Minutes of Strategic Policy Committee for Economic Development & Enterprise Support meeting on Tuesday 29th April 2026 at 4pm in the Council Chamber, M-Tek 1, Monaghan

In attendance:

Cllr. Sean Gilliland (Chairperson)	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Pat Treanor	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Colm Carthy	Monaghan County Council
Cllr. Niamh McCooey	Monaghan County Council
Mr. Pete McMahon	Business/Commercial
Mrs. Eileen Collery	Business/Commercial
Mr. Tom Treanor	Agri/Farming
Mr. Peadar Black	PPN- Community and Vol or Social Inclusion Electoral College
Mr. Ciaran McEntee	Environment Electoral College
Mr. Cathal Flynn	DoS Planning, Economic Dev., Capital Projects, & Regeneration
Mr. Adrian Hughes	Senior Planner, Planning
Ms. Fiona McEntee	Administration Officer, Planning
Ms. Bernice Creighan	Clerical Officer, Planning
Ms. Pamela Kerr	Head of Enterprise, LEO
Mr. Paul Connolly	Senior Executive Engineer, Capital Projects
Mr. Kevin West	Acting Senior Engineer, Roads
Mr. James Kiernan	Director of Relationship Management, Chambers Ireland

Apologies:

Cllr. Peter Conlon	Monaghan County Council
Mr. Fergal Duffy	Development/Construction - CIF

Agenda:

1. Adoption of previous minutes held on 24th February 2026
2. Matters Arising
3. Chambers Ireland
4. Southern Link Masterplan– Kevin West
5. Terms of Reference for Industry Advisory Group– Pamela Kerr
6. Annahagh West Development – Paul Connolly
7. AOB
8. Date of next meeting - Wednesday 30th September 2026

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1. Previous minutes

The minutes from the meeting held on 24th February 2026 was adopted by Cllr. Pat Treanor and seconded by Mrs. Eileen Collery.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising to note.

3. Chambers Ireland

James Kiernan, Director of Relationship Management with Chambers Ireland (CI) made a presentation to the members of the SPC outlining the role and functions of the national body of chambers, lending support to its 36 chambers. He explained how CI lobby on policy & prepare submissions around trade, giving businesses a voice where they may not have one.
Chambers Ireland are a key stakeholder of the local authorities (LA), bringing issues to the LA on behalf of businesses.
When asked for an example of such work, Mr. Kiernan used Corporate Rates. Chambers lobby to Central Government to provide funding, they negotiate with the local authorities to get clarity on what the get in return for the money paid by way of corporate rates.
County Chambers provide a balanced approach with one voice to represent business in the whole county rather than multiple smaller towns. Examples were given of smaller affiliated & non-affiliated chambers merging in counties such as Meath, Tipperary & Wexford.
Mr. Kiernan also detailed the membership costs and how the LA can help set up of a County Chamber by way of providing Seed Capital, Office Space to start or Funding for employees.
Chambers Ireland can help guide the creation of a County Chamber, planning & organisation, who to bring in, give direction on policy. They will help promote and ensure that everyone knows about it and provide the right contacts for meetings. Key members of Chambers Ireland sit on various national forums.

Cllr. Colm Carthy thanked Mr. Kiernan for the detailed presentation and raised some concerns around that fact that Monaghan do not have the same volume of chambers compared to some of the counties that were highlighted in the presentation. He asked that if Monaghan were to go down the route of a county chamber, would the other 4 towns take more emphasis, as Carrickmacross already has a very successful chamber established?
He also raised concern over the LA funding, if the LA provide staffing, it will strain the budget and have a knock-on effect on the ratepayer? He suggested that before the SPC bring any proposal to the plenary council engagement with the Town Teams & Carrickmacross Chamber is essential.

Cllr. Pat Treanor recalls a chamber in Clones and when talk of amalgamating in the past, locals were not keen on the idea. He suggesting approaching them to see why this didn't work and if they would be interested now.

Mrs. Eileen Collery appreciates the great things accomplished in Carrickmacross and would like to hear more on a county model, like Tipperary, and suggests that it requires a further meeting.

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon concurs with Cllr. Colm Carthy comments. He states the Carrickmacross Chamber is 50 years old and carried out a lot of positive work for the businesses in the area. He asks if this Chamber or the businesses are aware of this presentation to the SPC?

Cathal Flynn clarifies that this is presented today to start an initial discussion.

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon explained that he believed that out of respect & courtesy, talks would be needed with Carrickmacross Chamber as he believes it will not work without its support. He states that between the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) & the Chamber they are working satisfactorily. He suggested approaching businesses to see if there is an appetite for a County Chamber.

Cathal Flynn stated that if the SPC decides there is merit in the establishment of a county chamber then we move to approach Carrickmacross Chamber & local businesses.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland appreciated the success of Carrickmacross Chamber but reiterates Cathal Flynn comments regarding the SPC meeting providing an "open discussion" around the topic and, if successful, consultation must be provided pending the decision.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland explained that there is no threat to Carrickmacross Chamber or any other by name. This is merely a discussion to see if Monaghan could benefit from a county chamber with strength in numbers and potentially get grants & aids that we may not be getting. This is the earliest stage of the discussion. We owe the county the chance.

James Kiernan responded to say that he was not there to force a Chamber but to highlight the benefits. He highlights communications as a strength and states that having an established chamber in Carrickmacross as an advantage. CI is happy to engage at any stage of the process.

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon clarifies that Carrickmacross is not affiliated with CI.

James Kiernan recognises that not all chambers are registered with CI, some are created for a specific purpose.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland explained that this is what we have in Ballybay / Clones, there is a town team which resolve issues when presented. In contrast to Carrickmacross Chamber which meets regularly with a vision for the town.
The SPC is to look at this on a county basis and see where this may or may not benefit the county. If we have a chamber that works as effectively as Carrickmacross, Monaghan, as a county, will be better off. There is a body of work to be done.

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon questions if there is a Chamber of Commerce in Monaghan Town, to which Cathal Flynn confirms there is not.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland clarifies that Ballybay & Clones have one each by name only, made up of members of their Town Teams and Carrickmacross has an established Chamber of Commerce.

Cllr. Pat Treanor recognises that CMX is the only registered chamber and suggests we approach the others to see why they never registered with CI?

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Pete McMahon queried the cost to join, as Castleblayney had Chambers, but the cost put them off. James Kiernan responded to say that the minimum members are 100 @ €35 per member.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland recognises the cost for administration, however what doors does that open for the business and the county.

James Kiernan suggests that LA provide seed capital to get the Chamber off the ground / office. He gives an example of Meath County Council who provide an office space.
If the consensus is to explore then a cost analysis should be done. He notes that it took Wexford 2 ½ years to get set up. Funding has to be right and buy-in is essential.

Peadar Black raised concerns about introducing another tier of bureaucracy. Is this needed and would it be another expense on the ratepayer?

James Kiernan states that it is not another tier rather than filling a gap where the voice is not there at present. It would offer support for the ratepayers of the county.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland appreciates the discussion so far and would like Cathal Flynn to carry out an exercise to see how LEO could help?

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4. <u>Southern Link Masterplan</u>

Kevin West, Acting Senior Engineer in Monaghan County Council's Roads Section delivered a presentation containing the Monaghan Town Transport Plan with short & long-term recommendations, a simulation junction analysis, analysing the movement of traffic through junctions from Clones Road through to Old Cross Square. This analysis evaluated journey times, queue lengths & delay congestion hot-spots and provided recommendations & conclusions. Kevin's presentation concluded with an update on the Southern Link Road, a 2-phase project, 3.2km in length from the N54- R188 – N2.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland thanked Kevin for his presentation noting that with congestion something must be done and it is of no benefit to the rate payers of the town.
He queried whether there were any concerns or reservations regarding lights at roundabouts, for example the pedestrian crossing which is in close proximity to the Margaret Skinnader Roundabout and also the traffic lights. Currently a lorry could potentially block the roundabout if the lights are red. Will the roundabout be replaced with traffic lights?

Kevin West clarified that the Margaret Skinnader Roundabout is to be removed and a traffic light junction will be in its place giving priority to traffic travelling from Clones Road towards the town centre. These traffic lights will be synced with the traffic lights at the main junction at Dunnes Stores.
The roundabout in Old Cross Square would not be changed following the findings of the analysis.

Cllr. Niamh McCooey asked if there was a plan to remove the right turning lane to facilitate active travel? Kevin West responded to say that there was no definite plan as there is a reluctance in active travel where it is likely to increase congestion.
In response, Kevin noted that there will be traffic lights at this junction. When asked how long this project will take, Kevin said the next steps are to secure TII funding to progress recommendations of the study.

Regarding the Southern Link Road, Cllr. Niamh McCooey notes that the population only grew 200 people from the 2016 – 2022 census period and that the unlocking of lands for development that the link road will cater for is very welcomed. She also is happy to see a projected completion estimated for 2029.

Ciaran McEntee asked, can there be a 2-lane traffic option on approach to the Margaret Skinnader junction? From personal experience he has observed up to 6 vehicles unable to move because the vehicle to the front cannot turn up Park Street due to congestion.

Cllr. Pat Treanor asked if Ciaran's 2-lane suggestion can be done as a short-term solution? And also briefly referred to the junctions for both Scotstown & the swimming pool. Pat asked how much change can we expect to the waiting time as a result of the proposed changes?

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Kevin West confirmed that the estimated waiting would be reduced to 7-8mins from what previously took up to 14mins in peak times. (School times & evening peaks)

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon highlighted that Monaghan has a population of 10k and a vast selection of large retail outlets such as Dunnes, Aldi, Tesco, Supervalu and Lidl within proximity to each other.
In Carrickmacross, he raised concerned that the Dundalk to Kingscourt Road may see congestion following the completion of the swimming pool which is planned for the area in coming years.

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon also queried whether funding is available for the A5, and if so, could we try to link it to Monaghan Town? He expressed frustration regarding the Clones Road congestion and stated that the long-term solution is proper infrastructure.

Kevin West explained that there is a Local Transport Plan in production for Carrickmacross and it will address congestion on the link road to which PJ referred, from the N2 (by-pass) to the town centre. This will take priority over active travel. Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon complimented Kevin West on his work.

5. <u>Terms of Reference for Industry Advisory Group</u>

Pamela Kerr, Head of Enterprise, LEO gave a presentation following discussion at a previous (Nov 2025) SPC meeting where the committee did not agree with the creation of an Economic Forum and opted to explore an Industry Advisory Group instead. In her presentation, Pamela outlined the purpose of the Industry Advisory Group is to provide independent, informed, and constructive feedback from key industry sectors to the Economic Development SPC, to support economic growth, competitiveness and resilience.

The following information was highlighted regarding the Governance & Reporting of the Forum,

- The SPC retains full governance oversight on economic policy & strategy decisions
- Minutes of all Advisory Group meetings to be recorded & submitted to SPC for consideration.
- Structured to ensure transparency, accountability and not to undermine the SPC decision-making process.
- Reports directly to the SPC.
- Feedback & recommendations will be presented to the SPC by the chair of SPC.

Pamela concluded, seeking agreement to the proposed terms of reference.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland stated that there was a detailed discussion at the November SPC in conjunction with the Annahagh development. The new proposal for Industry Advisory Group means that the integrity of the SPC is retained. He welcomes questions from the committee.

Cllr Colm Carthy states that Pamela has done as requested, the terms of reference outline the role of the forum in an advisory capacity only and the decision-making remains the responsibility of the SPC.

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The next step is an open call for expression of interest from Industry leaders. Cllr. Colm Carthy proposes the move to this next stage. This proposal is seconded by Cllr. Pat Treanor.

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon complimented Pamela on her work with the recent Business Awards, held in the Nuremore Hotel in Carrickmacross. He proceeded to say that he would like to see the awards alternate between all towns in the county in the coming years, placing emphasis on equality throughout the county.
Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon also agreed with the importance of the Terms of Reference to ensure that everything is conducted correctly.

Cllr. Pat Treanor briefly stated that the project is a good one to have and useful to get information from industry leaders. He said that balanced development across the county will take time. The forum should consider other council policies around balanced geographical which should be made. Pamela Kerr agrees to balance across all 3 municipal districts.

Cllr. Sean Gilliland thanks Pamela and concurs with the comments made by all.

6. <u>Annahagh West Development</u>

Paul Connolly, Senior Executive Engineer, Capital Projects presented an update on the Annahagh Lands to provide levelled sites fully serviced with roads, footpaths and ancillary services. Costs were outlined to include construction and the asking price of €250,000 per acre of development. The Commercial Rates potential for the development is estimated to be in the region of €118,461.30 between warehouses, office space & commercial yards.

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon thanked Paul for the information provided and queried the costings, does this represent value for money for Monaghan County Council? Are the sites undervalued? He expresses concern over whether MCC are offering too good a deal where they could be optimising financial gain.
He draws comparison to a site on the Shercock Road in Carrickmacross where 16 acres are available, stating that a private developer would ask significantly more for similar sites.

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon questions that the same approach be made to MCC acquiring lands in other parts of the county for industrial development.

Cathal Flynn responded to say that Annahagh is the only land bank that Monaghan County Council have to develop at €250,000 per acre for serviced land. The sacrifice of the land is for the benefit of Industry growth. Points well made by PJ and acknowledged by Cathal Flynn.

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon understands that the Monaghan sites are subsidised because they are owned by Monaghan County Council however he feels that we should be getting more in return. He asks MCC to look out for land in the Castleblayney & Carrickmacross areas and other towns.

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Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon asks if MCC have any plans for buying a back of land? To which Cathal Flynn says the availability of zoned industrial lands is limited. Regarding land zoning, Cllr. Colm Carthy askes, as the local authority, do we have the provision to buy lands and then zone?

Cllr. Pat Treanor indicates that each MD had 50K for purchasing land. If this project is successful, then it can be used as a working example to gain future funding.

Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon called for: What happens in Monaghan Town must happen countywide!

Cllr. Sean Gilliland continued to say, we have the land, the question about activating land this is a good example to use. The land has to be feasible & workable for SME's to take part. This landmark development can be used to demonstrate success and can be presented as a benchmark for getting Central Government funding. Funding which can be used to replace land.

If we build – they will come!

In response to PJ's question, yes, we would do it in Carrickmacross.

Pete McMahon queried if the sites need to be levelled prior to sale? Paul Connolly explained that this is to be done prior to roads & infrastructure as it would ruin them if done afterwards.

7. AOB

Nothing discussed.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 30th September 2026 at 4pm.

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