

# **LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of Economic Development & Enterprise Support SPC Meeting Held In Conference Room, Boyne Centre, Drogheda on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2016 at 3.30pm**

**Present:** Cllrs: Mark Dearey (Chairman), Conor Keelan, Kevin Callan, Pio Smith  
Ms Karen Devine, Environment/Conservation  
Mr Eddie Phelan, Development/Construction  
Mr Simon McCormack, Business/Commercial

**Officials:** Frank Pentony, Director of Service  
Mary T Daly, Senior Executive Officer  
Thomas McEvoy, Head of Louth LEO  
Miriam Roe, Staff Officer

**Apologies:** Cllrs: Thomas Sharkey, Alan Cassidy, Marianne Butler  
Mr Anthony McArdle, Community/Voluntary  
Mr Paddy Donnelly, Agriculture/Farming

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### **1. Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

Upon the proposal of Karen Devine and seconded by Cllr Conor Keelan the minutes of the meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2016 were adopted.

### **2. Matters Arising:**

None.

### **3. Local Economic & Community Plan:**

Mary T circulated a hard copy of the plan to all present. She advised that the next step would be the drawing up of an implementation plan, which will then go to the steering group. The implementation plan will then be brought before this SPC. Updates will be given, on a quarterly basis, to the members of the SPC by Mary T. She stressed that it is a very good plan for County Louth and it is imperative that it is implemented and monitored closely.

### **4. Presentation – Retail Incentive Schemes**

Mary T gave a presentation to the members on these three initiatives comprising Small Business Support Scheme, New Business Incentive Scheme and Shop Front Improvement Scheme. Copies of the brochures were circulated.

- **Small Business Support Scheme:** Available to anyone with a rates demand of €5000 or less. Rates must be paid in full by 31st July or 30th November if paying by DD. Available to occupied properties. Further information from Finance Section LCC.
- **New Business Incentive Scheme:** For new businesses to locate in premises that have been vacant for at least 2 years. To actively encourage diversity in retail opportunities in key areas in Ardee, Dundalk and Drogheda. Premises vacant for a minimum of two years would be eligible for a grant of 50% of rates in year one and 25% in year two. Further information from the Louth LEO office.
- **Shop Front Improvement Grant Scheme:** Available to non domestic commercial properties within the boundary (formerly) of Dundalk TC, Drogheda BC and Ardee TC. Grants only available to independent businesses. Grants will not be offered in respect of works already completed (10th March, 2016). Possible eligible works were listed. Applicants may require planning permission and it's advisable to contact the planning section for guidance. Further information from the Economic Development Unit, LCC.

A number of items were subsequently discussed which included:

- How many premises would these schemes potentially apply to, is it significant?
- Where were the rates 'black spots', possibility of getting a breakdown regarding numbers by area.
- Is there room to expand the scheme.
- Encouraging 'clustering' and upgrading of entire streets.
- Enforcement regarding 'temporary signage' such as corrie-board. These must be eliminated from town centres.
- Database of old shop front photos might be useful.
- **Retail Excellence Expo:** Copies of the Invest Drogheda Retail and Dundalk Retail Investor Prospectus were circulated to the members ahead of the Retail Excellence Expo in Carlow. The Chairman commended the Councils presence at the event and stressed that Louth need to get big retailers on the main streets of our towns and not into the shopping centres.

## **5. Local Enterprise Office – Essential Guides for Small Business:**

Thomas McEvoy spoke about the 'Essential Guides for Small Business', which are unique to Louth and were published to coincide with Enterprise Week. The pack comprises 8 guides which captures much of the information essential to Small Business:

- Starting a business, the FAQs
- Sign-posting and networking
- The choices in setting up a business
- How to finance your business
- Sources of financial support

- Product and service delivery
- Marketing your product or service
- Preparing a business plan

Karen Devine commented that these were innovative and clever and it was great to see Louth leading the way in this area. Cllr Dearey asked if these could be made available to Accountancy Firms in the county, perhaps this could be done through CPA Ireland.

Thomas then went on to speak about the financial supports available through the LEO, including Feasibility Grant, Priming Grant and Business Expansion Grant. Details are available either via hard copy or online.

#### **6. LEO: Local Enterprise Development Plan 2016:**

Thomas McEvoy circulated a copy of the Local Enterprise Office – Louth Development Plan 2016 to the members. He gave a summary of the work done in 2015 and of the key actions to be undertaken in 2016, touching on the following:

Deliverables, targets, National Programmes that would be participated in, workshops, events and seminars available, the Trading On-Line Scheme (Vouchers), young entrepreneurs and also the funding available from Microfinance Ireland.

Eddie Phelan asked if there would be a location in Drogheda for LEO. Thomas advised that they currently operate 2 days a week from the Boyne Centre and that it might be possible to secure an office in the Fair Street complex going forward.

#### **7. Drogheda Boundary Review Update:**

Frank Pentony advised the members of the SPC that there has been no report from the Commission as yet but it was hoped that this would be forthcoming in the near future. There was also to be a meeting of the Finance Officers in the coming days, though most of the financial information available would be from Meath with regard to rates, levies etc.

#### **8. Update on the Louth Economic Forum:**

Mr Martin Cronin, who is the Chairman of InterTradeIreland has accepted the position of Chairman of the Louth Economic Forum. Mr Cronin was also Chief Executive of Forfás and Director of Operations in the IDA. Cllr Dearey welcomed his appointment and thanked Chief Executive, Joan Martin, for her interim Chairing of the Forum.

Mary T advised that the Tourism & Heritage Action Plan will go back to the working group and then will be brought before the next SPC meeting for comments and approval – as with the other Action Plans.

The next meeting will be held on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2016 at 3.30pm in the Cooley Room, County Hall, Dundalk.

This concluded the meeting:

**Confirmed at Meeting held on:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Chairman**