



Local Community Development Committee Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 29th November 2023 in County Hall and via County MS Teams at 11.30am

Members in attendance:

Public Sector representatives:

Mr. Joe Thompson, LOETB (Chairperson)
Cllr. John King, Laois County Council
Cllr. Paschal McEvoy, Laois County Council
Mr. John Mulholland, CE Laois County Council
Ms. Evelyn Reddin, Laois Local Enterprise Office
Mr. Kevin Geoghegan, DSP
Ms. Paula Phelan, HSE

Private Sector representatives:

Ms. Joan Bolger, Laois PPN (Vice Chairperson)
Mr. Caroline Hoffman Business Sector
Mr. Ray Harte, Laois PPN
Ms. Nina Horan, Laois PPN
Ms. Caroline Lydon, CEO Laois Partnership Company

Apologies:

Cllr. Conor Bergin, Laois County Council
Mr. Harry Lalor, Farming Sector (I.F.A)
Ms. Rosey Kunene, Youth Sector (Youth Work Ireland Laois)
Mr. John Oxley, Laois PPN

In Attendance:

Ms. Pamela Tynan, A/Chief Officer
Ms. Suzanne O'Connor, Senior Staff Officer, LCC
Ms. Danielle Keane, Clerical Officer, LCC

Ms. Suzanne O'Connor LCC commenced roll call and registered all members present on the meeting attendance sheet.

Mr. Joe Thompson, Chairperson, opened the meeting informing members of the resignation of PPN member Mr. Naeem Iqbal. Mr. Thompson thanked Mr. Iqbal for his contribution to Laois LCDC and wished him well in his future endeavours.

1. Confirmation of Minutes of LCDC meeting held on 25th October 2023

The minutes were adopted following a *proposal from Ms. Joan Bolger seconded by Ms. Caroline Lydon*

2. Matters Arising

None

3. Correspondence

None

4. SICAP

Prior to discussions commencing in relation to the SICAP Internal Audit and SICAP 2024+ tender, Ms. Caroline Lydon, CEO Laois Partnership Company declared a conflict of interest and briefly left the meeting room while discussion were undertaken.

(a) SICAP Internal Audit – 2022 Programme

Ms. Pamela Tynan, A/Chief Officer advised that the purpose of the internal audit is to provide an independent review of the governance practices within Laois Partnership Company Ltd, in its delivery of the SICAP programme. The scope of the audit focused on:

- What governance structure is in place in Laois Partnership Company Ltd and how effective it is.

The review period was from 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2022. The audit detailed 6 findings all of which were considered “unacceptable”, the internal control framework does not meet minimum acceptable standards overall. Systematic and/or material control weaknesses were identified.

- Finding 1: Poor/Absent governance policies/practices and procedures
(Referring to board rotation, absence of letter of appointment training, Nomination of board members, unclear skills of board members, unclear skills of board members and board functions)
- Finding 2: Conflicts of Interest
(Expense claim approved by family members, no formal documentary evidence relationships within the company being declared)
- Finding 3: Inadequate recording of meetings
(No recorded that directors left room after conflict of interests were declared, unsigned minutes, poor minute taking)
- Finding 4: Policies and Procedures
(Several company policies not ratified, absence of comprehensive control systems, essential policies such as governance/ risk register/ conflicts of interest and code of conduct was either absent or inadequately communicated)

- Finding 5: Previous Audit Recommendations not completed
(Incomplete implementation of previous audits, difference in cash-on-hand amounts)
- Finding 6: Insufficient Management Response Oversight
(Previous audit reports not presented to entire board as required. Lack of board involvement in the managements response to previous audit recommendations)

Management responses from Laois Partnership are included in the report the formed part of members meeting papers and commitments have been made to address all Findings.

Laois LCDC Chairperson, LCDC Chief Officer, LCC Management as financial partner have meet with Laois Partnership to discuss the report findings. Laois LCDC SICAP sub-committee have met on 2 occasions to thoroughly discuss the report and agree the best approach in moving froward.

Ms. Caroline Lydon re-joined the meeting.

(b) SICAP 2024+ Tender

Ms. Tynan advised member that the new SICAP programme 2024-2028 was tendered this year. One tender was received from Laois Partnership and the SICAP Tender evaluation process has now concluded. Laois Partnership scored 728 out of a total Max Score available of 1090. The Min score required is 525.

The SICAP Sub-committee have meet to discuss the audit report and the awarding of the new SICAP programme. The following approach is proposed for members consideration.

- Rather than issuing a standard letter of award to the successful tenderer, a letter of award subject to certain conditions will be issued.
- Within this letter, as a condition of award, the tenderer will be requested to provide an Implementation Plan of Actions addressing the audit recommendations within the first year of programme implementation.
- The Implementation Plan will be included as an addendum to the new SICAP Contract prior to signing.
- The Implementation Plan will be closely monitored by the SICAP sub-committee and LCDC during the first year of SICAP implementation, documenting progress on a quarterly basis, including timelines and quarterly milestones for each recommendation, with release of year two funding dependent on documented implementation of the plan.

Next steps:

LCDC approval to award the tender based on SICAP subcommittee recommendation, after which:

- Letter of award will issue via e-tenders
- Once the Implementation Plan has been submitted to the satisfaction of the SICAP sub-committee, the contract can be formally signed. (contacts to be signed week commencing 18th December)
- Within 30 days of signing the contract publish an award notice on eTenders/OJEU

LCDC members were agreeable to all conditions and were satisfied to awards to SICAP 2024+ Contract based on said conditions, being proposed by Mr. John Mulholland and seconded by Cllr. Paschal McEvoy.

5. Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP)

Ms. Pamela Tynan, A/Chief Officer confirmed that 10 High Level Goals were ratified by LCDC members previously. Sustainable Objectives and High Level Outcomes have now also been developed and approved. All documentation has been forwarded to the Eastern & Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) for their consideration with a full AA & SEA assessment due to be completed by Friday 24th November. It is envisaged that the LECP will be presented to members for approval at the January 2024 meeting and will subsequently be presented for adoption at the January Council meeting.

Currently all actions are being developed which will form part of the working Implementation Plan. The LECP will be presented to members in January 2024.

This LECP has undergone SEA and AA screening in order to determine if a full detailed assessment is required. The consultant concluded that a Strategic Environmental Assessment was not required, while it was noted that as part of the Appropriate Assessment Screening that was evaluated that there are no likely significant adverse effects on the qualifying interests, special conservation interest or the conservation objectives of any designated European sites.

6. Any Other Business

Ms. Pamela Tynan, A/Chief Officer noted that following the resignation of Mr. Naeem Iqbal vacancies has arisen on the Community Enhancement Programme, SICAP and healthy Ireland Sub Committees.

Ms. Tynan sought members to nominate a member to replace Mr. Iqbal on the CEP sub Committee.

Nominated: Ms. Evelyn Reddin
Proposed: Cllr. Paschal McEvoy
Seconded: Ms. Joan Bolger

Ms. Tynan sought members to nominate a member to replace Mr. Iqbal on the SICAP sub Committee.

Nominated: Ms. Paula Phelan
Proposed: Ms. Joan Bolger
Seconded: Ms. Caroline Lydon

Ms. Tynan sought members to nominate a member to replace Mr. Iqbal on the healthy Ireland sub Committee.

Nominated: Ms. Joan Bolger
Proposed: Ms. Caroline Lydon

Seconded: Cllr. Paschal McEvoy

This concluded the business of the meeting.

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Joe Thompson
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SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** Wednesday 13th December 2023.

Mr. Joe Thompson
CHAIRPERSON – LAOIS LCDC