Minutes of the Louth Economic Forum meeting
Wednesday 27th January, 2016
4pm, Cooley Room, County Hall

Attendance:
1. Joan Martin  County Manager, Louth County Council and Interim Chair of LEF
2. Mary T Daly  Louth County Council
3. Anne Keeley  Department of Social Protection
4. Frank Pentony  Louth County Council
5. Peter McVeigh  Louth County Council – Sustainable Energy
6. Miriam Roe  Louth County Council
7. Ray Carroll  Chair, Tourism & Heritage Forum
8. Anne Caldwell  Enterprise Ireland
9. Emer Higgins  PayPal
10. Eddie Phelan  President, Drogheda & District Chamber
11. Irene McCausland  DkIT
12. Niall O’Lamhna  Teagasc
13. Thomas McEvoy  Louth LEO
14. Simon McCormack  Drogheda & District Chamber
15. Michael Gaynor  President, Dundalk Chamber

Apologies:
1. Gavin Duffy  Chair, Age-Friendly Business Forum
2. Jim Malone  Ardee Business Community
3. Declan Meally  S.E.A.I
4. Peter Egan  LMETB
5. Paddy Malone  Dundalk Chamber
6. Jim Mulcahy  Chairman, Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Forum
7. Paddy Matthews  Dundalk Chamber
8. Graham O’Rourke  Drogheda & District Chamber
10. Grainne Ward  Project Officer, Failte Ireland
11. Deirdre Craven  IDA
1. **Minutes**: The minutes of the previous meeting of the 18th November, 2015 were taken as read and agreed.

Joan Martin welcomed the Forum members to the first meeting of 2016 and in particular Irene McCausland, DkIT, new to the Forum. Joan Martin outlined she will be chairing the LEF meetings on an interim basis until a new permanent Chair is in place. A lunch will be arranged for the members to formally thank Padraic White for his service and make a presentation.

2. **Matters Arising**: REDZ – The Mill. Mary T advised the members that the official Launch of Phase II of The Mill took place last week. It is hoped that this project will be delivered by mid 2016. The County Manager will be meeting with members of the board in the coming weeks to discuss financing and where the Council will be able to assist with regards to shortfall.

3. **Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) – Update**: Mary T gave a brief presentation regarding the LECP, paying particular attention to the LECP Vision, Goals and Objective. She re-iterated that it is a joint venture between the Economic Development & Enterprise Support SPC and the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), with a lifespan of 6 years. It is hoped that the plan will be adopted in March. The LEF, through their advisory/implementation/driving role will be a lead partner in the delivery of this
plan. The Interim Char commented that it is opportune that we are currently in the process of revising the suite of plans and also the implementation groups.

4. Action Plan Updates – Work Plan:
Mary T gave updates on the following plans:

Broadband Action Plan
The Broadband Action is being launched officially on Friday 29th January in the Food Hub, Ardee by Minister Ged Nash. An implementation group will be established as a priority and LEO will be the lead on this. If anyone has suggestions as to suitable members please contact Thomas McEvoy. Cooley/Greenore area has been identified specifically in the Action Plan as an area of high priority and the implementation group will need to keep focus on this as a particular area for attention.

Tourism & Heritage Action Plan: The 2nd revision of the draft plan will be available shortly. This will be circulated to those who attended the workshop in the Crowne Plaza for comments. The plan will then be brought back to the LEF for approval before going to the SPC and then full Council. There will then need to be a renewed implementation group who will deliver the new Action Plan.

Agriculture, Food & Fisheries Action Plan: Mary T is working to bring together the Artisan food and craft producers in the county together. This would mirror the ‘Boyne Valley Food Series’ which has been successful. This initiative overlaps considerably with the Tourism & Heritage Action Plan and it needs to be decided on how best it can be delivered.

Indigenous Industry Action Plan: Thomas McEvoy gave a presentation to the members. He spoke in particular about reviewing the existing plan, recent updates and taking matters forward. It was agreed, following the presentation that the Vision would be amended to read as follows “the Louth Economic Forum’s vision for Indigenous Industry is to create an environment within the County which encourages the establishment and growth of new business, helps develop existing business in order to maximise cross border, other exporting and future business opportunities”. – Presentation Circulated via email - Anne Caldwell then mentioned, that due to work commitments, she wouldn’t be able to chair the implementation group going forward. It was agreed that Thomas McEvoy would take over the role as chair.

Sustainable Energy Plan: Peter McVeigh ran through the update from this group. He mentioned particularly the BEC2016 stating that there were 11 applicants. LMETB are developing an accredited training course for Energy Assessors, part of whose training will involve auditing SME’s. LEO have made an application to EI for 2 Energy Interns. Energy office is currently exploring the potential for a cross border development scheme for Near Zero Energy Housing. Currently seeking energy efficient design & smart technologies to be incorporated into any future Clanbrassil Street development (on foot of previous applications).
**Town Centre Upgrade:** Frank Pentony advised that Dundalk has secured a €2 million grant to upgrade Clanbrassil Street and St Nicholas Quarter – an area taking in Church Street, Bridge Street and Linenhall Street. The funding has been made available through the European Regional Development Fund under the Designated Urban Centres Grants Scheme 2014-2020 and will be matched by Louth County Council to rejuvenate a large part of the town centre. There are also plans to meet with property owners along key stretches of the main street to discuss their plans for some of the more dilapidated properties. Mary T added that the Council is re-launching their Business Incentive Scheme and Shop Front Guidelines.

Joan Martin spoke about the REI Retail Management Development Programme which consists of 4 one day sessions which will be run over an 11 week period. This programme has been designed especially for owners/managers who want to refresh and enhance their skills. This is quite costly however, the Council will certainly subsidise it. Ann O’Flynn has undergone this training and has spoken to Joan about its benefits. It is hoped that through the Chambers that a number of businesses will come forward and be willing to undertake this course. Emer Higgins advised that PayPal may be able to help in regard to the ‘shop on line’ aspect of the course.

**Education & Training:** Emer mentioned the Action Plan for Jobs objectives. Also the group are continuing to promote the collaboration that exists between the DSP, LMETB, DKIT etc for employing people locally. There is continual promotion of the Video Empowering Employment in County Louth. There are some new members to the implementation group including Irene McCausland, a rep from National Pen and also the Crowne Plaza. Other possible new members were mentioned and this would be discussed directly with Emer. Emer mentioned that following Marys presentation on the LECP she saw 5 actions would definitely fit into the Education & Training groups remit. Mary T. Daly outlined that the plan would need to be revised.

Peter Egan spoke about motor vehicle mechanic apprenticeships currently on offer and agreed to liaise with Simon McCormac who stated there would be great interest among the industry. LMETB are also currently recruiting IT apprenticeships under the FIT programme.

**5. Schedule of Meetings 2016**

The schedule of meetings for 2016, which was previously circulated, was agreed.

**N.B:** The next meeting of the Louth Economic Forum will be held on Wednesday 23rd March 2016 at 4.00pm in Conference Room, Boyne Centre, Drogheda.