

Minutes of Strategic Policy Committee (Economic Development & Enterprise Support) meeting on Wednesday 24th September 2025 at 5pm in the Council Chamber, MTek 1, Monaghan

In attendance:

Cllr. Sean Gilliland (Chairperson)	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Pat Treanor	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Peter Conlon	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Niamh McCooley	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. P.J. O'Hanlon	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Colm Carthy	Monaghan County Council
Mr. Peter McMahon	Business/Commercial Reps
Mr. Ciaran McEntee	PPN - Environment Electoral College
Mr. Tom Treanor	Agri/Farming
Mr. Peadar Black	PPN - Community & Vol or Social Inclusion Electoral College
Mr. Cathal Flynn	DoS, Planning, Economic Dev., Capital Projects, & Regen.
Ms. Angela Gallagher	Administrative Officer, Planning Section
Ms. Denise O'Neill	Assistant Staff Officer, Planning Section
Mr. Paul Connolly	Senior Executive Engineer, Capital Projects
Ms. Pamela Kerr	Head of Enterprise, LEO

Apologies:

Ms. Eileen Collery	Business/Commercial Reps
Mr. Fergal Duffy	CIF
Mr. Adrian Hughes	Senior Planner, Planning Section

1. Welcome

Chairperson Cllr. Sean Gilliland welcomed everyone to the meeting drawing attention to the return of Mr. Tom Treanor who had returned after ill health. Mr. Treanor thanked the members for their good wishes and complimented the work of the healthcare system.

2. Previous Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th April 2025 were proposed by Cllr. Niamh McCooley and seconded by Mr. Ciaran McEntee.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Capital Projects Presentations

Mr. Paul Connolly, Senior Executive Engineer (Capital Projects) gave two presentations on the development of industrial lands at Annahagh in Monaghan town. The first presentation dealt with a plan for lands zoned for industrial use in the west of Annahagh while the second centred on a plan for the eastern portion of the townland.

Presentation 1: Annahagh Lands

The preferred site on the masterplan (Option 6) includes eight high-end industrial type units with the first six sites being serviced initially as the remaining two are on privately owned lands. It is proposed that the site, which is deemed very viable, would have connectivity to the old Armagh Road and future connectivity to the Ulster Canal Greenway.

Expressions of interest were sought from local businesses; fourteen applications were received and letters of support were offered to five of those businesses. A Part 8 planning application for the access road is due to come before elected members once a Variation is made to the County Development Plan.

Presentation 2: Joint Presentation (Shared Island Project – SME Innovation Clusters)

The second plan centred on Small & Medium Enterprise (S.M.E.) innovation clusters. Created under the Shared Island Project in conjunction with four other local authorities, the plan focuses on land not under the ownership of Monaghan County Council.

It is proposed to phase the development and provide access through the roundabout in Annahagh which will eventually connect to the Armagh Road (N12). In relation to costs, the intention is to further the development via partnership and to source grant or pilot funding to deliver the infrastructure.

Cllr. Pat Treanor thanked Mr. Connolly for the presentations and said he welcomed the proactive approach to development. Cllr. Niamh McCooey said it was great to see the progression from early plans at Municipal District (M.D.) level to the masterplans. She queried why there were only five letters of offer when there were six sites and asked whether TII would allow any more additional right of ways onto the N12 road.

Responding, Mr. Connolly said that one of the sites had already been transferred to Combilift under a Section 183 procedure. In relation to the N12, he said the link road would be via existing access. He added that although Transport Infrastructure Ireland (T.I.I.) may have concerns, they would have to be dealt with by the Planning Authority.

Cllr. PJ O’Hanlon thanked Mr. Connolly for the presentation saying it was a very positive thing. He queried the cost of providing the road infrastructure saying there was more work to be done in relation to costings so that the land would not be sold as a loss.

Mr. Connolly said the base cost per acre would be €250,000 or more if the development went to tender. He added that other sources of government monies were also being examined as funding for the project.

Chairperson Cllr. Sean Gilliland said the presentation was very good adding that he endorsed the comments of Cllrs. Treanor and O’Hanlon. With respect to the sale, Cllr. Colm Carthy said there needed to be a system of sale in place that encouraged prompt development.

Ms. Pamela Kerr, Head of Enterprise (LEO) said there was an appetite for developed industrial lands and the local authority was keen to encourage industry to develop.

Mr. Connolly, responding to a query from Cllr. Colm Carthy in relation to the prompt use of the land, said there would be clauses in the sale to accommodate the return of the land if development was not completed within a certain timeframe. He also highlighted that commercial rates would provide future revenue to Monaghan County Council as the project is delivered.

Mr. Peadar Black remarked that the development could act as a forerunner for the introduction of foreign investment. Responding, Mr. Connolly confirmed that his team had already been in touch with the Industrial Development Authority (I.D.A.).

Cllr. Colm Carthy drew attention to developers in the south of County Monaghan who he said were going ahead with developments themselves.

Chairperson Cllr. Sean Gilliland said he agreed with Cllrs. O’Hanlon and Carthy in relation to costings. He requested that Mr Connolly return to the next meeting and detail the cost of both projects including potential rates generated and to also outline how the sale of the lands might be conducted.

5. LEO Presentations

Ms. Pamela Kerr, Head of Enterprise (LEO) delivered two presentations to the members. Her first presentation looked at Monaghan's Economic Statistics while the second focused on the establishment of an Economic Forum for County Monaghan.

Presentation 1: Monaghan's Economic Statistics - Invest, Live, Grow in Monaghan

The first presentation, which contained information relating to the county's strategic location, skilled workforce, competitive commercial rents, and lower housing costs, zoned in on the most recent census data to show investors and businesses what Monaghan has to offer. Ms. Kerr said she wanted to compare the county's towns to large urban cities and stated that the Monaghan Economic Catchment (M.E.C.) area punched above its weight in terms of Gross Value Added (G.V.A.). A new website to attract foreign direct investment, monaghanbusiness.com, would soon go live and a LinkedIn page, Monaghan Business, had been established with local economic development news. Plans were also in place to expand the Economic Development unit with the appointment of an Economic Development Officer next year.

Cllr. Colm Carthy requested that the website's launch be advertised amongst the commercial sectors including the Chambers of Commerce and Town Teams through the Public Participation Network (P.P.N.) and the Community Section of the council.

Chairperson Cllr. Sean Gilliland suggested that the presentation be circulated at the upcoming Monaghan Dublin Business Network event after confirmation by Ms Kerr that the website was going to be launched at the event and on social media.

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon complimented the presentation and requested that the 2022 rental figures used in the presentation be revised. He added that it was important to address balance in the county ensuring all towns are attractive to investment.

Mr. Peter McMahon commented that he thought there should be an industrial plan for Castleblayney. Responding, Chairperson Cllr. Sean Gilliland made the point that it was important to view the plan as a county. He pointed out that some smaller towns in the county would benefit from the overspill of the development of the larger towns.

Cllr. Pat Treanor welcomed the presentation and acknowledged that despite competition between the various areas of the county, there was a commitment in the County Development Plan for balanced development. He said it was important to use all arms of the local authority to advance ambitious plans.

Mr. Peadar Black referred to Carrickmacross as a satellite town of Dublin and reassured members that smaller towns such as Ballybay would benefit as a result. Chairperson Cllr. Sean Gilliland pointed to the impact that blended working had on local house prices as people were now travelling from further afield.

Mr. Ciaran McEntee endorsed what Cllr. Pat Treanor had stated in relation to balanced development. He referred to Clones and Newbliss where he said there was a lot of private industry.

Cllr. Colm Carthy pointed to locations where people had settled once development had been established. He said the S.P.C. was a policy committee and as such, they could put measures in place to assist with housing and industry.

Mr. Cathal Flynn informed the members that there was plenty of land zoned for industry and employment but highlighted the challenge in trying to develop land banks of industrial land outside of local authority ownership in towns such as Castleblayney.

Mr. Tom Treanor drew attention to the loss of industry in the county to locations elsewhere and referenced milk processing plants, in particular. He also highlighted many industries in Clones.

Chairperson Cllr. Sean Gilliland concluded the discussion by saying that smaller towns such as Clones and Ballybay could provide a residential service to bigger towns like Carrickmacross. He stressed the prioritisation of the county as a whole and requested that Ms. Kerr attend the next meeting with an update.

Presentation 2: Monaghan Economic Forum

Pamela Kerr introduced a proposal for the establishment of an Economic Development Forum in County Monaghan. She explained that the Forum would aim to identify opportunities and challenges within the enterprise sector, formulate plans and policies to support economic development, and act as a sounding board for new projects and initiatives. Ms. Kerr noted that Terms of Reference had been drafted for the Forum and requested feedback from SPC members before the proposal would be brought to the Corporate Policy Group (C.P.G.) for approval. She reiterated that the items outlined were suggestions only and that members' feedback would be crucial in shaping how the Forum is ultimately formed.

Mr. Cathal Flynn stressed the potential benefit of the involvement of IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland on the Forum. Chairperson Cllr. Sean Gilliland welcomed the Forum's introduction but expressed concerns over its operations stating that it should work co-operatively with the SPC and not operate independently.

Cllr. Colm Carthy echoed these concerns, while also acknowledging the value of Economic Forums. He stressed the importance of establishing clear timeframes for how and when feedback from the Forum would be communicated to the SPC.

Cllr. Pat Treanor asserted that leaders of industry were best positioned to advise the Committee members despite concerns raised. Mr. Peadar Black added that a forum would be useful but cautioned against any dilution of the SPC's role in economic policy development. Cllr. Peter Conlon recommended that topics of interest could be disseminated to the Forum members in their advisory capacity, allowing for more focused and relevant input.

Chairperson Cllr. Sean Gilliland concluded the discussion by emphasising the importance of having clearly defined roles for both the Forum and the SPC, and that the Forum's Terms of Reference would be central to ensuring this clarity. It was agreed that the SPC would remain the primary forum for economic policy development in the county. The proposed Forum would serve in an advisory capacity, feeding insights into the SPC. Pamela Kerr, will revisit the proposal and return to the next SPC meeting with a revised plan, incorporating the feedback and suggestions provided by members.

6. A.O.B.

Chairperson Cllr. Sean Gilliland recommended that the Chair of the Environment & Climate Change Strategic Policy Committee (S.P.C.) attend a meeting regarding methane gas and chicken litter in response to a question from Cllr. Pat Treanor regarding an update on the issue.

Chairperson Gilliland also suggested that meetings could be strategically targeted towards different parts of the county and advised the sectoral representatives to bring any issues they had in their respective areas to the meetings.

It was agreed that members would be contacted in advance of meetings to add items to the agenda following a request from Mr. Peter McMahon requesting the circulation of same.

7. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 26th November 2025.