



MINUTES OF MEETING

Project Name	<p style="text-align: center;">Strategic Policy Committee</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Enterprise, Economic Development & Tourism</p>	
Purpose of Meeting		
Location of Meeting	Microsoft Teams	Date and Time
		<p>11.00 am</p> <p>2nd December 2021</p>
In attendance	Name	Representing
	<p> Cllr. Conor Bergin Cllr. Aidan Mullins Cllr. Aisling Moran Pat Hennessy Deirdre O`Connell-Hopkins Caroline Hofman Pat Culleton Gerry Murphy (GM), Head of Finance Honor Deevy (HD), Acting Head of Enterprise Denise Rainey (DR), Administrative Officer BSU Linda Meredith (LM) Senior Staff Officer LEO Dominic Reddin (DRed)Administrative Officer </p>	<p> Chairperson SPC Member LCC Member LCC Agriculture/Farming Rep Trade Union Rep Community/Voluntary Rep Dec/Construction Rep LCC LCC LCC LCC LCC </p>
Apologies	<p>Cllr Seamus McDonald</p>	<p>Member LCC</p>

Item No.	Description	Action By	Date for Completion
1.	<p>Confirmation of minutes</p> <p>Minutes of previous meeting were proposed by Caroline Hofman and seconded by Pat Hennessy.</p>		
2.	<p>Support to Business (Covid 19) – Gerry Murphy</p> <p>Small Business Assistance Scheme (SMASC)</p> <p>63 grants were issued under Phase II of the Small Business Assistance Scheme for Covid (SBASC) with a total of €228,000 paid out. The grants ranged from €1,000 to €4,000 per business. The Scheme is now closed.</p> <p>Commercial Rates Waiver</p> <p>The total paid out for the first three quarters of the year is €3.39 million.</p>		
3.	<p>BSU Update</p> <p>Denise Rainey (DR) provided an update with regard to the projects being carried out by the Business Support Unit (BSU) to date this year specifically highlighting the following:</p>		

	<p>Shop Front Grant Scheme</p> <p>24 applications received to date in 2021. 18 applications approved to the value of €10,500.00. Good uptake across all towns/villages in the County.</p> <p>Business Incentive Schemes</p> <p>2no. application has been approved to date this year under the Business Incentive scheme totalling €7,506 over the 3 years.</p> <p>Town and Village Streetscape Enhancement Scheme 2021</p> <p>The deadline for the scheme has been extended to the end of February 2022 with all works to be completed by the end of May 2022. The BSU have received 55 applications to date broken down as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 28 Mountrath 10 Mountmellick 13 Rathdowney 3 Ballinakill 1 Ballylinan. <p>The focus going forward will be on getting new applications and getting approved applicants to complete their works and claim down the funding.</p> <p>Portlaoise Town Team</p> <p>The BSU is in the final stages of completing a marketing project with the Traders Association Downtown Portlaoise- one final element outstanding will see the</p>		
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	<p>installation of an artistic feature in Market Square in Portlaoise.</p> <p>The BSU are now examining a project for 2022 which will be more focused on attracting tourists/visitors to the Town which will comprise of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Christmas market in 2022 -Marketing Portlaoise online <p>Portarlington Façade Enhancement Scheme</p> <p>The Portarlington Façade Enhancement scheme was launched at the beginning of the Summer. There has been great interest in the scheme. 47 applications have been received to date. 24 applications approved to the value of €24,282. It is envisaged the scheme will be extended to other areas in Portarlington in 2022.</p> <p>Portlaoise Façade Enhancement Scheme – Phase 2</p> <p>Phase 2 of the Portlaoise Façade Enhancement Scheme was also launched at the beginning of the Summer and has also generated a lot of interest. Bull Lane, Lyster Lane & Lyster Square are the areas of the town being focused on for Phase 2 of the Portlaoise Façade Enhancement Scheme. 14 applications have been received to date. It is envisaged the scheme will be extended to other areas in Portlaoise in 2022.</p> <p>Tourism Destination Town Project Portlaoise</p> <p>The BSU continue to work with Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer and Dom Reddin on advancing aspects of this scheme and have made great progress to date.</p>		
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Economic Development Update

Honor Deevy (HD) provided an update on the works carried out by the LEO to date this year.

- LEO approved €405,582 in grant aid to 18 Laois businesses with the potential to create 53 full-time jobs. 2 further applications have been submitted
- Delivered 9 Start Your Own Business Courses to date with 134 participants.
- Delivered 50 workshops to-date with 1,030 participants.
- 5 Laois Businesses have completed the Lean for Micro Programme.
- 5 Laois Businesses completed the First-time exporters programme.
- Completed an Intensive Management Development Programme lasting 10 weeks in collaboration with LEO Offaly. 10 Laois businesses took part.
- 27 business currently taking part in the Client Stimulus Programme – This is almost completed and feedback from businesses engaging in this has been very positive.
- 18 Laois businesses have applied for the Green for Micro Programme.
- Delivered 221 mentoring assignments to date under the Mentor Programme.
- Approved 67 Trading Online Vouchers to the value of €147,594.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over 40 companies have engaged with us around Brexit and the potential impact on their business going forward. - Plan to roll out a Digitalisation4Micro programme to help businesses improve their digital skills 		
<p>4.</p>	<p>Tourism Update – Dom Reddin</p> <p>Dominic Reddin (DRed) provided an update on the following:</p> <p>Tourism Destination Towns</p> <p>Consultants are working on finalising the proposals for the script, planning and design of the wayfinding and interpretation signage for the Destination Town Project for Portlaoise. Currently assessing other areas of the town to extend the Façade Enhancement Scheme – Main Street, Church Street and Railway Street are being considered. The public lighting for the 3 laneways, Bull Lane, Lyster Lane & Peppers Lane has been agreed and has been placed on order to be put in place in early January. All Civil and hard landscape works on Bull Lane are completed.</p> <p>Barrow Blue Way</p> <p>The stretch of the Blueway from Fisherstown to Killaghlis has been completed and the trackway re-opened to the public.</p> <p>The stretch between Vicarstown and Courtwood is now closed to public access as works have commenced in this</p>		

	<p>area. This is a large 3420m section that is targeted for re-opening to public access at the end January 2023.</p> <p>The Barrow Blueway Steering Committee are confident this development will be completed by August 2022.</p> <p>The Barrow Blueway Economic Plan</p> <p>A ‘Placemaking Plan’ is currently being developed by the Board. The aim of the project is to develop a placemaking plan for the Barrow Blueway rich in spatial, visual, and technical detail which is true to the overall Blueway Brand and Vision for the Barrow</p> <p>Glenbarrow Carpark</p> <p>Grant Funding has been allocated to Laois County Council of €112,518 for the provision of additional overflow car park at Glenbarrow. This development is a collaborative project with Coilte and Laois County Council on 0.6 Acres of Land and should provide approximately 40 spaces.</p> <p>Car parking at The Rock of Dunamaise</p> <p>LCC are still pursuing options for the availability of a suitable site for the provision of Car Parking at the Rock of Dunamaise. Discussions are ongoing with landowners.</p> <p>Timahoe Heritage Centre</p> <p>Under the Town & Village Grants Scheme works have commenced on the Conservation and upgrading of the Community-run Heritage Centre in the former Church of Ireland in Timahoe, to protect the fabric of the</p>		
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historic building and provide facilities and heritage interpretation for tourists and local people.

Presentation to the Farming Community - Teagasc

As Tourism Promotional Officer with Laois County Council, D. Reddin was invited onto a Farm Diversification talk hosted by Teagasc on Wednesday 24th November with members of the farming Community from Laois & North Kildare to look at land uses for farmers and Farm Diversification. One of the ideas DRed put forward was the provision of land to use for Caravan and Motorhome Parking. DRed advised possible future opportunities for landowners and what would be involved in this development including planning /promotion etc. and the current need in the county.

Christmas Street Markets

Laois County Council have supported Christmas Street Markets in Mountrath, Abeyleix, Durrow and Portlaoise.

Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trail

Coilte in association with Laois & Offaly County Councils are continuing to work on the development of the Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Project. There are now 11km of blue trails 12km of Red , 2km of Black trails completed in Laois. Construction of the Trail Head Building in the Slieve Blooms is expected to commence in the first quarter of 2022.

	<p>Pat Hennessy queried the ownership of the Land for the car park in Glenbarrow</p> <p>DRed advised it is a new piece of Land owned by Coillte which LCC had received funding for and LCC will construct the car park.</p> <p>Cllr Aisling Moran requested that LCC actively look at extending the Blueway from Athy into Carlow. GM advised that a Teams meeting had taken place with WWI, LCC & Kildare Co Co. WWI advised they cannot consider a new application for to extend the Blueway until such time the current project is completed.</p> <p>Cllr. Aisling Moran requested a Physical meeting with WWI to discuss the above. GM advised he will make a request for same.</p>		
<p>5.</p>	<p>Laois Chamber – Caroline Hofman</p> <p>Caroline Hofman provided an update on the current activities of the Laois Chamber:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership continues to grow even throughout Covid times. - The Love Laois 2022 Calendar which was launched in December sold 400 at the Portlaoise Christmas Market. Proceeds going to SOSAD - Laois Chamber will be launching newly designed sleeve for the Laois Gift Card for Christmas - Hoping to hold a Jobs Fair in Q2 2022. - Programme of Events drawn up for 2022 - The Inaugral Business Awards has been postponed to November 2022. 		

	- Thank you to LCC for continued Financial Support		
6.	<p>AOB</p> <p>Further to Deirdre O`Connell Hopkins query at the last SPC meeting regarding the Role of the SPC, GM advised that the 1st item on the agenda for the next meeting will be “The Role of the SPC”.</p>		
7.	<p>Next meeting</p> <p>Thursday 3rd March 2022 @ 11am</p>		