

**Laois Local Community Development Committee
Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 15th December 2021
At 11:30am via Microsoft Teams**

Members in attendance:

Public Sector representatives: Mr. Joe Thompson, Laois Offaly Education & Training Board (Chairperson)
Cllr. Conor Bergin, Cathaoirleach Laois County Council
Cllr. Paschal McEvoy, Laois County Council
Cllr. John King, Laois County Council
Mr. John Mulholland, CE Laois County Council
Ms. Honor Deevy, Laois Local Enterprise Office

Private Sector representatives: Mr. Martin Crowley, Business Sector (Vice Chairperson)
Mr. Clive Davis, Youth Sector (Youth Work Ireland Laois)
Mr. Henry Burns, Farming Sector (I.F.A)
Mr. Nina Horan, Laois Public Participation Network
Ms. Joan Bolger, Laois Public Participation Network
Mr. John Oxley, Laois Public Participation Network
Mr. Ray Harte, Laois Public Participation Network
Mr. Naeem Iqbal, Laois Public Participation Network

Apologies: Ms. Ann Sheerin, HSE
Mr. Colm Purcell, DEASP
Ms. Catherine Cowap, A/CEO Laois Partnership Company

In Attendance: Ms. Carmel McNicholl, Chief Officer
Ms. Suzanne O'Connor, A/Senior Staff Officer, Laois County Council
Ms. Anne Marie Kirrane, Healthy Ireland Programme Manager
Ms. Sandra O'Neill, Laois Partnership Company
Ms. Jenny Collier, Laois Partnership Company

Ms. Suzanne O'Connor, Laois Co Co took a roll call of all attendees and registered those present on the meeting attendance sheet.

Mr. Joe Thompson, Chairperson, opened the meeting welcoming all present.

1. Confirmation of Minutes of LCDC meeting held on 17th November 2021.

The minutes were adopted following a proposal from *Cllr. John King* seconded by *Cllr. Paschal McEvoy*.

2. Matters Arising

None

3. Correspondence

Ms. Carmel McNicholl, Chief Office advised members that four items of correspondence were received, all forming part of members meeting papers.

- *Email from Dept Rural and Community Development received Wednesday 1st December 2021 titled "SICAP Increase 2020"*

Ms. Carmel McNicholl noted the correspondence referred to an increase of €4 million (i.e. 10%) to the SICAP programme nationally, with each SICAP lot area to receive an increase of 5% minimum on their 2021 allocation. In addition to the increased allocation the Dept noted that there would be no changes in the KPI targets for 2022 which will remain the same as that in 2021.

- *Email from Pobal received Wednesday 1st December 2021 titled "SICAP Budget Allocations for 2022"*

Ms. Carmel McNicholl referred to the email received advising of the SICAP 2022 budget allocation of €694,860. Taking the increased budget into account the LDC are now required to update their annual plan, adding new actions where appropriate or updating existing actions to take into the account the increased budget. It was noted that the Minister would encourage, where possible to allocate additional funding to support the delivery of the Mid Programme review priorities

- *Email from Dept Health received Tuesday 7th December 2021 titled "Healthy Laois Plan"*

Ms. Carmel McNicholl advised that following consultation, the Healthy Ireland Healthy Cities and Counties Network within the Department of Health, advised and recommended to extend the current Healthy Laois plan by one year and focus on the upcoming LCEP process for Laois. They are recommending this for all counties and cities.

- *Email from Dept Rural and Community Development received Tuesday 7th December 2021 titled "Social Enterprise Capital Grants Announcement"*

Communication announcing the successful applicants awarded funding under the scheme which is laid out under Agenda Item 6.

4. SICAP

SICAP 2022 Annual Plan

Ms. Carmel McNicholl, Chief Officer referred members to the communication received, formerly acknowledged under agenda Item 3 – Correspondence. Ms. McNicholl confirmed the 2022 budget allocation of €694,860 and welcomed the increase of €90,634 on the 2021 budget of €604,22.

As a result, the LDC are now in a position to finalise the 2022 annual plan and input the relevant information onto IRIS. A review of the Annual Plan is currently being undertaken by LCDC staff with feedback on any issues to be communicated to Pobal. It was proposed that a meeting of the SICAP subcommittee be convened on Friday 7th January 2022 in order to review the plan and provide feedback to Pobal. The final 2022 annual plan must be approved by Monday 28th February 2022.

Mr. Joe Thompson, Chairperson welcomed the increase in spending on the 2022 SICAP Programme.

2020 SICAP Audit

Ms. Carmel McNicholl, Chief Officer advised that the Dept had requested that each Chief Executive arrange at LA level to audit SICAP annually effective from 2018. Accordingly, the CE instructed that SICAP be included in the Internal Audit Plan and an audit of both financial and non-financial records be carried out to give independent assurance to the LCDC that the PI is in compliance with all requirements of the programme. LCC Internal Audit carried out a SICAP audit 2020 which formed part of members meeting papers and was brought to members attention for noting.

In the course of the 2020 Audit a processing error in claiming Maternity Benefit was noted. This resulted in an overclaim in salaries under the SICAP Programme for 2020. It was further noted by the Internal Auditor that these errors were human and accounted for less than 2% of the salary in the amount of €7,568.29. Following consultation

With POBA, the LDC should now re-pay the SICAF bank a/c with the €7,568.29 from their Centralised bank a/c and the LCDC should then deduct the same amount from funding to be paid to the LDC in 2022.

Ms. Joan Bolger asked if plans were in place to address the high priority issue concerning SURF programme. Ms. Carmel McNicholl, Chief Officer noted that arrangements are in place with the IP to address all of the priority items identified in the report.

Payment to the IP

Ms. Carmel McNicholl, Chief Officer advised that in line with communication received from the Dept on Tue 7th Dec a completed draw down request was finalised. To comply with terms of the scheme an initial payment of €115,810 less the overpayment of €7,568.29 is to be paid to the PI (Laois Partnership), representing a payment of two months funding to facilitate their cash flow requirements at the beginning of the year. The balance of €57,905 representing the third month of Q1 2022 will be released on the final approval of the 2021 Annual Performance Review and the 2022 Annual Plan.

Q1 2022 Payment (Months 1 and 2 of Q1)

Ms. Carmel McNicholl proceeded to seek approval to make payment to the IP in the amount of €108,241.71 (i.e. full amount of 115,810 less the overpayment of €7,568.290), representing two months of the Q1 2022 drawdown. Payment will be forwarded to the IP once funds are received from the Dept.

The transfer of funds to the IP in the amount of €108,241.71 representing the first tranche payment of the Q1 2022 was proposed by Cllr. Paschal McEvoy being seconded by Ms. Joan Bolger

Q1 2022 Payment (Month 3 of Q1)

In addition, Ms. Carmel McNicholl sought members approval to make payment to the IP in the amount of €57,905, representing the final month of the Q1 2022 drawdown which will only be released on the approval of the 2021 Annual Performance Review and the 2022 Annual Plan.

The transfer of funds to the IP in the amount of €57,905 representing the second and final tranche payment of the Q1 2022 was proposed by Cllr. John King being seconded by Mr. John Oxley.

5. Healthy Ireland

Additional Funding

Ms. Carmel McNicholl, Chief Officer noted that a meeting of the Healthy Ireland sub-committee convened on Tuesday 30th November, the purpose of which was to formally agree the distribution of the additional HI funding allocation in the amount of €92,801. The total Healthy Ireland Round 3 allocation has increased from €246,050 to €338,851. Members were furnished with a copy of minutes detailing the distribution of funds, being formally agreed and endorsed by the HI sub-committee at the November meeting, and the matter was duly noted.

Extension of Healthy Laois Plan 2018-2020

Ms. Carmel McNicholl advised member that following consultation with the Healthy Ireland subcommittee and on the advice of the Dept of Health, it is recommended that the current Healthy Laois plan be extended for a further year to allow for completion of the LECF process for Laois. In light of this communication Ms. Carmel McNicholl sought members approval to extend the Healthy Laois Plan to 31st December 2022. Department of Health have indicated that they are advising similar extensions nationally.

Healthy Laois Presentation – Anne Marie Kirrane Programme Manager

Ms. Carmel McNicholl, Chief Officer introduced Ms. Anne Marie Kirrane, HI Laois Programme Manager to members. Anne Marie is working closely with the newly appointed Healthy Laois Co-ordinator Ms. Emma O'Connor who continues to work on the rollout of the HI programme in Laois. Ms McNicholl noted that it was considered an appropriate time for Ms. Kirrane to make a presentation to members to familiarise them with the extensive nature of the programme and the work that has been carried out to date.

Ms. Anne Marie Kirrane, HI Laois Programme Manager thanked members for this opportunity. She noted the challenges that the current pandemic placed on local authorities and action partners to deliver the planned initiatives. In this regard an additional three-month extension of the HI R3 programme was granted in order to achieve a full spend of the awarded allocation and to deliver on the approved actions, as well as to facilitate planning for Round 4.

Ms. Kirrane proceeded to give comprehensive outline of the HI budget allocation and actions undertaken by each action partner as follows:

Laois Partnership Company:

- Christmas Food Hampers were provided to residents in Direct Provision Centres with an activity pack for the children.
- Provided 250 homes with a Christmas wellness hamper containing practical non-perishable food items, an information leaflets about supports available, the keep well campaign information, mindfulness exercises and simple recipes.
- Trip to Dublin Zoo was organised for the children in the Direct Provision centres and the entrance fee was paid by HI

Laois Sports Partnership:

- Community Fit initiative- Laois Fit with 240 participants and Laois Fit Train the Trainer for Teenagers with 30 participants
- Activator pole programme supports older adults to stay active. This 6-week workshop was provided in a variety of community settings. In addition, delivered socially distanced outdoor sessions in Mountrath, Derryounce Portarlinton & Portlaoise

Youth Work Ireland Laois

- Positive Laois was designed to support Young People aged between 10-24 who have been affected by Suicide
- Positive Presence was a youth community group focused on reaching out to people within Co. Laois to offer support and raise people's spirits.
- 2 Videos produced- "I Stay Home: My Story" & "Sing A Song-Sing A Long"

Laois Co Co Sports and Leisure Section

- Swimability - supportive mechanism to promote physical activity to target those with chronic diseases such as hypertension, heart disease, diabetes. The programme was delivered over 10 weeks, at both Portlaoise & Portarlinton Leisure Centres, very low cost to participants, thereby reducing socio economic constraints to participation, significant further discounts for those in receipt of social welfare and students.
- Parkactivity provides a supportive mechanism to encourage sedentary adults to participate in various physical activity sessions in public park spaces
- predominantly delivered outdoors in public parks in a natural setting – which has considerable benefits for mental health
- 158 sessions- average of 10-15 people attending each session, free, reducing socio economic constraints to participation.

Community Engagement

- “We’re Breastfeeding Friendly Laois” launched 1st October 2021 and aims to improve the health and wellbeing of breastfeeding mothers, babies and their families in Laois.
- “Leave a Light on” – aim- fostering a sense of positive mental health in our community
- Musical Memories- Intergenerational Project-address the social isolation felt by those in long-term care units
- Smoke Free Playgrounds-aim- ensure that smoking does not take place around young people
- Art Therapist- provides the model for non-verbal communication and expression in a safe and therapeutic environment-many of the referrals currently awaiting appointments with Primary Care Psychology, CAMHS or the Adult Mental Health Services
- LGBT+ Mural- Increase LGBT+ visibility in Laois

The Members present complimented the H.I. team on the extensive and varied work programme and the positive outcomes derived locally from same.

6. Dormant Accounts Social Enterprise Capital Grant Scheme (SECGS)

Ms. Carmel McNicholl, Chief Officer noted that the SECGS sub-committee convened on Monday the 18th October in order to appraise applications received, and forwarded their recommendation to the Dept for full approval in accordance with scheme conditions. Seven application were received under the scheme, which included one late and one ineligible application. Of the five projects recommended to the Dept four were successful in acquiring funding. Following a Departmental Press Release and subsequent correspondence the Minister has approved the following four projects, for the amounts stated.

- Ballinakill Community Development Association CLG €11.325
- Stradbally Social Services Council Ltd €8,635
- Tigh Mochua Le Cheile €2,388
- Treo Nua Resource Centre €1,446

Ms. McNicholl added staff will now commence informing the successful groups.

7. Community Activities Fund

Ms. Carmel McNicholl, Chief Officer informed members that the Community Activities Fund application process opened on Tuesday 23rd November with a closing date of Friday 7th January 2022. As stipulated in the Letter of Undertaking Laois have received an allocation of €273,048 to be divided as follows:

- Current Funding: €166,863 (Non-Pay) towards running/operating costs
- Capital Funding: €106,185 towards carrying out necessary repairs and improvements to facilities, energy efficient type projects, purchase of equipment etc.

Ms. McNicholl noted that the Community Activities Fund will support groups, particularly in disadvantaged areas:

- With their non-pay running costs for example utility bills (electricity costs, refuse charges, heating charges) or other non-pay operating costs for example rental/lease costs, insurance bills.
- Groups will also be able to use the funding to carry out necessary repairs and improvements to their facilities, purchase equipment such as tables and chairs, tools and signage, laptops and printers, lawnmowers, canopies and training equipment etc.

In response to queries, the Chief Officer advised that full clarification on eligibility criteria can be obtained on request, from the Community Department.

The LEP subcommittee will convene on Monday 7th February 2022 in order to appraise applications received.

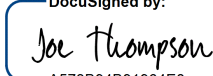
The recommendation of the subcommittee will be put forward to members of the LCDC for full approval at the February meeting.

8. AOB

Ms. Carmel McNicholl presented members with the proposed 2022 meeting dates which was unanimously agreed.

Wednesday 26 th January 2022 @ 11.30am
Wednesday 23 rd February 2022 @ 11.30am
Wednesday 30 th March 2022 @ 11.30am
Wednesday 27 th April 2022 @ 11.30am
Wednesday 25 th May 2022 @ 11.30am
Wednesday 29 th June 2022 @ 11.30am
Wednesday 27 th July 2022 @ 11.30am
August – No Meeting
Wednesday 28 th September 2022 @ 11.30am
Wednesday 26 th October 2022 @ 11.30am
Wednesday 30 th November 2022 @ 11.30am
Wednesday 14 th December 2022 @ 11.30am

This concluded the business of the meeting.

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Mr. Joe Thompson
CHAIRPERSON – LAOIS LCDC

DATE: Wednesday 26th January 2022.