



## MINUTES OF MEETING

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| <b>Project Name</b>        | <p align="center"><b>Strategic Policy Committee</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Enterprise, Economic Development &amp; Tourism</b></p>  |   |
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| <b>Purpose of Meeting</b>  |  |   |
| <b>Location of Meeting</b> | <p align="center"><b>Council Chamber</b></p>   | <b>Date and Time</b>  |
|                            |  | <p>11.30 am</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> June 2022</p>   |
| <b>In attendance</b>       | <b>Name</b>  | <b>Representing</b>   |
|                            | <p>Cllr. Conor Bergin<br/> Cllr. Aidan Mullins<br/> Cllr. Aisling Moran<br/> Cllr Seamus McDonald<br/> Caroline Hofman<br/> Pat Culleton<br/> Pat Hennessy<br/> P.J. Phelan<br/> Gerry Murphy (GM), Head of Finance<br/> Mark Clancy (MC), Business Advisor, LEO<br/> Denise Rainey (DR), Administrative Officer, Business Support Unit (BSU)<br/> Dominic Reddin (DRed), Administrative Officer<br/> Elaine Moore (EM), Administrative Officer<br/> Sheila Cahill (SC), Staff Officer BSU</p> | <p>Chairperson SPC<br/> Member LCC<br/> Member LCC<br/> Member LCC<br/> Business/Commercial Rep<br/> Dev/Construction Rep<br/> Agriculture/Farming Rep<br/> Community/Voluntary Rep<br/> LCC<br/> LCC<br/> LCC<br/> LCC<br/> LCC<br/> LCC</p> |
| <b>Apologies</b>           | <p>Deirdre O`Connell-Hopkins</p>   | <p>Trade Union Rep</p>  |

| Item No. | Description   | Action By | Date for Completion |
|----------|---|-----------|---------------------|
| 1.       | <p><b>Confirmation of minutes</b></p> <p>Minutes of meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 were proposed by Cllr Seamus McDonald and seconded by Pat Culleton.</p> <p>Cllr Bergin referenced Dom Reddin taking up a new position in the Environment Section. He thanked Dom for all his work in the Tourism Area and wished Elaine Moore all the best in the role. Cllr Mullins and several other members complimented Dom on his work and wished him well in his new position.</p>   |           |                     |
| 2.       | <p><b>Support to Business (Covid 19) – Gerry Murphy</b></p> <p><b>Commercial Rates Waiver Scheme</b></p> <p>Q1 of 2022 was the last quarter of Covid-19 supports. 266 businesses have availed of the Commercial Rates Waiver Scheme at an estimated cost of €420k. There is no indication of the Scheme being extended.</p> <p>Cllr Bergin asked how many businesses have closed permanently over the pandemic. DR advised that the BSU did not have those records. However, there has been an increase in requests for business supports during the pandemic and there has also been evidence of new businesses setting up during the pandemic.</p> <p>GM advised that all the main towns in the County are covered by rates reduction under Business Incentive Scheme. LCC are also looking at extending the scheme to other villages in the County. The scheme was recently extended to Borris In Ossory. GM asked the committee to promote the Scheme. Cllr Bergin welcomed this.</p> |           |                     |

3.

**LEO Update**

Mark Clancy (MC) provided an update on the works being carried out by the Local Enterprise Office (Attached).

Cllr Mullins thanked Mark for the update and a discussion took place around businesses getting back to pre Covid-19 times. MC advised that there has been a strong bounce back with grant applications and people are working on getting new businesses set up.

**BSU Update**

Denise Rainey (DR) provided an update regarding the current projects being carried out by the Business Support Unit (BSU). (Attached).

DR asked the committee to promote the Façade Enhancement Schemes for Portlaoise and Portarlington.

GM advised that the Façade Enhancement Scheme has proved very effective to date. The improvements are very visible in Portarlington and have greatly enhanced the streetscape.

GM is looking at other town/villages that could get involved in similar Schemes.

Cllr Bergin thanked DR for her update and advised that Minister English was very complimentary on the work of BSU & LEO on his recent visit to the County. Well done to all staff involved.

Cllr Mullins agreed with GM regarding the noticeable impact of the Façade Enhancement Scheme in

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|                  | <p>Portarlington to date and that small villages / towns would greatly benefit from a similar Scheme.</p> <p>Cllr Mullins queried the large number of vacant properties in towns. DR advised that the new town centre first policy and new grants being introduced to combat dereliction will contribute to reducing the level of vacancies in towns.</p> <p>Cllr Moran suggested that LCC charge rates on each floor of buildings to encourage the use of all floors. GM advised that the Valuation Office set the valuation on buildings.</p> <p>Cllr Moran suggested that LCC employ an EU Officer like some other Local Authorities who deals only with applying for EU grants. GM to look into this further. The National Roads Authority is visiting other EU countries regarding their cycle lanes, solar panels, etc. Cllr Bergin asked GM to review.</p> <p>Pat Hennessy commented that a lot of small businesses have closed and that their properties have been set up as flats / apartments. GM advised that they don't charge rates on businesses that have closed and if a new business is set up then rates would be payable.</p> |  |  |
| <p><b>4.</b></p> | <p><b>Tourism Update – Dom Reddin</b></p> <p>Dominic Reddin (DRed) provided an update on Tourism. (Attached).</p> <p>DRed advised that there will be a Laois tent at the Ploughing Championship and that expressions of interest</p>   |  |  |

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|                  | <p>are currently being sought. The aim is to fill the Laois marquee with Laois businesses.</p> <p>Pat Hennessy advised that the National Ploughing Championship organisers are looking for volunteers for car parks &amp; accommodation. This year it is a World Event. Cllr Bergin suggested that it could be included in the PPN newsletter.</p> <p>PJ Phelan advised the committee the Leinster Fleadh is taking place in Portlaoise on 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> &amp; 10<sup>th</sup> July. Laois Partnership and voluntary participants put together a short film on the History &amp; Heritage of Laois which is almost finalised. Screening of this film will be at the beginning of July before the Fleadh. Fleadh events will take place at Colaiste Dunamase, St. Peters Church Market Square and at the Parochial Hall Railway Street. On Saturday &amp; Sunday the main events will take place in Portlaoise College and the Midlands Park Hotel. Filming for the TG4 Programme will take place on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July.</p> <p>Laois GAA is providing parking at O'Moore Park and a free shuttle bus will be available. DR to liaise with the Roads Department regarding further parking in the town. PJ Phelan also confirmed that the County Fleadh is taking place this weekend – 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> June.</p> |  |  |
| <p><b>5.</b></p> | <p><b>Laois Chamber – Caroline Hofman</b></p> <p>Caroline Hofman provided an update on the current activities of Laois Chamber.</p> <p>(Attached).</p>   |  |  |

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|    | <p>Cllr Bergin and the members complimented Laois Chamber on the success of the Jobs Fair and the Shine event. Pat Culleton also complimented the success of the Shine Festival in collaboration with Emo GAA.</p>  |  |  |
| 6. | <p><b>Tourism Related Facilities / Activities in the County</b></p> <p>GM &amp; DRed circulated a draft Promotional Tourism Brochure / Magazine to the committee.</p> <p>GM asked the committee for ideas on what can be added to this draft brochure.</p> <p>Cllr Moran welcomed the brochure as a great idea however accommodation is needed in the County. Campsites would be so beneficial.</p> <p>Pat Culleton advised that funding was granted through Laois Partnership for camping &amp; changing areas at various locations in Laois.</p> <p>Cllr Mullins suggested that although it's mainly in Offaly the Trail head for Derryounce Lakes could be included on the brochure.</p> <p>Cllr Moran advised that Carlow are putting in infrastructure for businesses interested along the Blueway's &amp; greenways. Bridges and campsites are required on the Laois side of the River Barrow.</p> <p>Cllr Bergin suggested that a map be included that lists all walks, trails, gardens etc.</p> <p>Cllr Moran suggested heritage sites could be included such as Ballyadams Castle.</p> <p>An app could be created using QR codes to promote Laois.</p> |  |  |
| 7. | <p><b>Date of next meeting:</b></p> <p>Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022 @ 11am</p>  |  |  |