

**Minutes of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC**  
**Meeting held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2026 at 9.30am**  
**in the Wurzburg Room, County Buildings, Station Road, Wicklow Town**

**Present:** Cllr. Tom Fortune – Chair (TF)  
Cllr. Peir Leonard (PL)  
Cllr. Ned Whelan (NW)  
Cllr. Louise Fenelon Gaskin (LFG)  
Cllr. Ian Neary (IN)  
Cllr. Avril Cronin (AC)  
Mr. Jonathan Donnelly (JD)  
Mr. T.J. Foley (TJF)  
Ms. Margaret Coughlan (MC)

**Presentation:** Ms. Corinna Harte (CH), IPA

**In Attendance:** Ms. Helena Dennehy (HD)  
Ms. Susan Nichols (SN)  
Ms. Vibeke Delahunt (VD)  
Ms. Caroline Cullimore (CC)  
Mr. Fred Verdier (FV)  
Ms. Michelle Curley (MC)  
Ms. Patrice O'Toole (PO'T)

**Apologies:** Mr. Huw O'Toole (HOT)  
Mr. Killian McGreal (KMcG)  
Mr. John Powderly (JP)  
Mr. Chris Fox (CF)

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TF welcomed everybody and introduced Mr. Jonathan Donnelly from the Bray Chamber. Mr. Donnelly will be representing the Business Chamber and replacing Gerry Ginty who stepped down. He also advised that Jean Ryan has also stepped down but not yet replaced.

**ITEM 1: Minutes of meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support (EDES) SPC held on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2025**

The minutes of the EDES SPC which took place on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2025 were proposed by Cllr. P. Leonard and seconded by Cllr. N. Whelan.

**ITEM 2: Matters arising from the Minutes**

Any matters arising to be addressed as the meeting progresses.

**ITEM 3: Presentation on the Strategic Policy Committees by Corinna Harte from the IPA**

Corinna Harte specialising in Local Government with the IPA gave a presentation to the EDES SPC on the Strategic Policy Committee focusing on the Legislation and Guidelines and the difference between strategic and operational.

**Background and Overview**

The SPC was established under the Local Government Act 2001, as updated by the 2014 Reform Act. Its function is to monitor, formulate and review policy that informs the Corporate Plan. While it can make recommendations for change, only the full council can formally approve and adopt them. The power of the SPC should never be underestimated because of the legislative backing it carries.

Feedback has highlighted a number of frustrations and challenges around SPC's. There was a strong focus on how items should be placed on an SPC agenda, and the importance of everyone understanding that process. Members can lose interest when seeing nothing happening for their time spent sitting on SPC.

SPCs may be asked to review statutory or non-statutory policies, contribute to the annual service delivery plan, or examine why a particular policy isn't working in a specific area.

CH advised that one of the key parts of the job as a SPC member is to be able to differentiate between operational and strategic issues. At times operational roles may be linked to strategic issues. When looking at policy words such as developing, designing, defining, formulating, aligning, embedding, strengthening, suggesting reform and recommending will be used. All policies will be linked to other policy whether it is at local, national or international level and they all link back to the sustainable development goals (SDG).

**Highlights to be taken from the presentation:**

- Never be afraid to challenge and ask the awkward question
- All presentations should be limited to 7 slides with 5 key points
- Presenters should answer a specific question set by the group beforehand
- Question the expertise of the presenter
- Meet more frequently – either as a full SPC or in sub-groups
- Select a few key actions from the Annual Service Plan - what can you actually change/achieve.
- Project manage the work
- Ensure that the CPG and the SPC are aligning
- Insist that the CPG review the SPC as per statutory requirements
- Link in with other SPC's and report to the CPG
- Be an effective committee member
- Best practice for minute-taking would suggest capturing the themes and outcomes of the discussion rather than noting individual comments (he said/she said)
- Minutes should have actions/accountability and timeframe

TF thanked CH for the excellent presentation and all members for their contributions to the discussions.

**ITEM 4: To consider drafting a Multi Annual Work Plan for the EDES SPC.**

It was proposed by HD that the Multi Annual Work Plan (MAWP) would focus on the following three areas; Tourism, Enterprise and Food/Craft and agreed by TF and seconded by N.W.

It was also agreed that a working group would be set up under each focus area, made up of a mix of elected members and selected members. The appointment to the working groups was voluntary but not every member got their first choice. The aim was to ensure that at least one elected member and one selected SPC member would be in each group with one appointed staff member to support the group. TF is to liaise with each of the working groups and report back to the CPG.

The working groups were finalised as follows:

<b>Tourism</b>	<b>Enterprise</b>	<b>Food/Craft</b>
Cllr. Avril Cronin	Cllr. Louise Fenelon Gaskin	Cllr. Peir Leonard
Cllr. Ian Neary	Jonathan Donnelly	Cllr. Ned Whelan
Huw O'Toole	T.J. Foley	Margaret Coughlan
Fred Verdier	Killian McGreal	Caroline Cullimore
	Vibeke Delahunt	

It was decided that each working group would meet and report back to the SPC with their proposed submissions to the MAWP. The final MAWP is to be agreed by the full SPC and submitted by 23<sup>rd</sup> March.

Each working group will need to be able to identify and review relevant policy relating to their focus area and decide if the policy is there to get them what they want to achieve.

**ITEM 5: Update on the County Wicklow Skills Strategy**

CC advised that the skills taskforce has agreed to meet every two months during 2026. The Taskforce is the main driver behind the strategy while Wicklow County Council holds a coordinating role. The main struggle would be the lack of feedback.

**ITEM 6: To consider updates from each group: Economic Development, Head of Enterprise, Content Creation Hub and Wicklow County Campus, and Tourism Officer**

The reports issued were taken as read and TF invited any comments arising from them. The following comments were made

- Congratulations to V.D. and her team at LEO on the excellent work they do and noting the recent announcement of the annual results of the Local Enterprise Offices for 2025 held in West Wicklow.
- VD advised that this year's Local Enterprise Week takes place from 2nd - 6th March and a full list of events could be found on the website
- Will the proposed new short-term letting (STL) regulations have an effect on the 850 registered Airbnb properties in County Wicklow?
- An update on the Aires Park development at the Murrough was requested. The development is a project managed by the Municipal District and it was advised that an update would be sought.

#### **ITEM 7: Correspondence**

**SN delivered the following two pieces of correspondence to the Members:**

**1. Notice of motion - Proposed by Cllr. S. Bourke and seconded by Cllr. P. Stapleton**

'That Wicklow County Council explore an application for RRDF funding for Town First projects similar to Carrick-in-Suir, that prioritises undergrounding of ESB and other utility cabling, to enhance the visual urban landscape of Wicklow towns, and provide funding to eliminate exterior metal shuttering from retail premises on Main streets, as recommended on page 190 of the Architectural Heritage Protection document issued by the Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Arklow should be used as the initial candidate to pilot this proposal as it has been singled out for criticism by An Taisce.'

*'That Wicklow County Council unify the public lighting infrastructure in public Realm areas, initially by removing redundant attachments, matching lighting fixtures, and paint all stands in a single uniform colour, (grey, black or a suitable alternative), to unify the street landscape. Arklow's Main Street, Ferrybank and Wexford road, should be the initial focus, as Arklow has been singled out for criticism by An Taisce. Other towns and villages in county Wicklow could be incorporated in this scheme to re-organise lighting to match up older lighting fixtures. Climate sensitive lighting should be prioritised.'*

**2. Email dated 16/2/2026 from Huw O'Toole**

Huw O'Toole requested that the EDES SPC appreciates that the environment enables all economic activity be it farming, construction, film tourism, marine etc.

#### **ITEM 8: To consider dates for EDES SPC meetings during 2026**

Meeting dates as follows were agreed: Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April, Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June were agreed. It was decided not to have a meeting in July. Meetings scheduled for October and December were moved to September and November (dates to be decided). The dates were agreed by LFG and seconded by PL.

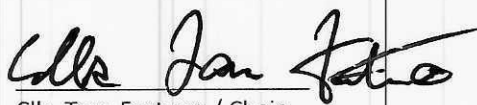
#### **ITEM 9: AOB**

Will Bray be getting a Town Team? It was advised that Bray is not on the cards for 2026 and that national advice is being sought on how to manage a Town Team in the larger towns (for which Bray is one).

#### **Actions arising from the presentation and the agenda items:**

1. The areas of focus for the 2026 Multi Annual Work Plan (MAWP) to be agreed
2. Set up sub groups to work under each area of focus for the MAWP
3. The MAWP is to be agreed by the full SPC which has a deadline of 23/3/2026
4. Sub groups to identify and review appropriate policy for their subgroup
5. Review the layout of the Agenda and Minutes for the SPC going forward
6. Agenda must be specific. Pose Agenda items as questions and seek input from members beforehand
7. Provide an update on the Aires Park development at the Murrough
8. CH to provide summary points of the presentation to share with the members

Signed:



Cllr. Tom Fortune / Chair  
Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC

Date:

20/4/2026

