

Minutes of Strategic Policy Committee (Economic Development & Enterprise Support) meeting

held 7 June 2022 on MS Teams

In attendance:

Cllr. Sean Gilliland (Chair)	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Sean Conlon	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. David Maxwell	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Brian McKenna	Monaghan County Council
Alan Johnston	Monaghan Town Team - Business Pillar Rep
Patrick McCormick	Irish Farmer's Assoc. – Agricultural Pillar Rep
Karen Jeffares	Just Transition
Peadar Black	Latton Social Services
Paul Clifford	Acting Chief Executive Officer
Nuala Woods	A/DOS Climate Action, Environmental & Water Services
Toirleach Gourley	A/Senior Planner
Tara Humphreys	Assistant Staff Officer
Robyn Flanagan	Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies

Cllr Noel Keenan	Monaghan County Council
Adrian Hughes	A/Director of Planning & Economic Development

1. Previous Minutes

The minutes of meeting on 30th November 2021 were proposed by Cllr. David Maxwell and seconded by Cllr Brian McKenna. Cllr. Sean Conlon requested an update following the presentation from Fáilte Ireland at the last meeting. Paul Clifford advised that Failte Ireland have launched a Destination Plan for County Monaghan last week in Glaslough. Cllr. Sean Conlon requested that the presentation and the subsequent plan be circulated to members of the committee. This was agreed by Paul Clifford.

Cllr. Brian McKenna complimented the co-operation between Fáilte Ireland and Monaghan County Council

2. Update on Housing Needs & Analysis

Toirleach Gourley, A/Senior Planner in Monaghan County Council gave a presentation to the committee on the Housing Needs & Analysis Assessment that is underway.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland thanked the speaker and opened the floor to questions.

Patrick McCormick raised the issue of the proposed Zoned Land Tax and the need for agricultural land to be excluded. He added that the Irish Farmers Association sees this as a huge problem for their membership. He highlighted that this issue hasn't been raised at government level and that the Opposition's only objections to the Government proposal was that the 3% tax wasn't enough. The IFA have made representations to the Minister of Agriculture highlighting that this would result in a huge number of farmers applying to have land de-zoned to avoid the tax on land that is solely used for agricultural purposes.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland acknowledged the issue and the problems facing farmers as a result. Toirleach Gourley stated that the tax will not be operational until 2024 and that there will be an opportunity to oppose, appeal or object to the proposed zoned areas. A map will be available in Autumn, showing the proposed zoning of land in the county.

Cllr Sean Gilliland agreed that the zoning and/or de-zoning of land has been an ongoing issue and asked if Residential A and Residential B was to be included. Toirleach Gourley confirmed that they would both be included and added that this issue could be discussed in more detail at another meeting of the committee.

Cllr. Sean Conlon agreed with the contribution of Patrick McCormick and added that this was a legacy issue and welcomed the review of the zoning of lands with a common-sense approach. Cllr. Sean Conlon also asked if the re-zoning / de-zoning of land would impact on the town boundaries.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland added that this would re-shape the County Development Plan and should be added the agenda of another meeting to allow more time for discussion.

Paul Clifford stated that the zoning of land was important for the delivery of services and highlighted that good planning was the right balance between zoned land for the provision of services in towns and villages and un-zoned land for agricultural use. Toirleach Gourley agreed that the balance between the two was important.

Cllr. Brian McKenna stated that politicians have had this discussion for many years and need to deal with any issues that arise as a result. Areas of undeveloped land that are in the middle of towns are an issue. Cllr David Maxwell agreed with comments and welcomed farmers to get land re-zoned. He added that there is a balance to be found between those who want zoned land and those who do not.

3. Update on Poultry:

Nuala Woods, A/DOS Climate Action, Environmental & Water Services gave the committee an update on the progress of the taskforce for the poultry sector. Meeting have been held with various stakeholders, including; Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Agriculture, Minister for Rural Development. The primary focus of the taskforce was to engage with business leaders in the sector and this focus will move to engaging with producers in the sector. Other challenges have been highlighted through this engagement, but the benefit of the taskforce can be seen. The formal structure would allow the sector more scope when lobbying at government level.

Cllr. Sean Conlon welcomed the presentation and commented on how the producers would meet the ammonia emissions. He also commented on the need for housing to be improved and how the litter they produced can be better managed.

Future meetings planned with agencies, will discuss sustainable options in relation to managing litter. Nuala Woods added that the producers are not being excluded but the taskforce had to start somewhere and that the business leaders involved in the sector were a good starting point.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland showed support for the taskforce and the approach taken. Cllr. Brian McKenna agreed with this support but added that the producers have been left with the problem of managing the litter and should be invited to any meeting and/or presentation from these agencies. It was encouraged that the producers should be consulted at this stage.

Karen Jeffares thanked Nuala for her presentation and added that the environmental impact must not be forgotten. Karen stated that it was important not to lose sight of the environmental impact of the sector.

Patrick McCormick echoed the comments of Cllr. Brian McKenna and added that producers needed to be consulted at this stage because the task of managing litter was the responsibility of the producer rather than the processor.

Nuala Woods confirmed that the focus of the taskforce was the environment and the future for the industry and poultry farmers. The approach was to engage firstly with the businesses to secure Monaghan's central role in the industry.

Paul Clifford highlighted Monaghan County Council's concerns for the environment and added that the Department of Agriculture and EPA appreciated the engagement with the industry.

4. Update on LECP

Paul Clifford provided the meeting with an update on the progress of the LECP and advised that it was still being prepared. Progress has slowed because of the delay in the census data which is required for an up to date plan to be prepared. He added that progress on this wasn't expected until Q4 when the preliminary census data would be available.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland agreed that the census data was very important and was slowing the development of many plans.

5. Update on Economic Development Projects

Paul Clifford gave a presentation to the committee, giving an update on Economic Development Projects. He advised that the North East Enterprise Plan had been agreed with the department and key sectors. Key issues for the county are the need to create higher paid employment to retain and attract graduates in the county and to focus on added value product. He mentioned Monaghan Mushrooms as an example of which had innovated to expand into new food markets.

The presentation outlined the projects currently ongoing including each of the following; Bio Economy, Industry 4.0, Knowledge Economy and Second Site Strategy. An update on the capital investments in the county was also provided. The importance of marketing Monaghan as a place to work and live was highlighted. Working with other counties in the region was also highlighted.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland thanked Paul for the update and agreed that marketing Monaghan was important. He also agreed that embracing new technologies would benefit businesses in the County. Cllr. Sean Gilliland also asked if there was anything the SPC could do to help promote and market the County. He added that this should be a full topic at another meeting to allow for further discussion.

Cllr. Sean Conlon commented on the importance of working collaboratively as a region and asked if there were any updates on the County Tourism Strategy.

Paul Clifford advised that the Tourism Strategy will be revised later this year and that the Fáilte Ireland Destination Plan will form a critical element of it.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Cllr. Sean Gilliland thanked the committee and those that presented. It was agreed that the next meeting will be held at 4pm on Wednesday 14th September. The following topics were highlighted as possible discussion points:

- Housing Needs Assessment: Further Update
- Engagement with the Dublin Monaghan Business Network and M1 Corridor
- Colleagues from Fire Department and Building Control should be invited to present
- Clarification should be sought on the Zone Land Tax