

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTERPRISE AND PLANNING STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY ON MONDAY 29th MARCH, 2021 AT 2PM

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR: Councillor Eddie Ryan

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors: Daniel Butler, Bridie Collins, James Collins, John Egan, Liam Galvin, Michael Murphy, Sasa Novak Uí Chonchúir, Emmett O'Brien, Jerry O'Dea, John O'Donoghue, Olivia O'Sullivan, Jerome Scanlan, Catherine Slattery.

SECTORAL INTERESTS/ PPN NOMINEES: Dr. C. Cahill and Eoin Ryan (Business/Commercial), Declan Hehir (PPN), Madeleine Lyes (PPN), Brian Thompson (PPN), Keith Enright (PPN).

OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Vincent Murray, Economic Development, Pat Fitzgerald, Cecilia Larkin, Rory Corbett, Trade & Investment; Maria Woods, Karen Burke, Forward Planning; Mike Cantwell, LEO/Innovate, Rosie Webb, Urban Innovation; Paraic Rattigan, MW Regional Enterprise; Brid Burke, Economic Development.

OTHERS:

KPMG: William Hynes MD; Aoife Doyle Manager; Daragh McGreal, Economist; Hugh Walsh, Planning Consultant; Colin King, O'Mahony Pike Architects.

Mark McDermott

Apologies: Cllr. Martin Ryan

Item 1

KPMG Consultation on the Review of the Limerick 2030 Plan (Internal Workshop)

A Team from KPMG, led by William Hynes, Managing Director, KPMG Future Analytics gave a comprehensive presentation to members on the review of Limerick 2030 – An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick. The presentation was followed by a Q&A session with members of the SPC.

Item 2

Consider the Recommendations of Limerick City & County Council's Submission to the SME Taskforce

Mike Cantwell, Head of Local Enterprise Office(LEO) and Innovate Limerick gave a presentation to the members outlining the various supports provided to SME's through the Local Enterprise Office, including Feasibility Study Grants, Priming Grants, Business Expansion Grants, Agile Innovation Fund, Trading Online Vouchers, Microfinance Loans and various Training Courses / Mentoring available to SME's. In 2020, LEO approved €4.5m in supporting SME's in Limerick.

He also outlined a range of initiatives being proposed/developed through Innovate Limerick:

HAPPEN – Role out of a range of E-Hubs in Mid-West, with centralised manager (20 No.)

Abbeyfeale Hub – Former Bank building acquired for E-Hub and works to recommence next month

Rathkeale Enterprise Centre –Part VIII planning application submitted for Industrial launderette
Kantohar Enterprise Centre – Proposed new food production centre
Bruree Enterprise Centre – Proposed new food production centre
Kilmallock Business Park – Proposals for new food business
Digital Collaboration Centre –Development will facilitate collaboration between multinational and indigenous companies - Tender for building to be approved next month
OPW Building –Proposed 6 storey Accelerator building to attract high potential Start-Ups
Royal Theatre – Plans to transform building into Convention Centre / Film Centre
Troy Studios – Attractive location for film production / locating another smaller facility for filming
Limerick Engineering Cluster – Collaboration of Tech Companies in Mid-West
Smart City / Digital – Tech initiative with Transact Campus
Business Plan – Innovate are preparing a new Business Plan for next 5-10 years

Members thanked M. Cantwell for the comprehensive presentation and welcomed the new initiatives by Innovate, which will encourage job creation in Limerick city and county.

He assured members that all parts of Limerick city and county were being considered for the location of E-hubs and that a feasibility study was being carried out at the former Convent in Cappamore for proposed use as an E-hub.

While welcoming the level of investment by LEO in SME's in Limerick, members expressed concern that a lot of small businesses and sole traders, who were a vital part of the community, did not qualify for such supports and also had difficulty in accessing finance.

M. Cantwell informed members that loans of up to €25,000 were available from Microfinance Ireland and SME's were also eligible for various training courses and mentoring provided by LEO. Supports were also available for SME's from the Leader Companies, Ballyhoura and West Limerick Resources, with grants of up to 75% funding.

Supporting members, J. Moran stated that government supports for businesses needed to be addressed and a clearly defined governance was required to cover all SME's.

He pointed out that the level of jobs lost during the pandemic could take up to 3 years to be replaced and he suggested the following:

- An analysis be carried out of SME's in Limerick prior and post Covid-19, showing the level of job displacement.
- Supporting apprenticeships for manual trades that will be required under the Housing Building Programme
- Build on home-grown sectors - similar to the Film / Food sector initiatives
- A case be made for SME's who export out of Limerick to be considered eligible for LEO funding.

V. Murray stated that ongoing monitoring of Companies was being carried out by the Rates Department and an up-to-date report will be prepared in the near future.

Replying to members regarding the setting up of a Local Taskforce to support SME's, the Chairman stated that the following item would be discussed at a Special Meeting of the Council on 8th April. That a local SME Task Force be established as a sub-committee of Innovate Limerick. That the membership of the committee would include the Mayor; 2 representatives of the Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning SPC and 2 representatives from the Business community; and a member of the Education/Training/Skills community. The committee will have a dual

reporting relationship with the Board of Innovate Limerick and the Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning SPC.

The Chairperson confirmed that membership of the Taskforce was open to all members of the SPC.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____

**Councillor Eddie Ryan,
Chairperson**