had gone quite a distance with the preparation of the plan and that each Directorate of the Council has identified high level goals in their area, and the council is required when drawing up these objectives to focus on cross cutting issues such as social inclusion, equality, human rights, climate change mitigation and adaptation objectives and sustainable development as well as quality service and community leadership. Elected Member and staff consultation has taken place and the process of wider stakeholder consultation has commenced in terms of the SPCs, LCDC, the PPN and that a short questionnaire had been developed on the Council Website (Consultation Hub) inviting the views of the public as to what they would like to see the Council Focus on over the next 5 year period and how they would like the council to communicate with them with regard to issues in their area. The committee noted the closing date for receipt of submissions being Friday the 25th of October, 2019.

Item 13

Correspondence

No correspondence received noted by the committee.

Next meeting: The Chair advised of apologies from Cllr. Avril Cronin unable to attend the meeting as the meetings of the Baltinglass MD take place on the morning of the 3rd Monday of the month in Baltinglass. It was agreed therefore that the next meeting of the SPC will take place on Monday the 9th of December, 2019 commencing 11.00 am followed by the meeting proper at 11 am and Christmas lunch.

Signed:

Cllr. Gerry Walsh
Chair
Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC

Date
