



Coiste Polasaí Straitéiseach Gnóthaí Forbairt Eacnamaíochta & Fiontraíochta

Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)

Dé Máirt, 31 Márta 2015, 2.00 i.n.

Tuesday, 31st March 2015, 2.00 p.m.

Centrepoint Boardroom, Ground floor Centrepoint Building, Liosbaun Industrial Estate,
Tuam road, Galway.

Minutes

Members in attendance

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn, Chairperson	Elected member
Cllr. Peter Feeney	Elected member
Cllr. Shane Donnellan	Elected member
Cllr. Mary Hoade	Elected member
Cllr. Tom Healy	Elected member
Michelle Murphy	Business / Commercial representative
Dan Dowling	Community representative

Present

Catherine McConnell	A/Director of Services, GCC
Alan Farrell	Senior Executive Officer, GCC
Brian Barrett	Administrative Officer, GCC
Valerie Kavanagh	Staff Officer, GCC
Dr. James Cunningham	Director, Whitaker Institute, NUIG

1. Welcome & Introductions

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn welcomed those in attendance to the first meeting of the SPC. Catherine McConnell also welcomed those present and particularly those who were non members of the Council representing various interests.

2. Presentation on the Industry & Economic Baseline Study of Galway City & County - Dr. James Cunningham, Director, Whitaker Institute, NUIG

To help inform the economic element of the Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) NUIG have prepared an Industry & Economic Baseline Study of Galway City and County. Dr. James Cunningham gave an outline presentation of the main areas of the study.

In summary;

- Galway has a diversified sectoral base with a mix of traditional and new sectors
- Nine sectors for growth were identified; creative, marine, education, medical devices, food, agriculture, ICT, retail and tourism.
- Third level institutions and public research organisations are a significant asset and benefit to Galway
- Galway has a thriving and globally recognized creative sector that has contributed to the visibility of Galway globally
- Medical device cluster is one of a rare set of successful international clusters
- Richness of culture, the natural environment, coupled with diversified sectors are key elements of place based innovation and key assets for future development
- There is an economic interdependency between City and County

He also stated that a website will be developed which will contain all the data gathered on Galway City and County which can be easily updated.

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn thanked Dr. Cunningham for the presentation and invited questions from the committee.

Cllr. Tom Healy asked if there was anything the local authority could do to improve data collection. Dr. Cunningham said that the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government are looking at a more systematic approach for data collection in each local authority area and this should improve matters. Cllr. Healy also mentioned that while tourism is important for Connemara, it can be slow in the winter months and a more balanced approach was needed across the County. Dr. Cunningham suggested ideas such as looking at what products or services could be elongated and people diversifying into areas other than their core activities.

Cllr. Peter Feeney noted that while as a whole the BMW region is far more disadvantaged than the S&E region, Galway on its own fairs much better than this picture. Comparing Galway to the S&E might paint a better picture.

Michelle Murphy asked if there was an appetite for more clusters, as start ups could gravitate towards clusters if there was. Dr. Cunningham stated that the strategy will allow for more people to integrate in sectors. Clusters can be replicated in Galway and allow people to go after new markets. He also mentioned Finland where they have mini hubs where people can rent desks with access to broadband and meet similar business people.

Cllr. Mary Hoade noted that a lack of infrastructure in some areas was a problem and smaller towns will need to be helped. She also agreed with the data collection point. Dr. Cunningham said that the local authorities will be able to update the website. He also said that if you show people the benefits of spending money locally they might be more enticed to do so.

Cllr. Shane Donnellan stated that the point regarding 90% of companies in Finland working with a 3rd level institute was interesting and if it could work here. Dr. Cunningham said that each sector could be looked at separately to establish how they could link for example long term research needs, job placements, future needs for curriculums - identify where the skills gaps are.

Catherine McConnell said that this data was a good starting point for preparing the strategy and once it's handed over it will be managed and tracked.

3. Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP)

Brian Barrett gave a presentation on the new Local Economic & Community Plan process. The economic elements of the plan will be managed by the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC and the community elements of the plan will be managed by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). However they will be prepared in an integrated manner and both committees will have an input into both elements of the plan.

An Advisory Steering Group (ASG) will be established to monitor the preparation of the plan. It will consist of 3 members of the LCDC, 3 members of the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC, the Chief Officer of the LCDC, Catherine McConnell, and any other persons considered likely to make a significant contribution to the plan for example NUIG.

Brain stated that the plan will be largely based on the 5 national priorities the Government has committed to implementing at an EU level. These are around employment, research & development, climate change / energy, education and poverty / social exclusion.

In summary the key tasks required to produce the plan are:

- Establish Advisory Steering Group
- Do an area profile and evidence of needs
- Map existing providers and delivery agents
- Produce a Socio-Economic Statement
- Produce High Level Goals
- Send out for consultation and comments
- Produce objectives for each high level goal
- Produce actions for each objective
- Plan to be approved by relevant committees of the council.

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn thanked Brian for his presentation on the plan.

Catherine McConnell added that the Local Authority will now take a more proactive, joined up approach and statutory basis for economic planning. Sections of the Council will be able to work better together to reduce barriers for business people and companies.

Cllr. Peter Feeney commented that the plan was a big opportunity to deliver for County Galway. Previously the County Council had been the facilitator with regards to economic development whereas now the Council can be the driver.

Cllr. Mary Hoade agreed with Cllr. Feeney saying that it must be embraced.

Cllr. Tom Healy agreed with Catherine's point stating that it should lead to a happier customer experience for people. He mentioned that South Korea and New Zealand have much less regulation in place for businesses and this should be kept in mind.

Dan Dowling said that initiatives must come from the community and that Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre was a good example of this.

Cllr. Shane Dowling stated that there are SME's that don't know what resources and supports are available and this needs to be looked at.

Michelle Murphy agreed with Mr. Dowling stating particularly for people in the County as opposed to the City. They aren't aware what grants and mentoring supports are available and maybe a rebranding exercise is needed.

4. Nominations to the LECP Advisory Steering Group

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn stated the committee needed to nominate 3 members to the Advisory Steering Group.

Cllr. Shane Dollenan was proposed by Cllr. Mary Hoade and seconded by Michelle Murphy
Dan Dowling proposed himself and was seconded by Cllr. Tom Healy
Cllr. Peter Feeney proposed himself and was seconded by Cllr. Mary Hoade

5. Galway Airport Site Feasibility Study

It was agreed to leave this item for the next meeting as an update report had not yet been received from the Consultants.

6. Agree SPC Work Programme

Catherine McConnell proposed the following work programme for 2015

- LECP
- Town centre regeneration – policy and actions for recommendation to full council
- Defining and developing the local authorities role in economic development and developing strategies around the area of food, creative and cultural industries
- European Capital of Culture Bid and maximising economic benefits to County Galway
- Review of the Community Support Scheme Grants – criteria, methodology and assessment of the economic element of the scheme
- Galway Airport Site – Review of Feasibility study and make recommendations to full council.

Cllr. Tom Healy commented that the committee might have a role in energy generation. Catherine stated that it's contained in the County Development Plan.

Dan Dowling asked whether energy conservation could be considered. Catherine stated that this would come under the remit of the Environment SPC.

Cllr. Peter Feeney stated that town regeneration was an important issue to focus on and ideally every town would have a town manager. Cllr. Shane Donnellan asked whether the committee should be looking at technology to create employment. Catherine said that this was only the work plan for 2015 and it wouldn't be possible to take on everything.

7. 2015 Schedule of Meetings

The meetings for 2015 were agreed to be:

10.00am, 9th June

10.00am, 8th September

10.00am, 17th November

They will take place in the Centrepoint Building in Liosbaun Industrial Estate. Alan stated that an extra meeting could be called during the year if it was required.

8. AOB

There was no other business. Cllr. Jimmy McClearn thanked those for their attendance.