



Coiste Polasaí Straitéiseach Gnóthaí Forbairt Eacnamaíochta & Fiontraíochta
Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)
Cruinniú /Meeting

Tuesday, 8th December 2015, 10.00am

**Centrepoint Office (Galway County Council), Liosbaun Industrial Estate, Tuam
Road, Galway**

Members in attendance

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn, Chairperson	Galway County Council
Cllr. Peter Feeney	Galway County Council
Cllr. Shane Donnellan	Galway County Council
Cllr. Mary Hoade	Galway County Council
Cllr. Tom Healy	Galway County Council
Cllr. Seán Ó Tuairisg	Galway County Council
Cllr. Karey McHugh	Galway County Council
Cllr. Michael Finnerty	Galway County Council
Dan Dowling	Community representative
Paul Mannion	Scott Tallon Walker Architects

Present

Catherine McConnell	A/Director of Services, Galway County Council
Alan Farrell	Senior Executive Officer, Galway County Council
Brian Barrett	Galway County Council
Ann Mallaghan	Galway County Council
Breda Fox	Galway County Council
Valerie Kavanagh	Galway County Council

Apologies

Paul Quinn	Trade Union representative
Michelle Murphy	Business / Commercial representative

Welcome & Introductions

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn welcomed those in attendance to the fourth meeting of the SPC.

1. Minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC held on 23rd June 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th September 2015 were approved on the proposal of Cllr. Seán Ó Tuairisg and seconded by Dan Dowling.

2. Draft Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016 – 2021 for County Galway

Catherine McConnell gave a brief update on the drafting of the plan to date. She said that an extensive consultation process had taken place and a draft plan had now been prepared. She said that the Advisory Steering Group (ASG) had given great guidance and support and they had approved the draft plan at their last meeting with some minor amendments which were now included.

Brian Barrett then outlined the layout of the plan. He said that there were 10 overarching themes each containing high level goals, objectives and actions. The draft action plan was handed out for the committee to look at. He said that a number of objectives from the County Development Plan had been included as well as more general objectives. He said that funding for the delivery of the action plan would come from programmes such as LEADER, SICAP, REDZ and from the partner organisations. He also stated a lead agency had been identified for each action and they had given their commitment to deliver the action.

Cllr. Peter Feeney then spoke on behalf of the ASG. He said that the Group had gone through the draft plan in great detail at their meeting on 17th November and were satisfied with the plan. He proposed that the SPC adopt the plan based on the recommendation of the ASG.

Cllr. Shane Donnellan asked if a planned workshop had taken place on the plan. The Director of Services said that there had been plans to have a workshop however it was felt in the end that one to one discussions with stakeholders on specific issues was a better approach.

Cllr. Seán Ó Tuairisg said that it was a very good document and he hoped that it would be delivered on the ground and there would be buy in from the relevant stakeholders.

Breda Fox said that the LEO office can access funding from Micro-Enterprise Ireland where start-ups might not be able to. She said that a lot of clients come from the Urdaras area.

Alan Farrell said that Urdaras sit on the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and he had met with all the Chief Executives of the Stakeholder agencies to get their buy in.

Cllr. Karey McHugh asked if there was anything in the plan about supporting social enterprise. Brian Barrett answered that there was. Breda Fox said that the LEO also support social enterprises.

Cllr. Mary Hoade asked if the plan will be going before full Council. The Director said that it will be going before the Municipal Districts in the next few weeks, the Regional Assembly, the LCDC and then the full Council at probably their February meeting.

Paul Mannion asked how public the plan would be. The Director said that once it is finally adopted it will be published.

Cllr. Tom Healy asked if the plan fits into the County Development Plan (CDP). The Director responded that it was compliant with the CDP. They are separate documents but the LECP is a much more action focused, detailed plan especially regarding delivering actions.

Cllr. Tom Healy also said that the plan could be missing out on the hydro energy potential of the County. The Director of Services said there was an objective in the County Development Plan to prepare a Renewable Energy Strategy and that if this went ahead the LECP would be amended to reflect such a strategy.

Ann Mallaghan said that there aren't agencies to deliver renewable energy actions at the moment but that when the plan is being reviewed there would be an opportunity to bridge these gaps if possible.

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn asked for the plan to be seconded and it was seconded by Cllr. Seán Ó Tuairisg.

The Director of Services Catherine McConnell thanked the ASG and all the staff involved in preparing the plan to date.

3. European Region of Gastronomy 2018 Bid

Alan Farrell updated the SPC on Galway's bid to become the 2018 European Region of Gastronomy. A workshop had been held in the Galway Bay Hotel with all the Stakeholders prior to the application being submitted and they were asked for their ideas on what key areas should be included, what Galway's legacy could be, what the theme should be etc.

Alan said that it would be similar to the European Capital of Culture 2020 bid but that it's not just about the designation, it's about developing other areas such as education, health, enterprise, tourism etc. He said that Galway County Council, Galway City Council and Galway Mayo Institute of Technology are heading up the bid but they would be working with

other Stakeholders such as Urdaras, Teagas, Fáilte Ireland, the Galway Education Centre, the HSE, the agricultural sector and the festival and events to name a few. Galway's food heritage would also be an important element and developing food trails. He said that the bid book must be submitted by the end of January 2016 and a presentation would be given to an international jury at the end of March 2016.

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn asked if there was buy in from industry. Alan said that was buy in from individual industries but that they needed to target the bigger companies.

Cllr. Seán Ó Tuairisg said that Connemara Mountain Lamb should be included as they are commanding a premium price for their products. He also said that the Islands should be encouraged to grow more vegetables as they are able to harvest them earlier than the main land.

Cllr. Karey McHugh complimented Alan on the work that had been done to date. She said that food tourism can't be underestimated and that micro breweries are also important.

Cllr. Shane Donnellan complimented Alan on the work that had been done to date. He asked if there was a website for the initiative. Alan stated that a dedicated website recently went live - www.galwaygastronomy.ie

Cllr. Tom Heally asked if the food initiatives will be at Municipal District (MD) level. Alan said that if ideas are coming from the MD's they can be included e.g. the Muscle Festival and Connemara lamb. They will look at all the MD areas to maximise their potential. He said that there is also an opportunity to include and promote lesser known activities.

Cllr. Mary Hoade complimented Alan on the bid work to date. She asked if the other local authorities in the West are supporting the bid and how the Councillors can support the bid.

Alan said that as time was constricted it was left to Galway City and County Council's to prepare the initial application but that more engagement with the other Western local authorities will come later. He said that Councillors can help to promote the bid and act as the voice on the street to help get feedback from communities.

Paul Mannion asked if there was any engagement with the Chamber of Commerce. Alan said that some engagement had taken place but that any help would be welcome. Paul also said that the scouts could also play a role in the year as they are very interested in food and food heritage.

Cllr. Peter Feeney asked about the Food Hub in Athenry and if there was buy in from Enterprise Ireland.

Alan said that they were engaging with Enterprise Ireland, SCCUL Enterprises and Teagasc. Once funding has been identified they will submit a planning application for incubation units and office spaces. There is also interest from GMIT and the LEADER companies.

Breda Fox said that there is a lot happening in this area in the City and County and there is great potential for small businesses to grow and that a lot of LEO clients have moved to Enterprise Ireland indicating the successes.

4. Business Incentive Schemes

The Director of Services said that this is an area that the Council is looking at especially in towns that have taken a hit in recent years and in light of the new Development Contribution Scheme.

She said that they are looking at what other local authorities have done. One option is to introduce rates grants to give new businesses a chance to get up and running and the grant would be at a reducing scale over a number of years. A suite of measures will be proposed and presented to the SPC again. The main concern is the impact on the local authority's finances and how that can be bridged.

Cllr. Shane Donnellan said that the proposed scheme was very welcome. He said that it will bring vacant buildings back into use and that any small help a business can get is very welcome. He said it's also important that the scheme would not encourage competition among businesses as this would defeat the purpose if existing businesses suffered.

Cllr. Tom Heally said that it was a positive development as there is currently a big problem with vacant premises.

Dan suggested that the local authority could establish a revolving fund where people can contribute even small amounts. This could then be used to give struggling businesses or start ups an interest free loan.

The Director of Services said that she wasn't sure if the Local Authority could administer such a fund and that maybe an institution like the Chamber would be better suited.

Cllr. Mary Hoade said that the scheme was a very good idea. She also asked whether the SPC could look at towns that have suffered the most to see what help could be given. The Director of Services agreed that this could be done.

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn asked Paul Mannion if the revolving fund idea could be something that the Chamber could look at. Mr. Mannion said that this was a possibility and maybe looked at in conjunction with the local credit union.

Cllr. Mary Hoade said that not all towns have Chambers or Business Traders Associations. Alan Farrell said that if it's known of such towns then now is the time for them to get organised and apply for the Community Support Scheme in January.

5. AOB

Cllr. Seán Ó Tuairisg mentioned that the World Masters Fishing Competition was coming to Connemara in 2016. This is a major event with 32 countries taking part. There are 3 lakes involved; the Corrib, Cornamona and Lough Inagh. Angling is the most popular sport in the world and there is great potential to attract tourism.

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn said that it was agreed that the Connemara Municipal District would deal with the Fishing Competition.

Catherine McConnell said that we could perhaps provide support through the Community Support Scheme Grant Applications and also Fáilte Ireland might be able to assist.

Cllr. Shane Donnellan asked how the REDZ applications were getting on and if there was any LEADER funding available from Galway Rural Development.

Catherine McConnell said that as time frames involved were so short, areas really needed to be ready to go as soon as the funding was made available. The Director added that if the pilot is successful it is likely to be rolled out again. Alan Farrell added that the capacity of communities in County Galway was brilliant and commended them for their efforts. He said that the LEADER programme is in the same position. The Local Development Strategy will be submitted to the evaluation committee for their decision. It is to be further discussed at the LCDC meeting tomorrow.

Alan Farrell also mentioned the Made in Galway Local Christmas Craft Fair taking place in Claregalway Castle at the weekend. The Fair consists of Galway based craft and food producers attached to the Made in Galway umbrella.

The date for the next meeting was agreed for 19th January 2016 at 10am.