

# **LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of Economic Development & Enterprise Support SPC Meeting Held In Cooley Room, County Hall, Dundalk on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2016 at 3.30pm**

**Present:** Cllrs: Mark Dearey (Chairman), Conor Keelan, Kevin Callan, Pio Smith,  
Alan Cassidy  
Ms Karen Devine, Environment/Conservation  
Mr Eddie Phelan, Development/Construction

**Officials:** Mary T Daly, Senior Executive Officer  
Thomas McEvoy, Head of Louth LEO  
Miriam Roe, Staff Officer

**Apologies:** Cllrs: Thomas Sharkey, Marianne Butler  
Mr Pat Mulligan, Community/Voluntary  
Mr Paddy Donnelly, Agriculture/Farming  
Mr Simon McCormack, Business/Commercial  
Frank Pentony, Director of Service

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### **1. Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

Upon the proposal of Ms Karen Devine and seconded by Cllr Conor Keelan the minutes of the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2016 were adopted.

### **2. Matters Arising:**

Cllr Keelan asked for an update on the Retail Incentive Schemes. Mary T advised that there has been positive interest and uptake across the three schemes. It is hoped that there will be provision in the 2017 Budget for their continuation next year. The Development Contribution Scheme, when adopted, should compliment these initiatives. Louth County Council will also be running a 'Louth is Open for Business' campaign shortly.

### **3. Louth Economic Forum Update:**

Martin Cronin, who is the current Chairman of InterTradeIreland, is the new Chairperson of the Louth Economic Forum, chaired his first meeting in July. The Forum is in the process of reviewing a number of their Action Plans, including the Education & Training plan, Indigenous Industry Plan and Age Friendly Plan. The Forum has focussed on a number of key actions from the Action Plans which to be delivered over the course of the next 18months to 2 years.

Replying to Cllr Callans question Mary T advised that the position of Chairperson of the LEF is a remunerated position. However, Martin as an independent chairperson has a recognised and respected profile on a national level which crucial in allowing him to make representations on behalf of Louth.

It was agreed that Martin Cronin would be asked to attend the next SPC meeting in December to discuss his role as Chairperson and the work of the LEF. Cllr Dearey said that he would like there to be more contact between this SPC, who are the democratic representatives and the LEF who are the practitioners.

In reply to Cllr Smith question Mary T advised that the review of the Education and Training Plan would be in line with the LECF, assuring the members that all plans will be brought before the SPC for their comments and input.

Finally Eddie Phelan, who also sits on the LEF, said that the environment of the Forum allows a collective of state and industry reps, who may never usually be in the same room, to have discussions in an informal setting. It works very well and we are leading where other counties are now trying to follow.

#### **4. Draft Tourism & Heritage Plan:**

Mary T gave a presentation to the members on the Draft Tourism & Heritage Plan. Discussion followed on the presentation and draft plan which included

- Provision of a pontoon for Drogheda, which should be delivered within the next 12 months and will have enormous tourism potential.
- The provision of a dedicated marketing budget which was crucial for delivering the plan.
- The inclusion of a clear focus in the plan on cycling and cycling routes given the market potential in Europe.
- The need for a clear commitment for a full time Tourism Officer within the county should be included in the plan under resources.
- The need to get tourists to visit areas outside the county's 'honey pots'.
- Louth County Council liaising with OPW with regard to increased availability of access to both Monasterboice and Mellifont sites

The members agreed that the plan should be amended to include a focus on cycling and cycling routes and also the provision of a dedicated Louth Tourism Officer.

Mary T stated that she would look at amending the Action Plan accordingly but was clear that the appointment of any staff, including a Tourism Officer, was an Executive Function.

## **5. Town & Village Renewal Scheme:**

Mary T briefed the members, stating that the central aim of the scheme is to support the revitalisation of smaller towns and villages. This is being driven by Aisling Sheridan, Administrative Officer, Housing - Community & Social Development. There are a maximum of 8 grants available for 8 separate town/village projects.

## **6. M1 Payments Corridor:**

Alan Costello, Ruby Consulting, gave a presentation on the M1 Payments Corridor. The presentation was followed by a number of questions from the members.

Responding to questions from Cllr Smith, Alan stated that Brexit will have an effect but that it is seen predominantly as an opportunity amongst industry leaders. He also confirmed that companies are always interested in getting good graduates from HEI's such as DkIT and DCU. Challenges pertaining to the payments corridor would include availability of space and also the Central Banks Financial Regulatory Framework.

Cllr Keelan was assured that broadband in Louth was not a barrier.

Cllr Callan asked about The Mills role in this going forward. Alan suggested that the role of The Mill could be in one of the three Programmatic Pillars he had spoken about.

The Cathaoirleach thanked Alan for his informative presentation and commented on a number of areas which included; The necessity to better align our graduates to the needs of the sector, uncertainty over the next 5 years concerning Brexit and the co-ordinating role of the Local Authority in formulating policy to facilitate growth of the payments corridor. Cllr Dearey also stated that it was essential that we find new uses for the spaces in our town centres, the importance of identifying the M1 Payments Corridor in any future National Spatial Strategy and finally, the changing role of the traditional banks in light of the developments in on-line payments and virtual wallets.

## **7. Horizon 2020:**

Thomas McEvoy gave a presentation to the members on Horizon 2020, which is the EU's Programme to support Research and Innovation. It is one of seven flagship initiatives in *Europe 2020*, the European Union's ten-year jobs and growth strategy. H2020 has a budget of €75 billion and runs from 2014 to 2020.

H2020 funding (grant aid) is awarded on a competitive basis to researchers and companies across three main pillars:

- Excellent Science;
- Leadership in Industrial Technologies; and
- Societal Challenges.

Thomas then briefed the members in regard to H2020 and FDI in the region which was particularly pertinent in light of the recent Ebay announcement.

An analysis of employment in State supported (Enterprise Ireland and IDA) businesses in Ireland was provided by Region. This highlighted that for every 1,000 population, there are approx. 78 State supported jobs in the North East Region (Counties Louth, Monaghan and Cavan) compared to a national average of 83. The North East compares favourably to the majority of Regions in Ireland, including the Mid-West, Mid-East, Midlands, South East and North West. The figures for the NE region highlight its reliance on indigenous industry, with approximately 77% of State supported jobs being indigenous compared to a national average of 51%.

The next meeting will be held on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2016 at 3.30pm in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Dundalk.

This concluded the meeting:

**Confirmed at Meeting held on:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Chairman**