

LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of Economic Development & Enterprise Support SPC Special Meeting Held In Cooley Room, County Hall, Dundalk on Wednesday 5th October, 2016 at 3.30pm

Present: Cllrs: Mark Dearey (Chairman), Conor Keelan, Kevin Callan, Pio Smith,
Alan Cassidy
Mr Pat Mulligan, Community/Voluntary
Mr Simon McCormack, Business/Commercial

Officials: Frank Pentony, Director of Service
Mary T Daly, Senior Executive Officer
Thomas McEvoy, Head of Louth LEO
Miriam Roe, Staff Officer

Apologies: Cllrs: Thomas Sharkey, Marianne Butler
Ms Karen Devine, Environment/Conservation
Mr Eddie Phelan, Development/Construction
Mr Paddy Donnelly, Agriculture/Farming

1. Tourism & Heritage Action Plan:

Cllr Dearey called the meeting to order stating that the purpose of this special meeting was discuss whether the engagement by Louth County Council of a Tourism Officer should be included in the Tourism & Heritage Plan. Whilst recognising that there is a Heritage Officer in place it has been an aspiration that there should also be a dedicated Tourism Officer within the Council. He continued by saying that Mary T, on behalf of the Council, expressed the view that this decision is not a policy matter but an Executive function.

Mary T spoke wishing to re-assure the members that Tourism is part of her portfolio and she will work with Fáilte Ireland to ensure that Louth get the best we can from Irelands Ancient East with the resources she has. There is a substantial amount of Marketing and PR involved but Louth have to do a lot of the work themselves. There is a team of Tourism Officers already in place between The Boyne Valley Tourism Officer, Dundalk/BID's Tourism Officer, Carlingford Tourism Officer and the Tourist Office in Drogheda, who are all dedicated to raising the profile and promoting tourism in the county. The council also have a Heritage Officer to implement the Heritage element of the plan. The Tourism & Heritage Plan will be implemented through these key stakeholders.

Cllr Dearey thanked Mary T for her assurances and suggested that the SPC should monitor the implementation of the plan in two or three meetings time, stating that policy without implementation and resourcing has no effect.

Cllr Keelan welcomed that fact that Martin Cronin would be attending the December meeting but expressed his concern over our relationship with Fáilte Ireland and asked if they could be invited to attend an SPC meeting. He also stated that by removing the need for a Tourism Officer from the plan that the responsibility for implementation rests with the Executive. Mary T advised that Ruairi Deane from Fáilte Ireland will be addressing the Council meeting in October.

Cllr Smith asked where the cycling element would be included in the Plan and how will its success be measured. Discussion followed with one idea being that it could be per km delivered, bearing in mind that this would be dependent on external funding. If we have quality safe cycling networks then we can attract tourists. As the old national route from Dundalk to Drogheda is underutilised would it be possible to have a dedicated cycling lane along its length.

Cllr Dearey, whilst noting the strong views held with regard to a Tourism Officer, proposed that the plan be passed as it stands

The Tourism & Heritage Action Plan was passed on the proposal of Cllr Pio Smith and Seconded by Mr Simon McCormack.

Cllr Dearey, on behalf of all the members, extended a warm welcome to Mr Pat Mulligan who is the new representative from the Community/Voluntary sector. Pat then spoke a little about his background as National School Principal and his involvement with the Tidy Towns.

Frank Pentony mentioned that Louth County Council, in conjunction with Meath and Fingal held a REI one day training session in City North on 28th September. The feedback from those who attended was extremely positive. Thomas McEvoy then mentioned that REI may deliver some training in Louth, as part of the LEO Enterprise Week in March 2017.

Finally Cllr Smith stated that Drogheda were looking for support for their application for Purple Flag accreditation which he hoped would boost the evening and night time economy.

This concluded the meeting.

Confirmed at Meeting held on: _____

Signed: _____
Chairman