



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Cruinniú / Meeting

Coiste Polasaí Straitéiseach Gnóthaí Forbairt Eacnamaíochta & Fiontraíochta

Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)

Via Microsoft Teams

Thursday 2nd December 2021 @ 9:30

Déardaoin 2 Nollaig 2021 @ 9:30

Members in attendance:

Cllr Karey McHugh (Chair)	Galway County Council
Cllr David Collins	Galway County Council
Cllr Declan Geraghty	Galway County Council
Cllr Tim Broderick	Galway County Council
Cllr Mary Hoade	Galway County Council
Dave Hickey	Business Representative
Dan Dowling	Community Representative
Paul Carey	Construction/Business Representative

Present:

Alan Farrell	Galway County Council
Diane Gallagher	Galway County Council
Eimear Dolan	Galway County Council
Valerie Kelly	Galway County Council
Liam Hanrahan	Galway County Council

Apologies:

Marian Spellman	Trade Union Representative
Cllr Gerry Finnerty	Galway County Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC held on 22nd September 2021.

Cllr Karey McHugh welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 22nd September 2021 were approved on the proposal of Cllr Mary Hoade and seconded by Paul Carey

There were no matters arising.

Local Enterprise Office Update.

Cllr Karey McHugh introduced the first of today's speakers Valerie Kelly, Senior Enterprise Development Officer, Galway County Council who gave an update on the work of the Local Enterprise Office in 2020 and to date in 2021 (presentation attached).

Presentation concluded

Cllr McHugh thanked Ms Kelly for her presentation and commended the work of the Local Enterprise Office during the Covid period, Cllr McHugh invited questions/observations from the floor.

Cllr Tim Broderick thanked Ms Kelly for her presentation and concurred with Cllr McHugh on commending the Local Enterprise Office for all the help they have given small businesses throughout Covid. Cllr Broderick queried whether the mentors doing the mentoring are internal or external to the Council and also what areas/topics they cover.

Ms Kelly advised that there is a mentor panel in place with mentors who have skills in a broad range of areas and sectors, and that mentors are assigned based on the needs of the applicant. Ms Kelly also advised that the staff of the Local Enterprise office provide mentoring in the form of one-to-one advisory clinics.

Dave Hickey thanked Ms Kelly for her presentation and concurred with the other members regarding the good work being carried out by the Local Enterprise Office in helping small and medium sized businesses. Mr Hickey stated that as he is a mentor on the mentor panel he has seen how the assistance provided by the LEO assists small businesses adding that he can vouch for the good work being carried out in the Local Enterprise Office from experience. Mr Hickey queried whether the staffing resource issues mentioned at the last meeting had been sorted.

Ms Kelly advised that staffing levels in the Local Enterprise Office were almost at full complement.

Cllr David Collins thanked Ms Kelly for her presentation and for all the work being carried out by the Local Enterprise Office. Cllr Collins queried whether small and medium sized businesses that availed of the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme during Covid would be able to remain viable once the scheme comes to an end in the new year or were there any resources in place to help deal with this issue.

Ms Kelly stated that there are some employment supports available through the Local Enterprise Office but that they are not expecting a blanket employment support for businesses to be made available. Ms Kelly stated that the Local Enterprise Office provide financial advice to businesses and are available to work with businesses to help them build and develop. Ms Kelly advised that Microfinance is there for businesses to apply for if they are in need of financial assistance.

Cllr Declan Geraghty thanked Ms Kelly for her presentation and for the work being carried out by the Local Enterprise Office and the help given to small businesses. Cllr Geraghty asked what do the Local Enterprise Office envisage in the green industry going forward and if there has been much uptake on the green initiatives currently in place.

Ms Kelly stated that there is a huge priority on green and sustainability programmes. Ms Kelly advised that the Local Enterprise Office currently run a Green Programme and that they hope to start running green/climate action workshops in the new year.

Cllr Geraghty paid his respects to Charles Lynch former CEO of Galway Enterprise Board who passed away earlier this year and requested that a letter of condolence be sent to Mr Lynch's family from the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC, Cllr Hoade concurred with Cllr Geraghty's request.

Paul Carey thanked Ms Kelly for her presentation and concurred with previous speakers that the Local Enterprise Office have carried out great work during Covid. Mr Carey stated that it was good to hear some good news stories such as that of Greenstone.

Cllr McHugh thanked Ms Kelly and all the team in the Local Enterprise Office for their continuous work in helping small and medium businesses and congratulated them on surpassing all their targets this year.

Ms Kelly thanked the committee and asked them to continue to spread the word to members of the public about the offerings available through the Local Enterprise Office to help businesses.

This concluded the Local Enterprise Office update

Outdoor Seating & Accessories Scheme Update

Cllr McHugh introduced Alan Farrell to give a brief update on the Outdoor Seating & Accessories Scheme.

Mr Farrell gave a brief overview of the scheme and advised the members that 325 completed applications were received. The rate of support for each application was at the 75% rate of quoted costs up to a maximum of €4,000.

As of the end of November 2021 the total amount approved was €829,151 with €735,387 of this amount drawn down. With the closure of the scheme a small number of approved applicants will not be drawing down primarily because they are not progressing with their application as per the approval offer conditions.

Cllr McHugh invited questions/observations from the members

Liam Hanrahan stated that there had been an unprecedented amount of administrative work involved in rolling out this scheme and getting the applicants to drawdown stage, Mr Hanrahan commended the work of the team in getting the scheme to its final stage.

Cllr Tim Broderick concurred with Mr Hanrahan and thanked the team for all the work carried out on this scheme. Cllr Broderick stated that the scheme was of huge benefit to small hospitality businesses who had struggled during Covid.

Cllr McHugh stated that Covid had helped us to understand the importance of having outdoor dining facilities in Ireland and making the most of our outdoor spaces.

Cllr Declan Geraghty thanked the team for all the work on this scheme and stated that some businesses who did not sell food previously are now in a position to do so with the extra outdoor dining spaces. Cllr Geraghty asked if there is a new model to be taken on board after this scheme.

Alan Farrell stated that the Council would have to wait and see what discussions take place at national level as the scheme was established by Failte Ireland working with the CCMA/LGMA and administered by local authorities. He said it was aimed at dealing with the issues around Covid and if the various representative bodies of the tourism and hospitality sector pushed for it, that there may be further supports. Mr Farrell stated that the tourism and hospitality sectors are very important to the county and that any supports that are beneficial in terms of sustaining jobs are welcome. He said that hopes that through the likes of the BIA Innovator the Council can look at potential initiatives to further develop the tourism, hospitality and food sectors including through the training and development programmes that will be run.

Cllr Mary Hoade concurred with the other members and thanked the staff for the roll out of this scheme. Cllr Hoade stated that if further funding becomes available down the line for the enhancement of outdoor dining that staff resources for the Council must come with it.

Cllr Declan Geraghty stated that it was good to hear some good news stories and that the public need to be made aware of the schemes that are on offer through the Council.

This concluded the Outdoor Seating & Accessories Scheme update

Town & Village and Streetscape Scheme update

Cllr McHugh introduced Eimear Dolan, Galway County Council who gave an update on the Town & Village Renewal Scheme (presentation attached).

Cllr McHugh invited questions/observations from the members

Cllr McHugh queried whether the spec of the paint being used for the Streetscape Scheme was checked before works were carried out.

Eimear Dolan advised that it wasn't technically prescribed for applicants but that advice had been given to applicants by our Regeneration Architect and a professional colourist.

Cllr McHugh stated that the visual impact of our towns and villages is very important and that the work being carried out under the schemes is transformative. Cllr McHugh stated that the work of Made in Galway is important in supporting local businesses that sell Irish made unique products. Cllr McHugh stated that we have exceptional talent in Ireland.

Cllr Mary Hoade thanked Eimear for her presentation and the work being carried out. Cllr Hoade stated that the work carried out in Headford has had a huge impact when you drive through the town. Cllr Hoade stated that the timelines given by the Department for schemes such as the Streetscape Scheme need to be revised and an extension given as the timeframes given are too tight and are not viable.

Cllr Declan Geraghty queried if there is any stream of funding available that could be distributed more evenly to towns and villages throughout the County.

Eimear Dolan advised that there are a number of schemes available through the Council offering grants that can be applied for by all towns, villages and communities and that the Town & Village and Streetscape Schemes are only 2 of a wide scope of schemes available.

Alan Farrell advised that the Town & Village Scheme is one of a suite of projects being rolled out by the section and that the team try to work with all communities. Mr Farrell commended Ms Dolan on the work being carried out under the Town & Village and Streetscape Schemes.

Cllr Declan Geraghty thanked Ms Dolan for all the work being done and gave examples of Headford and Ballinasloe and how well they look after the work that has been carried out. Cllr Geraghty stated that there is huge opportunity for the Council to publicise more about the grants on offer and would love to see these schemes expanded more.

Cllr David Collins thanked Ms Dolan for her presentation and for the work being carried out. Cllr Collins stated that all schemes both large and small are important to our communities and that there needs to be more publicity given to these schemes and grants, to help regenerate our towns and villages.

This concluded the Town & Village and Streetscape Scheme update.

Local Economic & Community Plan update

Cllr McHugh invited Alan Farrell to give a brief update on the Local Economic & Community Plan.

Mr Farrell advised that under the Local Government Act 2014 the Council is required to develop a 6-year plan that looks at the objectives and actions for the economic and community development of the county over the 6-year period. He advised that there are 2 elements to the Plan, the Economic element which falls under the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC and the Community element which is the responsibility of the LCDC. Mr Farrell advised that there is an information meeting taking place on the 9th December in relation to the new Local Economic & Community Plan and that this will guide the development of it.

Mr. Farrell advised that there will be some changes since the last plan, for example, there will be an overall strategic framework adopted with 2-year action plans under these. Mr Farrell outlined the various phases of the plan, from the preparatory phase to public consultation to formulation of the plan and adoption of the LECP by the Council.

Mr Farrell stated that no timeframes have been set by the Department to date but that he anticipated most of it will be done is 2022 although with the volume of schemes being administered it was likely that resources will be an issue.

This concluded the Local Economic & Community Plan update.

Cllr McHugh invited questions/observations from the members

Cllr McHugh stated that the Local Economic & Community Plan is an opportunity to bring economic and community elements together.

As there were no further questions/observations this concluded the Local Economic & Community Plan update.

AOB

Cllr Declan Geraghty stated that it is important to promote shop local over the next few weeks and wished all the members a Happy Christmas.

Cllr Tim Broderick stated that he is happy to now be a part of the Economic Development and Enterprise SPC and reiterated that it is important to shop local all year round, and that the promotion of shop local is also an opportunity to help the rate payers around the County.

Cllr Karey McHugh agreed that it is important to support rate payers and that shop local is key. Cllr McHugh gave credit to local businesses who have decorated our towns and villages so well in the run up to Christmas.

As there was no other business to be discussed Cllr McHugh thanked all for attending the meeting and wished the members a Happy Christmas.

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be agreed with the Chair and the members notified in due course.

The meeting then concluded.