

Minutes of the Meeting of Strategic Policy Committee (SPC1)
Economic Development, Enterprise Support, Tourism, Planning & Development
Policy
held via MS Teams
Friday 18th September 2020

Present: Cllr. Ger Frisby (Chair), Cllr. John Coonan, Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Michael Doyle, Cllr. Maria Dollard, Cllr. Patrick O’Neill, Brian Hamilton, Deirdre Shine, Paul Brophy, Eileen Moyles, Marion Acreman

Apologies: Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick

In attendance: Sean Mc Keown, Martin Prendiville, Fiona Deegan, Martina Comerford, Denis Malone, Catherine Myers

Item	
1.	Declaration of Interest: There were no Declarations of Interest
2.	Confirmation of Minutes: The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 rd July 2020 were proposed by Cllr. Michael McCarthy and seconded by Cllr. John Coonan and agreed.
3.	Matters Arising: There were no Matters Arising
4.	<p>Progress Reports:</p> <p>Mr. McKeown acknowledged the difficulty for members of virtual meetings and advised that the Progress Report would be circulated prior to meetings going forward, in order to allow members to read through same.</p> <p>Mr. McKeown stated that Covid-19 was still a major challenge for the local economy, in particular, the Retail and Hospitality sectors (with 40% of the labour force in Kilkenny working in the Hospitality Sector). He further stated that 26% (13,000) had availed of support in the form of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) or the Wage Subsidy Scheme, stating that there has been a 70% drop (3,250) in people applying for the PUP since May and a 20% drop (5,500) in people availing of the Wage Subsidy Scheme, with the South East Regional Office forecasting that a total of 26,500 jobs across all sectors, could be lost by the end of 2020 in the South East. Mr. Mc Keown stated that the main priority for the Local Authority at present was to continue to support local business.</p> <p>Mr. Mc Keown stated that a review of actions as detailed in the current 5-year LECP document (2016-2021) would be conducted shortly and an update on the agreed strategic actions would be provided for the next meeting of the committee.</p> <p><u>Restart Grant update</u></p> <p>Mr. Martin Prendiville provided an update on the Restart Grant, which the Local Authority are administrating on behalf of the Department Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) and stated that the Restart Grant provides funding to rateable businesses to assist with the costs of reopening following months of closure and is equivalent to the rates bill for 2019 with a minimum payment of €2,000 and a maximum payment of €10,000.</p> <p>Mr. Prendiville stated that the closing date for this grant was the end of August and 966 applications had been submitted, 826 processed totalling €2.95M.</p>

Mr. Prendiville stated that as part of the July Stimulus Package, a further support was available in the form of the Restart Plus Grant with a minimum payment of €4,000 and a maximum payment of €25,000, with 812 applications submitted of which 134 have been processed totalling €8M. Mr. Prendiville noted that successful applicants of the Restart Grant could also apply for the Restart Plus Grant. In answer to a question from Ms. Marion Acreman, Mr. Prendiville advised that for any business that missed the first Restart Grant they could submit an appeal (via email) to Kilkenny County Council and this in turn would be forwarded to DBEI, noting that 29 appeals had been received to date.

Rates Waiver Scheme

Mr. Prendiville noted that the current 6 months Rates Waiver Scheme for business that had to close their doors due to Covid-19 would end on the 27th September.

Tourism Update

Ms. Martina Comerford provided an update on the following:

- The work of the Kilkenny Tourism Recovery Taskforce, stating that Fáilte Ireland had launched their National Media Campaign entitled – “Ireland ~ Make a Break for It” and that Kilkenny has featured strongly in its TV, Print Media and Social Media platforms and asked all to use #MakeABreakForIt.
- businesses should sign up to the Covid-19 Safety Charter which is designed to give comfort and reassurance to employers, employees and customers that their business are ready to re-open safely with applications to be made via www.failteireland.ie. Ms. Comerford stated that Fáilte Ireland had also set up the Covid-19 Adaptation Fund to assist Tourism business with the costs incurred with reopening their businesses in line with the Fáilte Ireland’s Guidelines for Re-Opening with support by way of grant payments to assist with structural adaptations, PPE, Hand Sanitiser, etc. with further information and details of the application process available on www.failteireland.ie, asking the committee for their help in getting the message out on same.
- Update on the Kilkenny Welcome Team, a group of local volunteers who meet and greet visitors over the weekends at high footfall locations and offer them helpful information, such as the opening hours to attractions, ATM locations, train and bus times and interesting facts about Kilkenny, fully trained in Covid-19 protocols. Ms. Comerford stated that Brian Cody agreed to be the Ambassador for the Kilkenny Welcome Team which launched on the August Bank holiday Weekend, with the initiative very well received by visitors and also receiving good media coverage. Ms. Comerford stated that a review of the Kilkenny Welcome Team would be carried out in November to determine how best to continue the initiative and to prepare for next year’s season.
- The Medieval Audio Guide had been launched and is available to download on mobile devices, which allows visitors to explore Kilkenny City and learn more about the main attractions along the route and further stated that the CONNECTED Sculpture Trail had been launched by the Design and Craft Council of Ireland and showcases many sculptures located throughout the city, stating that this was commissioned for Culture Night 2020 (18th September) but will also be promoted again as part of the Kilkenny Day Celebrations on the 11th October. Ms. Comerford stated that this was produced by the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland with Kilkenny County Council, Kilkenny Arts Festival, Kilkenny Civic Trust, OPW, Butler Gallery, Kilkenny Tourism, Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce and local business owners.
- The Butler Art Gallery was open with free admission.
- Outlined that bed occupancy in the city is currently between 40-50%, however, the forecasted occupancy figures for Q4 are weak.
- update on the Wolfwalkers Film which will be screened in the IMC Cinemas during Kilkenny Animates Festival on 1st weekend of October with walking and sketching tours being arranged by Cartoon Saloon throughout the month of October with artwork displayed in Butler Gallery launching at the end of the month. Ms Comerford stated that Restaurants and Cafes will be asked to have a Wolf Walker Theme to their menus and to help create a buzz around the city to

	<p>promote Wolfwalker month, noting that Kilkenny County Council will “dress the city” with banners displaying the Wolfwalker imagery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kilkenny Day will take place on the 11th October this year and it is in the early stages of planning. • Kilkenny Tourism had launched their Autumn PR & Marketing campaign entitled “Loving History... Loving Culture”. <p><u>Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Update</u></p> <p>Ms. Fiona Deegan provided an update of Key Performance Indicators for the LEO for which the SPC provides a monitoring role and advised that take-up on supports had increased dramatically, with many businesses engaging who had not engaged in the past, and provided statistics particularly in relation to COVID-10 supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Programmes – noting a target of 650 for 2020 with current participants at 986; • One to one mentoring – noting a target of 375 with current numbers at 850; • Trading on line Vouchers – noting a target of 26 for 2020 with current numbers at 207 totalling €490,000; • Business Continuity Vouchers – a COVID related support with 311 business approved same, totalling €698,218. <p>In terms of Brexit, Ms Deegan outlined that Wednesday 23rd September marked 100 days to Brexit, stating that the LEO have a range of supports available including Customs Training Workshops, 1:1 Mentoring Clinics and Webinars.</p> <p>Ms. Deegan stated that the new County umbrella website www.kilkenny.ie and associated branding, initiated by the City Centre Task Force would be launched prior to Kilkenny Day on Friday 8th October, under the tagline ‘The Best of Ireland’.</p> <p>Ms. Deegan provided an update on the Kilkenny Food Strategy, in conjunction with County Kilkenny Leader Partnership with the main objectives to sell Kilkenny as a Food Tourism Destination, to work to develop food producers and establish a Food Verification System, where Restaurants, Hotels and cafes would be recognised for using local food on their menus.</p> <p>Ms. Deegan also outlined the #Tastekilkenny Tour in partnership with KCLR and Carlow County Council which aims to promote all things food and drink over the coming months in County Kilkenny, which involves a series of outside broadcasts and will feature stories from local food and drink producers and hospitality establishments around the County, visiting Kilkenny City, Gowran, Thomastown, Ballyhale and Castlecomer over 5 dates during September and October.</p> <p>M.s Deegan provided a brief update on a new grant which had just been announced – Micro Enterprise Grant, which provides supports from €500 to €1,000 for eligible businesses as a contribution towards the cost of re-opening or keeping a business operational and re-connecting with employees and customers.</p>
5.	<p>Consideration of Policy Issues:</p> <p>Mr. Denis Malone provided an update on the City and County Development Plan, stating that there is now one plan with two volumes – County and City.</p> <p>Mr Malone went through the process and indicated that the Draft Plan is now ready to go to the Members for approval before it goes for public consultation for a period of 10 weeks.</p> <p>Targets are to be set out in the plan, with measured results, with regards to Climate Change. Rural Housing Policy, Renewable Energy Strategy and the Transport Plan are all to feature in the Policy for Climate Change.</p> <p>Mr Malone also provided an update on the following Masterplans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loughmacask – Work is underway. - St Canice’s Campus – Joint Plan with the HSE. Early Stage of consultation. - Fairgreen – Appointment Finalised.
9.	<p>Any other business</p> <p>None</p>

10.	Date of Next Meeting: The next meeting of SPC1 will take place on Friday 4 th December at 3.30pm. The meeting concluded at 5.00pm
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Signed: _____

Date: _____

GER FRISBY

Chairman