

**Minutes of the Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee Meeting  
held remotely on MS Teams on Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2021 at 11.00am**

**Present:** Cllr Pat McMahon, Chairperson  
Cllr Michael Begley  
Cllr P.J. Ryan  
Cllr P.J. Kelly  
Cllr Gabriel Keating  
Cllr Johnny Flynn  
Ms Elaine D'Alton  
Mr Pat Morris  
Mr Pat Keogh  
Ms Rosaleen O'Reilly  
Ms Emma Karran  
Liam Conneally, Director of Service  
Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise  
Candace Ingram, A/Senior Executive Planner  
Brendan O'Caoimh  
Des McCafferty  
Hannah Burke  
Aoife Sugrue  
Valerie Fleming, Assistant Staff Officer

**Apologies:** Cllr Pat Daly

**1. Minutes of Economic Development SPC meeting 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021.**

The minutes of the Economic Development SPC meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021 were proposed by Cllr Gabriel Keating, seconded by Cllr Johnny Flynn and agreed.

**2. LEO Presentation**

Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise, Local Enterprise Office, gave an overview of the work of the Clare LEO. He outlined such areas as Business Support 2021, LEO Clare employment summary, Client Stimulus, strategic focus, challenges and the future of work.

Cllr Gabriel Keating asked if Padraic is aware of any grants available to businesses unable to open following the pandemic.

Elaine D'Alton asked if there was a gender breakdown of business supports and employment as the availability of such information would highlight where resources are required.

Cllr Johnny Flynn asked if there was progression in the area of 'earning while learning' i.e. Apprenticeships.

Cllr Gabriel asked if Digital Hubs will be affected by the return of staff to their place of work.

Padraic replied that rural areas are disproportionately affected by the pandemic and he is not aware of any further business support schemes but that he would bring this request to the attention of the Department.

Padraic advised that there is no gender breakdown of supports provided but he will review all data available.

Apprenticeships are to be included under the CAO application process for the first time this year.

### **3. Presentation from Mr Brendan O'Keeffe, O'Keeffe Social Research on *InPlace Ennistymon-Lahinch***

Liam Conneally introduced Mr Brendan O'Keeffe, O'Keeffe Social Research and Professor Des McCafferty who are researching the impacts of pre- and post-COVID commuting patterns on the spatial relationships between people and place. This research is being conducted through a case study approach with Ennistymon-Lahinch selected as one of three pilot locations throughout Ireland.

Brendan O'Keeffe acknowledged the support of Clare County Council and advised that his group are feeding into the Clare County Development Plan review currently underway. A PowerPoint presentation was used to outline the work to-date on *InPlace Ennistymon-Lahinch*.

It is envisaged that conclusions and recommendations from this research will provide a greater understanding of housing need and anticipate changes to established patterns of demand; inform potential priorities and actions for the next iteration of both the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) and Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs); and provide evidence for the leveraging of funding for digitisation and regeneration.

Cllr Michael Begley asked if the results might impact Foreign Direct Investment coming from larger companies who traditionally want all services available at one location.

Professor McCafferty replied that the hybrid model of working may increase the attractiveness for some larger multi-nationals to invest in locations such as Ennistymon-Lahinch but that it is too early to draw any conclusions from this study.

Liam Conneally thanked Brendan and Des for their presentation and added that there are strong settlements in Clare which are impacted by commuting patterns and that Clare County Council is happy to lead the debate in this space.

#### **4. Climate Change and Biodiversity**

##### **- Presentation from CARO Office**

Ms Aoife Sugrue gave an outline of the work of the Climate Action Regional Office (CARO), Atlantic Seaboard South including Climate Action Policy & Legislation and CARO Projects.

Cllr Michael Begley asked if a template will be available to local authorities to implement the Climate Action & Low Carbon Act (Amendment) 2021.

Cllr P.J. Ryan expressed concern that there is an over emphasis on the year 2050 as a target to achieve climate neutrality as people may feel it is too far away to worry about it now.

Emma Karran asked how carbon budgets are to be allocated and if each local authority will be overseeing the countywide budget. Emma also referenced a request to discuss a Data Centre strategy for Clare.

Aoife responded that each local authority is responsible for preparing their own plan with no one national template however there will be national guidance.

Aoife agreed that 2050 is far away but added that carbon budgets will be allocated in 5 year cycles and will set the carbon reduction levels for each sector.

Liam Conneally outlined that this is a very relevant topic and asked that any further updates in relation to the guidelines be channelled through him as this will continue to be an item on the Economic Development SPC Agenda. In relation to the Data Centre discussion Liam responded that a Data Centre application is currently going through the planning process, which is a quasi-judicial process, and it is therefore not appropriate to discuss it outside of that process.

Elaine D'Alton referred to the PPN and asked when Clare County Council will facilitate a broader discussion on Data Centres to take on board what is being said at a national level.

Liam Conneally responded that direction provided by national government will be taken into account in the assessment of the application and that already a lot of discussion has been

held with renewable energy providers. He added that the formal planning process exists to facilitate public input to the planning application process.

## 5. Planning

### - County Development Plan Review progress update

Candace Ingram, A/Senior Executive Planner, outlined the County Development Plan review process and added that it is hoped to present the draft plan to communities in person following 22<sup>nd</sup> October next. The deadline for submissions on the draft plan is 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

Cllr P.J. Kelly thanked Candace for the presentation and referred to his request for a definition of “proper planning and sustainable development” for which he says he has one meaning and other people have a different meaning. He added that the Minister said that the definition for “proper planning and sustainable development” is a matter for Government which he says leaves every County Development Plan open to challenge.

## 6. A.O.B.

There was no item of AOB.

The meeting then concluded.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Cllr Pat McMahon, Chairperson**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Liam Conneally,**  
**Director of Economic Development.**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_