

**Minutes of Strategic Policy Committee for Economic Development & Enterprise Support meeting
on Tuesday 24th February 2026 at 4pm 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. PJ O’Hanlon	Monaghan County Council
Mr. Pete McMahon	Business/Commercial
Mrs. Eileen Collery	Business/Commercial
Mr. Tom Treanor	Agri/Farming
Mr. Cathal Flynn	DoS Planning, Economic Dev., Capital Projects, & Regeneration
Ms. Pamela Kerr	Head of Enterprise, LEO
Mr. Kevin McNally	Town Regeneration Officer, Town Regeneration
Mr. Darragh Drury	A/Vacant Homes Officer, Town Regeneration
Mr. Brian Annon	Executive Engineer, Town Regeneration
Mr. Adrian Hughes	Senior Planner, Planning
Ms. Fiona McEntee	Administration Officer, Planning
Ms. Sharon Finnegan	Senior Staff Officer, Planning
Ms. Bernice Creighan	Clerical Officer, Planning
Mr. Cian Murphy	Communications Executive, GAA
Dr. Peter Horgan	Strategy, Insights, and Innovation Manager, GAA
Mr. Shane Cassells	Public Affairs, GAA

Apologies:

Cllr. Niamh McCooey Monaghan County Council
Mr. Ciaran McEntee PPN - Environment Electoral College
Cllr. Colm Carthy Monaghan County Council

1. Previous Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2025 were proposed by Cllr. Pat Treanor and seconded by Pete McMahon.

2. Matters Arising

Cllr. Cllr. Sean Gilliland welcomed everyone.

Eileen Collery asked if the Terms of Reference for the Industry Advisory Group information would be included in today's meeting as indicated in the November SPC. Cllr. Sean Gilliland confirmed that it was not on the agenda, but it can be discussed at the April SPC meeting.

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon— in relation to the discussion which took place at the September SPC meeting regarding the Annahagh Site, will there be any further discussion & updates on the matter and when can this be expected? Cllr. Sean Gilliland advised that due to a full agenda, it will be added to the April SPC meeting.

Eileen Collery stated that she had hoped that there would updates on the Anaerobic Digester by DoS Nial O'Connor. Adrian Hughes stated he will engage with Nial O Connor in this regard and give a brief report at the April SPC meeting.

A further query was raised regarding the N54 traffic concerns on Clones Road - Kevin West to be asked to attend & give an update at the April SPC meeting.

3. Town Regeneration Update - Kevin McNally

Cllr. Sean Gilliland praised the Regeneration Team, along with Planning for their great work that is visibly evident throughout the county and welcomed Kevin McNally, Brian Annon & Darragh Drury to present to the committee.

Kevin McNally commenced his presentation with a review of the Town Regeneration section progress in dealing with dereliction, stating that the success of the section was dependant on the cooperation of all the MCC sections & the Elected Members. He then gave an overview of projects in each of the Municipal Districts.

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon added that the Digi-hub initiative mentioned was greatly supported by the East Border Region (EBR) to which he is the Chairperson for 2026. He expressed his gratitude to MCC in supporting this initiative and asked for their support in the upcoming "East Border Region 50th Anniversary" event which will be hosted in Co Monaghan in October 2026. Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon expressed the opinion that a MCC presence would be vitally important at the event. Cllr. Sean Gilliland suggested that a further discussion around the Conference take place at the April SPC meeting.

Brian Annon discussed the issues that lead to dereliction in the county giving a brief overview of the process (derelict Sites Act) and timelines involved. Working examples were presented.

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon complimented the great work that has been carried in the CBY/CMX MD and sought clarification regarding the "Prescribed Urban Areas" highlighted on the map in the presentation. Kevin McNally responded to say that the focus is on the 5 towns to begin with. Brian Annon added that the Team hopes to be able to assess other Hamlets /Rural Areas with a view to get the Department to add them to the map in 2026. (Time and resources are required to carry out this additional work). Brian

Annon suggested that if the Elected Members know of local “Hot Spots” of dereliction to let the team know and they will endeavour to add them.

Pete Mc Mahon queried if MCC could provide an incentive for younger people from the area to get on the property ladder through some of these derelict properties. He also highlighted that the timelines for the Scheme could prove difficult when you consider the time taken to consult with Architects and source a Contractor. In response Brian Annon said that MCC are open for discussion once meaningful engagement is made with the team. Kevin McNally added that the process had to be carried out in line with the National Regulations.

Darragh Drury updated the committee on the success of the Croi Conaithe Grants to date and gave an overview of the funding available to applicant’s (€50k with possible €20k top-up). He presented approved and drawdown figures and gave examples of how MCC are leading the way in promoting the work that they have completed to date.

Eileen Collery asked if there was a specified period in which the works should be completed for drawdown to which the team advised the schedule was 13 months from approval to drawdown, but that MCC could use their discretion to extend. It was also advised that there is a 10-year legal charge placed on the properties, which means if a property is sold within the 10 years a % of the grant must be paid back.

Tom Treanor queried why only a small portion of the €20m approved has been drawn down. Brian Annon responded, noting that the scheme was operational from 2023, over €9million had been drawn down and that other projects are still under construction.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland said it was great to see so many citizens take on these projects to the benefit of 143 families, now housed in these derelict properties. Cllr. Pat Treanor reaffirmed that the work carried out was great however there are many who cannot fund the developments in the first place. He asked if perhaps MCC could do anything to help them?

Kevin McNally said people may apply for Council Loan to cover the cost of works pending payment of the grant.

Cllr Pat Treanor queried if MCC could approach financial institutions or give a letter to support loan applications. Could the VHO network raise it at Department National level? Cllr. PJ O’Hanlon asked if having a reputable contractor count as a commitment to complete the work be used to help get funding? He recognised the great work done by the team to date.

Kevin McNally stated that as this is a National Scheme, MCC must ensure the process is carried out in line with the National Regulations but would ensure that the issue regarding finance is raised at network meetings for discussion.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland suggested Kevin McNally set a meeting up with Olga McConnon, Head of Finance with MCC to discuss a proposal for presentation to the Department. Cllr Gilliland would be happy to attend this meeting.

4. GAA – Economic Impact of the Ulster Final in Clones

The GAA was represented at the meeting by Peter Horgan, Strategy, Insights, and Innovation Manager, Cian Murphy, Communications Executive, & Shane Cassells, Public Affairs.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland welcomed them to the February SPC and stated that Monaghan is facing a battle not to lose the Ulster Final in Clones, and he was delighted that they agreed to give the SPC an insight into the economic impact that the event has for the area.

Peter Horgan led the committee through the presentation prepared by Sheffield Hallam University on the Economic & Social Value of the Gaelic games with specific research on the Ulster Final Event in Clones. The presentation showed the objectives, how the data was collected & from whom, the 3-strand method used and the findings. The Social Return On Investment (SROI) was highlighted as 2.30:1.

He outlined the direct and indirect effects to the economy of the 2024 Ulster Final in Clones stated the total economic impact for 1 day was €1.5 million for Clones. Businesses, spectators, workers and accommodation providers were surveyed not just in Clones but also on the routes taken by spectators on the day of the 2024 Ulster final. 10% of attendees on the day were part of spectator surveys.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland was impressed by the figures produced, methods used and appreciated the fact that Sheffield Hallam do not inflate the financial findings. (i.e. Measured against minimum wage etc) He was delighted that the GAA used Ulster Final, Clones, 2024 as their working example for their GAA Assessment.

Cllr. Pat Treanor expressed the importance of keeping big games in Clones and was happy to see the figures to back this up. He commended the work involved in quantifying the social impact of the games also and said that this will help when seeking funding and investment in Clones. Cian Murphy responded outlining the figures shown on return on investment in GAA are “at least” figures.

Cllr. PJ O’Hanlon commented that it was an excellent piece of work and very well timed. The GAA in Monaghan was in a difficult position, and he expressed the “Need for help” from GAA HQ and that continued investment was required in St Tiernach’s Park.

He proceeded to ask the following of the GAA reps;

1. What as an organisation have the GAA got planned for Clones?
2. Is their focus on West Belfast only?
3. Has this presentation been given to Monaghan County Board?

In response, Cian Murphy answered that the report booklet containing the data has been circulated to the county boards, a presentation has not been given to Monaghan County Board.

Cllr. PJ O’Hanlon gave assurances that the elected members of MCC will do everything in their power to support Clones (and explore alternative uses e.g. Concerts etc) He requested the GAA contact Monaghan County Board and make a presentation to them. He commended them on the presentation given this evening and noted the importance of having our local TD’s and Senators on board with this also.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland proposed a motion that the presentation be given at both Clones-Ballybay Municipal District Meeting & Full Council Meeting, Cllr. Peter Conlon 2nd the motion. Pete Mc Mahon said that the GAA do things well and complimented them on issuing a fantastic document. Cathal Flynn agreed presentation will be given to MD & Full Plenary Meeting, and this would include media presence to promote.

On behalf of the GAA, Shane Cassells thanked Cathal Flynn DoS for organising and thanked the committee for their time dedicated to the topic.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland confirmed that dates for the MD & Full Council meeting will be agreed with GAA in the coming weeks, Cathal Flynn will liaise with GAA on the matter.

Kian Murphy noted the importance of the media presence, especially with the recent closure of the northern standard. Cathal Flynn confirmed that local media i.e. Northen Sound Radio & Anglo Celt Newspaper attend all council meetings. We can invite our own comms team to also be present.

Eileen Collery queried whether Declan McBennett was still the RTE Sports correspondent and suggested that an invitation be extended to him also.

5. Local Economic Plan 2026 – Pamela Kerr

Pamela Kerr informed the committee she was here to brief the members on the draft Local Enterprise Development Plan (LEDP) for 2026-2027. This is a two-year plan required under the Enterprise Ireland Service Level Agreement, and it sets out the strategic direction and priorities for the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) in Monaghan.

Pamela Kerr proceeded to give an overview of what the LEDP is and outlined the key priorities and deliverables over the next two years. Her ask of the committee was to review and note the draft plan before it is due to go back to Enterprise Ireland in early March for approval.

Cathal Flynn thanked Pamela and the LEO team on their work. Lots of local businesses are benefitting from LEO supports. This plan helps set out how the LEO are achieving and exceeding their targets. It was unanimously agreed that LEO provided significant supports to businesses, however more promotional work was required.

Cllr. Pat Treanor referenced the importance of having balanced development in the County within the plan with smaller villages needing extra encouragement and support for potential startups. Pamela Kerr responded by saying that last year business clinics were held in the 5 towns and local Councillors were encouraged to ask local businesses to come and meet the team.

Cllr. PJ O Hanlon acknowledged the very positive work being done and the launch of the Anglo Celt Business and Tourism awards for County Monaghan in partnership with MCC recently in the Nuremore was a positive step in the right direction. He agreed with Cllr. Treanor in regards the need to support the smaller towns and villages.

Pamela Kerr thanked the members for their feedback and will take on board the hosting of specific events in Ballybay/Clones over the year that could continue to raise the profile of the LEO.

Cllr. Sean Gililand suggested the production of short businesses videos that could be shared and highlighted via the MD and SPC meetings throughout the County would also increase the profile of the LEO?

Pamela Kerr advised that this can be facilitated. A LEO-supported business will be identified for each MD, and if the businesses are agreeable, a short promotional video of the benefits of LEO supports will be produced. These videos can then be shared by each Cathaoirleach for their relevant MD'S across social media etc.

6. AOB

Tom Treanor wished to acknowledge the support of the committee in regards the recent IFA sit-in protest at Bord Bia. The issue is still not resolved but they are hopeful that some agreement can be reached soon.

Cllr. Sean Gililand agreed stating that hopefully round table talks will aid in making some progress for the farming community. He also wanted it noted that the committee lend their full support to former SPC member who is one of the five members of the IFA involved in the sit-in protest.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 29th April at 4pm.