



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

Tuesday, 8th September 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
Michelle Murphy	Business / Commercial representative
Dan Dowling	Community representative
Paul Mannion	Scott Tallon Walker Architects

Present

Kevin Kelly	Interim Chief Executive, Galway County Council
Catherine McConnell	A/Director of Services, Galway County Council
Alan Farrell	Senior Executive Officer, Galway County Council
Teresa O Reilly	Galway County Council
Brian Barrett	Galway County Council
Kieran Coyne	Galway County Council
Valerie Kavanagh	Galway County Council

Apologies

Paul Quinn	Trade Union representative
Cllr. Karey McHugh	Galway County Council
Cllr. Michael Finnerty	Galway County Council

Welcome & Introductions

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn welcomed those in attendance to the third 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 23rd June 2015 were approved on the proposal of Cllr. Peter Feeney and seconded by Cllr. Shane Donnellan.

2. Tourism Strategy for Galway

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn proposed to take item number 5 first as Teresa O Reilly had to go to another event.

Teresa gave a presentation outlining that the County Council had joined up with the City Council to develop a 10 year Strategy for Tourism in Galway. The need for a Tourism Strategy is a key action to ensure that the Councils play their part in tourism together with other key players and support local economic and community development. She advised that consultation will be a key part of the Strategy at the initial stages, pre draft stages and once a draft is produced. It is estimated that it will take 6 – 9 months to develop the strategy.

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn thanked Teresa for her presentation and invited questions from the committee.

A number of members raised queries and made comments in relation to the development of the Tourism Strategy. Cllr. Tom Healy stated that there was a need for investment in infrastructure at key tourist locations including facilities to encourage motor home tourism. He also said that there was very little tourism activity happening in Connemara outside the peak season especially from November to January and that the strategy should seek to extend the tourist season.

Cllr. Seán Ó Tuairisg said that more lay-bys in Connemara were needed and more facilities in general on the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW). He said that there was small investments that could be made that would enable better tourism products and referred to investment in piers so that boats can still operate in low tides. He also said that the WAW dips in and out of the Gaeltacht and signage doesn't correspond with what's on maps. One way to combat this would be to have the English on brown signs.

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn said that Lakelands and Waterways are not currently on the agenda despite the fact that the strategy was launched in 2010 but there has been very little about them since. He also said that the WAW is great for areas that it impacts on but not on other areas such as the Suck and the Shannon region.

Cllr. Peter Feeney asked would it be possible to have a Tourism Officer, someone to coordinate tourism activity.

Catherine McConnell said that Teresa was not a Tourism Officer but will lead on the Strategy which was a first good step. She said that tourism was a key economic development area and that the Council had a significant role to play.

Teresa responded to the motor home comment saying that it was something that needs consideration and that signage should be a priority. She said that Inlands and Waterways are working with Fáilte Ireland to promote the Lakelands and waterways better.

Paul Mannion said that a list of things that can be done at local level should be drawn up for example the signage and other micro projects.

Dan Dowling said that the Horse and Heritage Museum in Ballinasloe was underutilised and also commented that sports facilities are needed to attract people into areas. He said that events such as the regatta held in Ballinasloe last year which attracted 80 boats over 3 nights was a great success and that provision should be made for local events like this.

Michelle Murphy said that mobilising communities on the ground was important and linking with festivals and events.

Catherine McConnell added that it was vital that an action plan comes from the strategy with actions that can be implemented.

Kevin Kelly stated that he is holding economic development meetings with all the Directors of Services in the Council to see what can be implemented. He stated that the strategy will focus on what can be done by the Council and with other agencies and will be very practical. He said that grants may come available down the road and we must be ready to capitalise on them.

3. Update on Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)

Brian Barrett gave an update on progress of the economic aspect of the plan. He said that to date existing plans and strategies had been looked at to see what work is already happening and this would be consolidated in the Economic plan. He gave the Group a handout containing a sample of high level goals, objectives and actions and went through some examples. He said that this was only a sample of actions and if there were actions that the Group would like to see in the plan to send them on.

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn thanked Brian for his input and stated that there was very positive work happening and it was a good blue print to start off with.

Cllr. Seán Ó Tuairisg said that it was essential that progress reports were done each year to see what we are achieving. He also stated that there needs to be an up skilling of young people. He said that if there was an upturn in the building industry there might be a shortage of workers as many of them have gone abroad.

Cllr. Tom Healy said that more vocational education may need to be encouraged. He said that some small businesses don't have the resources or expertise to deal with the Public Procurement process and this is a barrier for them. He added that the rates system needs to be overhauled as it doesn't support new businesses.

Cllr. Mary Hoade stated that it was good to see small towns and villages mentioned and we must try to protect them and small businesses. She said that it was important for the Council to focus on how it can support towns and villages and that all stakeholders should work closely with the communities in this regard.

Brian Barrett stated that there will be progress reports, targets will be set and updates on whether they are achieved or not.

4. Galway Airport Site – Update

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn proposed that they take item number 6 on the agenda at this stage.

Catherine McConnell stated that a study was commissioned to determine the potential future economic uses for the Galway Airport Site. She advised that in addition to the research and work carried out by the consultants that a consultation process took place and the report has been submitted for consideration by the Councillors. She said that report had identified a number of potential opportunities such as a Creative Campus or an Enterprise Park and that it had found that aviation was not commercially viable.

The discussion then led to the air service to the Aran Islands. Cllr. Seán Ó Tuairisg stated that an application has been submitted by Enterprise Helicopters to use the Galway Airport site. He asked who makes the decision on that application.

Cllr. Peter Feeney stated that the Site at Galway Airport had no future as an Airport citing that there will be a full motorway to Shannon and to Tuam which will provide easier access to Shannon Airport and Knock Airport. He said that the Aran Islands should be serviced by the Airport that was built for it.

Cllr. Mary Hoade added that Galway County Council have contributed money to Knock Airport.

Kevin Kelly stated that the agreement with Carnmore Aviation is up until 15th December 2015. He said that the report by Future Analytics would be brought before the Council and that they would consider the future economic uses of the site as this is what it was bought for. He said that the report outlined a number of potential uses and that the Council would consider if these should be explored further. He advised the committee that there are certain reserved and executive functions in relation to the site, giving the example that it was a reserved function to lease the property for a period in excess of eleven months.

Catherine McConnell stated that the report is a first step in deciding the long term strategic use of the site. Multiple possible uses have been identified but an airport is not a viable option.

5. Update on project proposals under the REDZ Pilot initiative

Kieran Coyne stated that the REDZ pilot initiative was the launched by the Department arising out of the CEDRA report. He said that ten zones have been identified in County Galway and that groups in the zones were invited to put together a submission on behalf of their zone and that seven applications were submitted to the Council. He advised the meeting that match funding from the community is needed and that the groups were made aware of the provisions and the conditions of the pilot scheme.

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn commended Kieran on the amount of work carried out over the summer period on this project.

Cllr. Shane Donnellan said that the timeframe for groups was very short and that it took place over the summer months and this may have meant that some groups couldn't get involved. He queried if they should be getting proposals ready for further opportunities that may arise. Kieran said that yes they should, there may be other funding opportunities in the future and that it was important for communities that they were planning ahead.

6. Economic Baseline Study for County Galway (Report already circulated)

Catherine McConnell advised that the Baseline Study had been commissioned by NUIG along with the City Council. She said that sectoral reports were completed and that these looked at the emerging national and global opportunities in each of the sectors as well as the identified local opportunities and potential actions. The study identifies challenges, opportunities, threats and recommendations for Galway City and County. She advised the members that considerable useful information is available on the Galway Dashboard website.

7. AOB

Alan Farrell advised that it was proposed to develop a Food Innovation Hub at Mellows College in Athenry in partnership with Teagasc and SCCUL Enterprises. He said that the agriculture and food sectors had been identified as having strong economic potential for Galway and that the food innovation hub would assist to develop both sectors. He advised the committee that the Council were working closely with Teagasc in relation to the economic opportunities for the food and agriculture sectors and that SCCUL would bring valuable resources and experience to the proposed hub. He said that SCCUL had already applied for funding for the Food Innovation Hub under EI community enterprise funding initiative.

Alan Farrell informed the committee that Galway County Council are taking the lead along with other partners such as Galway City Council and GMIT to bid for Galway to become the European Region of Gastronomy 2018. He said that European Region of Gastronomy was similar to the European Capital of Culture on a smaller scale and that instead of culture it focussed on the food sector and gastronomy in its widest sense. He said that there were a number of focus areas including supporting SMEs, innovation, sustainability, digital agenda education, health, linking urban & rural and cultural diversity. He said that Galway was the first region in Ireland to apply for the award and that it was hoped that it would be a good tool to deliver on a range of economic, social, cultural and environmental issues. He stated that membership of the European platform would also provide further opportunities including sharing knowledge and funding applications.

Cllr. Tom Healy stated that he was engaging with An Post in Cleggan to retain the post office. He said that the Post Office was an important part of the community and economic life of an area and that the Local Economic and Community Plan should seek to ensure the retention of Post Offices and other local services.

The date for the next meeting is Tuesday 17th November at 10am in Centre Point Office.