

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

held 11th October 2023 @ 4pm in Council Chamber, MTek 1,

In attendance:

Cllr. Sean Gilliland (Chair)	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Colm Carthy	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Sean Conlon	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Noel Keelan	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. David Maxwell	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. P.J. O'Hanlon	Monaghan County Council

Mr. John Tobin	Carrickmacross Chamber of Commerce
Mr. Patrick McCormick	Irish Farmers' Assoc. – Agricultural Pillar Rep

Mr. Cathal Flynn	Director of Services, Planning & Economic Development
Mr. Adrian Hughes	Senior Planner
Ms. Eilin Connolly	Business Advisor, Local Enterprise Office
Ms. Dympna Condra	Tourism & Marketing Executive
Mr. Dermot Brannigan	Chief Fire Officer
Ms. Angela Gallagher	Administrative Officer, Planning Section
Ms. Yvonne Kelly	Clerical Officer, Tourism

Mr. Alan Hill	Tourism Management Consultants
Ms. Deirdre Lewis	Tourism Management Consultants

Apologies

Mr. Alan Johnston	Monaghan Town Team – Business Pillar Rep
Mr. Paddy Sherry	Knockatallon Ramblers – PPN Rep

1. Previous Minutes

The minutes of meeting held on 31st May 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Noel Keelan and seconded by Cllr. P.J. O'Hanlon.

2. Matters arising

Cllr. Sean Gilliland stated that Mr. Kevin McNally has been appointed Acting Town Regeneration Manager.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland referred to the 'Croí Conaithe Grants Scheme and advised that a motion was passed at the Council meeting agreeing to write to the Department asking them to consider extending the scheme.

3. Draft Tourism Strategy 2023-2028

Ms. Dympna Condra advised that this is a draft Strategy for review, there was significant public consultation online, with Councillors and Focus Groups.

A presentation was made by Mr. Alan Hill and Ms. Deirdre Lewis on the draft Tourism Strategy.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland asked where the €25m funding over 5 years is coming from and Alan Hill clarified that this is a mix of public and private sector investment in the tourism product in the county.

Cllr Noel Keelan referred to the displays in Dublin and asked how Monaghan can get its name advertised at this location?

Ms. Dympna Condra confirmed that it cost €100-€200 per month to use the kiosk at Dublin Airport and felt that advertising on Social Media was financially more effective.

Cllr. David Maxwell state that most people already know where they are going when they land at the airport, those arrangements have already been made before they fly into the Country.

Cllr. Noel Keelan referred to the Greenway from Carrickmacross to Inniskeen & Dundalk and the bike scheme in Inniskeen and asked about Public Liability Insurance and how can this be dealt with?

Ms. Deirdre Lewis stated that the issue surrounding Public Liability Insurance is a national problem, Failte Ireland are aware of it and are looking to see if there are other ways of dealing with it.

Cllr Colm Carthy referred to the lack of hotels in Carrickmacross as there are issues surrounding the Nuremore and M Hotel but stated that he thought setting up a Forum was a good idea.

Cllr. P.J. O'Hanlon referred to the lack of hotel accommodation throughout the County and asked what the €5m per year will be spent on?

Mr Alan Hill advised that the issues surrounding Hotels is an issue for the Private Sector to resolve not the public sector and that if Monaghan can show that the Tourists will come, it would encourage them to develop the bed spaces. Mr Alan Hill stated that he would flag the issue regarding hotel accommodation, however it is a huge political issue.

Cllr Sean Conlon proposed that it go before the full Council Meeting, this was seconded by Cllr. Noel Keelan.

Cllr Sean Conlon referred to the Diaspora document and asked that the content of that document be integrated into the Strategy. Cllr Sean Conlon stated that a number of Towns and villages throughout the County are twinned and that the Council need to more to promote this and to avail of the funding to do this.

Mr Alan Hill advised that the information from the Diaspora document will be in the final draft of the Plan.

Mr John Tobin referred to Branding & Marketing, stating that there is no mention of Monaghan on the M1 and can this be changed.

Mr Alan Hill stated that Monaghan should not rush into the branding, give time to implement the Strategy for the first 2 years and then look at the branding by the end of the 5-year plan it will be resolved.

Cllr. David Maxwell stated that the issue of the name places on the M1 has been raised before and that TII Policy is to name the final destination only.

Cllr Colm Carthy stated that the MD contacted TII regarding the naming of towns in Monaghan and referred to the brown signs and said that these are Tourism signs and this could be considered as an alternative.

Mr. Cathal Flynn referred to festivals in Monaghan and stated that they should be more prominent in the strategy as they had great potential as visitor attractors.

Ms. Deirdre Lewis confirmed that the festivals are contained within the document but they would be highlighted more in the final draft.

Mr. Patrick McCormick referred to the unexplored parts of Monaghan and that these should be promoted more with a view to bringing in the Tour Bus operators. He referred to the Sliabh Beagh, where there are walks, accommodation, food and entertainment off the beaten track.

Cllr. David Maxwell stated that there is nowhere for Campervans to park in Monaghan and that this could be an opportunity for Monaghan.

Mr. Alan Hill confirmed that this is mentioned within the plan.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland asked if there is anything that the Council could do now that would have an immediate impact?

Mr. Alan Hill stated that he would look at identifying 4-5 quick wins and would include these in the next draft of the document before it goes for consideration to full council.

4. Operational Plan (Section 26) 2023-2027

A presentation was carried out by Mr. Dermot Brannigan on the Operational Plan 2023-2027. Mr. Dermot Brannigan advised that Fire Safety Week was launched on Monday and confirmed the presentation will be circulated to the SPC.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland thanked Dermot for his presentation and asked if he adequately resourced within Building Control and Fire Station in Ballybay?

Mr. Dermot Brannigan advised that a new Building Control Officer has been appointment and is currently being trained and that there are 9 Firefighters in each station.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland also stated that it has been the toughest year in relation to traffic accidents within the County and asked that a letter be issued by the SPC to thank the staff for their work during these difficult times.

Cllr. Colm Carthy asked if this Plan is to go to the full Council, and that he proposed it proceed to Full Council, this was seconded by Cllr. P. J. O'Hanlon.

Cllr. Colm Carthy praised the fire service for attending to a young football player who was injured and had to remain on the football field for nearly 3 hours waiting for an ambulance.

Cllr. Colm Carthy stated that there should be positive discrimination to enable Fire fighters to become Local Authority staff and that the Council should see this is a positive not a negative.

Cllr P. J. O'Hanlon issues with Building Control should be dealt with appropriately by either Planning and the Fire Service and also asked if Building Control is adequately resourced.

Cllr. Noel Keelan asked in relation to the budget, are they adequately resourced and asked about the Civil Defence.

Mr. Dermot Brannigan stated that he has asked for resources within the forthcoming Budget and that the Civil Defence currently has 58 volunteers 20/30 which are available every week, they are well equipped, however age may be a factor in a number of years.

Mr Patrick McCormick referred to members of the public who are first on the scene of traffic accidents and asked if there is counselling provided to them. Members of the public are sent home without counselling.

Mr Dermot Brannigan stated that the Fire Personnel are offered and have availed of Counselling after accidents.

Cllr Sean Gilliland asked Mr Cathal Flynn is there capacity to provide members of the public Counselling and can the Local Authority assist with this?

Mr. Cathal Flynn stated that a letter can be issued to National Counselling Service (HSE) regarding all accidents and what supports can be given to members of the community.

5. AOB

No items raised under AOB.