

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

held Monday 29th March 2021 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. Noel Keelan	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Brian McKenna	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon	Monaghan County Council
Alan Johnston	Monaghan Town Team - Business Pillar Rep
Patrick McCormick	Irish Farmer's Assoc. – Agricultural Pillar Rep
Karen Jeffares	Transition Monaghan – Environmental Pillar Rep
Paddy Sherry	Knockatallon Ramblers – PPN Rep
John Tobin	Carrickmacross Chamber of Commerce
Paul Clifford	Director of Services, Economic & Community Development
Adrian Hughes	Senior Planner
John McEntegart	Head of Local Enterprise Office
Toirleach Gourley	Senior Exec Planner
Angela Gallagher	A/Administrative Officer, Planning
Olga McConnon	Financial/Management Accountant
Gavin McEntee	IS Technical Support
Denise O'Neill	Clerical Officer Planning Section

1. Welcome and Introduction

The chairman Cllr. Sean Gilliland welcomed everyone to the first meeting of this SPC in 2021.

2. Previous Minutes

Cllr Brian McKenna referred to item 7 of the previous minutes under AOB and asked that they be amended to read "*Cllr. Brian McKenna*" and not "*Cllr. B Treanor*".

The minutes were proposed by Cllr. Brian McKenna and seconded by Cllr. Noel Keelan.

3. Draft General Development Contribution Scheme 2021-2026

In his presentation Toirleach Gourley advised the members that there is a requirement to review the Council's Development Contribution Scheme. Mr Gourley advised the group that current Development Contribution Charges applied in the County are amongst the lowest in the State and no significant changes are proposed to the current charges, with the exception of those relating to renewable energy development.

Cllr Brian McKenna suggested that the Group be issued with the new changes to the scheme highlighted in red against the old scheme as this would make it easier for the Group to see what changes are being recommended.

Cllr Sean Conlon referred to advertisements and stated that he would be reluctant for any increase as this would be detrimental to Local Businesses and asked what degree are the Council liable to conform to what the Government says?

Toirleach Gourley stated that the Council is required to stay broadly within Guidelines and circulars issued by the Government. In relation to advertisements the County Council's scheme is only €1/€2 per sqm higher than other local authorities for an advertising board and at €2 per square metre a reasonably sized two square metre sign would only have a charge of €62.

Cllr Sean Conlon asked in relation to the erection of Masts, does the County Council staff have the technical knowledge in assessing these applications?

Toirleach Gourley stated that the onus is on the Applicant to demonstrate proof that the erection of a mast will provide coverage in an area where there is currently no coverage. In those circumstances there will be no development contributions payable by the applicant.

Cllr Noel Keelan asked what is the development contribution charges for the installation of a new mast or dish?

Toirleach Gourley stated that it is currently €10,510 per mast installation and €5,280 per Antenna/Dish, however these charges would not apply if there is currently no coverage in that area.

Cllr Noel Keelan referred to the infilling of lands stating that he felt that someone infilling their garden should not be charged the same rate as someone wishing to infill a field and asked what the rate was for this.

Toirleach Gourley advised that it is a flat rate of €2,610 per hectare or part thereof and it was agreed to review this to allow a proportionate charge for smaller areas.

Patrick McCormick referred to agricultural charges and stated that he hopes that these charges would not affect the Poultry Houses which are a great success in Monaghan?

Toirleach Gourley stated that there are currently no changes proposed to agricultural charges which are €2 per square metre, whereas commercial development is charged at €7 per square metre.

The draft Scheme will now be forwarded to the Council for publication and public consultation.

4. Update on Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021

Paul Clifford gave a brief update on the 61 Economic Actions incorporated into the Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021, which is now coming to an end. He highlighted that only 5 actions did not proceed.

- Conduct an Audit of opportunities to identify gaps for new business/complimentary services that could be established within the county,

- Work with farming organisations to identify the training and up-skilling requirements for farmers in the county,
- Progress Shercock-Carrick-Dundalk Road Upgrade,
- Upgrade Gas network to north of county and
- Develop the Borderlands tourism marketing concept.

Paul Clifford stated that a new plan will be developed in consultation with the SPC this year.

Cllr PJ O’Hanlon stated that he would be in support of the Shercock-Carrick-Dundalk Road Upgrade and hoped that this development could still be progressed in the long term and that everyone would support this.

Cllr Brian McKenna referred to the Gas line and was surprised by the lack on demand in North Monaghan. He asked what market research was carried out?

Paul Clifford stated that in 2016, the Council executive had met with Eriva, who specified what they needed to bring the supply to North Monaghan. Eriva had indicated that there was not a sufficient supply of large scale companies/businesses committed to use the gas and the capital investment required to extend the network would not be economically viable.

Patrick McCormick referred to the Gas Network not coming to North Monaghan and stated that he hopes that this could be looked at again especially for the Poultry Houses.

Paul Clifford stated that Eriva advised that extending the gas network to Poultry Houses in dispersed rural locations is not viable.

Cllr Sean Conlon proposed *“That this SPC seeks clarification from the Commission for Regulation of Utilities that the current status of only two bulk LPG providers, Calor and Flogas, satisfies State and EU competition legislation”*. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Brian McKenna and agreed

Paul Clifford advised that any recommendation from the SPC would be referred to the CPG for its decision to refer to the Council meeting as a motion.

Cllr Brian McKenna also referred to the Borderland concept and asked what was looked at by Failte Ireland and why was this not progressed?

Paul Clifford stated that the Failte Ireland claimed that Borderland did not fit into their marketing programme and this is why it was not developed.

Cllr Sean Conlon stated that he would like the SPC to maximise opportunities for business for tendering through our Social Media platform and that we should increase the level of advertising to make it easier to tender for work.

Cllr Noel Keelan referred to all the business premises in the Towns which are likely to remain vacant after Covid restrictions are lifted and stated that we need to look at utilising vacant buildings such as the Bank of Ireland premises as Digital Hubs, working closely with the Chambers of Commerce.

Mr A Johnston referred to the vacant properties in the Towns and stated that the Council needs to address this either through the Rates system or with the owner. He stated that some properties have been left vacant for a number of years and these impact on the vibrancy of the towns. He stated that

the Council should consider penalties for private landlords with vacant properties or forcing the owner to sell.

Paul Clifford stated that the Council is tackling derelict properties in each town. However, the Council could consider reducing the 100% Rates Relief on vacant properties, as other Councils do, to encourage the owner to rent the premises.

Ms K Jeffares referred to the upskilling of farmers and training needs of farmers and asked if this is likely to proceed before the end of the Plan?

Paul Clifford stated that upskilling of the farmers action is the responsibility of CMETB to deliver. However, the Council will write to them with regards to this matter.

5. Update on proposed Tourism Strategy

Dympna Condra provided an update to the member on all the current Tourism Projects completed and ongoing in County Monaghan including the Heritage projects, Natural Resources and Amenities and Walking and Cycling routes. Dympna stated that a new County App has been developed along with a brochure for Rossmore Park and a new Tourism Website. Dympna stated that promotions are ongoing despite Level 5 restrictions and that they are currently recording video messages which will be placed on the Council's Social Media account and the Council's website. Dympna also stated that a new Tourism Strategy 2022-2027 will be progressed in Q3 with the appointment of a consultant.

Cllr Brian McKenna referred to the Sliabh Beagh in North Monaghan which recently developed a Masterplan and referred to the Penal Cross and stated that he would like to see this come to the fore within Tourism?

Dympna Condra stated that they were recently unsuccessful in obtaining funding for the Sliabh Beagh Area however this had happened with previous projects before and that the Council will try again to obtain funding.

Cllr Noel Keelan asked what plans are in place to promote the hospitality sector once level 5 restrictions have been lifted?

Dympna advised that Failte Ireland is working with the industry providing support and the sector is in receipt of Covid Grants.

Cllr Noel Keelan asked if there can be roofed outdoor eating/drinking areas within each of the towns which could assist businesses with their recovery?

Dympna Condra stated that the Local Authorities are expecting funding to be made available in relation to outdoor dining.

Cllr Sean Conlon referred to Monaghan's connection with Canada and stated that the number of visitors to Ireland from Canada is expected to increase and asked whether we should consider rebranding and to increase our social media activity to strengthen our ties with Canada?

Dympna Condra stated that the Tourism section does not have the capacity to organise individual festivals, but would be more than happy to assist any Groups/Committees who would be able to organise/facilitate these festivals.

Cllr Sean Conlon stated that Genealogy is another good way of attracting people to the county and people are very interested in tracing their Irish roots and he suggested that the Treanor Clan could organise an event to attract as many Treanor's to the County. He proposed that *"That this Council invite a delegation from the Treinfhir Clan for the purpose of providing a presentation that will showcase their efforts to date, and plans in place that will enhance the potential for increasing visitor numbers to our County through their firmly established ancestry and family heritage initiatives."* This proposal was seconded by Cllr Brian McKenna and agreed.

Dympna Condra stated that those initiatives are very important and that the Council would be very happy to promote it.

Cllr Sean Conlon asked if the Council was aware that the Sliabh Beagh Bike Hire company is having difficulty obtaining insurance and asked if there is anything that could be done to assist them?

Dympna Condra stated that she was aware of this not just for the Sliabh Beagh group, but other groups have issues with insurance too and she has discussed these issues with Failte Ireland.

Cllr PJ O'Hanlon asked if there was anything that could be done to promote the fishing south of the County?

Dympna Condra stated that the Angling Groups are always on the lookout for funding any project would need to be organised at a local level.

6. Date of next meeting

Paul Clifford stated that there is likely to be a joint SPC meeting with the Environment SPC in April in relation to the Climate Action Plan and Decarbonisation Zones.

The next SPC meeting will be held on Thursday 20th May 2021 at 4pm on MS Teams

This concluded the business of the meeting.