**Minutes of Laois Local Community Development Committee Meeting held on Tuesday, 6th October, 2015**

Present

Cllr John King, Chairperson, John Mulholland, Cllr Gerry Lodge, Cllr Paschal McEvoy, Joe Thompson, Linda Tynan, Robbie Quinn, Mary White, Anne Goodwin, Paddy Buggy, PJ Campbell, Michael Bergin

Apologies

Olivia Clarke, Joe Ruane, Evelyn Reddin, Dave Fingleton

In Attendance

Ian McCormack, Chief Officer, Gormla O’Corráin, Acting Senior Executive Planner

Welcome and Introduction

Cllr John King introduced and welcomed John Mullholand, Chief Executive, Laois County Council to the committee. Mr Mulholland thanked Cllr King, referred to the important role of the committee and stated that he looked forward to working with them in the future.

Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th July, 2015 were proposed by Cllr Paschal McEvoy and seconded by Paddy Buggy.

Presentation on Local Development Strategy

Anne Goodwin made a comprehensive presentation to the committee on work carried out to date on the preparation of a Local Development Strategy.

Main issues arising from community consultations:

* Lack of jobs in rural areas particularly for young people
* Reduction of services in rural areas
* Access to adequate broadband as a driver for job creation
* The environment and the limited resources.

Vision:

To create vibrant, innovative, sustainable and integrated rural communities in the County.

The presentation mainly focused on each of themes, subthemes, local objectives, strategic actions and financial allocations to be contained in the Strategy.

Cllr King thanks Ms Goodwin for the presentation on behalf of the committee and opened the floor to members for their comments and observations.

John Mulholland welcomed the allocation of funding for County Laois, emphasised the importance of broadband provision and highlighted opportunities for service providers when tendering and youth funding opportunities.

Joe Thompson stated that the youth aspect traversed across many themes and subthemes. He expressed concern at the small allocation for young people given the fact that the County has a young population.

Mary White was of the view that this programme would present opportunities, create a platform for young people and will be a positive step forward.

Joe Thompson proposed that a draft copy of the Strategy be circulated to the members of the committee for consideration. Cllr John King seconded this proposal. Ian McCormack agreed to circulate the relevant documentation to the committee. The committee agreed to consider the draft documentation over a 2 week period and reconvene on Tuesday 20th October, 2015 to further discuss same.

Presentation on the Local Economic Community Plan

Gormla O’Corrain, Acting Senior Executive Planner presented the Draft Socio Economic Statement to the members for adoption for consultation purposes.

She stated that:

* This is a six year statutory plan where community based groups, business groups, agencies and special interest groups are being asked to identify actions for inclusion in the plan and then to drive the implementation of those actions.
* The LECP will be an important document when applying for funding.
* The Socio Economic Statement gives an overview of the basic principles to be adhered to when preparing the Plan, state the affairs in the County having regard to census and swot analysis, highlights the 10 High Level Objectives and outlines the public consultation process.

She confirmed that both the LCDC and the Strategy Policy Committee for Enterprise and Economic Development will have a further opportunity to adopt the final statement post consultation period.

The consultation period will run from Friday, 9th October, 2015 to Wednesday, 10th November, 2015.

Cllr Jerry Lodge requested that Third Level be more integrated into the Socio Economic Statement before going to public consultation. The Committee agreed with this proposal.

Joe Thompson was of the view that young people should be consulted as part of this process and is willing to assist, if required. The committee supported this proposal.

Pat Buggy proposed that the Draft Socio Economic Statement be adopted for public consultation purposes, Anne Goodwin seconded this proposal.

John Mulholland asked to be excused in order to attend another event.

SICAP Midterm Report

Ian McCormack informed the members of the committee that Pobal had conducted a review of the Programme Implementers progress made to date on implementation of the SICAP Programme. Pobal’s report was referred to the Programme Implementer to enable them to respond.

Anne Goodwin responded to all matters raised in detail and the Chief Officer agreed to forward same to Pobal for consideration. The Chief Officer also undertook to engage with the Programme Implementer to ensure that all outstanding matters are resolved.

SICAP Payment

Anne Goodwin, Michael Bergin and Paddy Buggy declared a Conflict of Interest and left the room.

Ian McCormack advised the members that the Programme Implementer had surpassed their Headline Targets but a number of mid year targets set for individual actions had not been achieved and the Programme Implementer had just provided the rationale for not meeting these mid year targets. They had adhered to their Budget Parameters, additional programme considerations were satisfactory and Pobal had conducted their parallel review. He recommended to the committee that payment be made to the Programme Implementer and he undertook to engage with the Programme Implementer and liaise with Pobal with regard to Pobal’s comments on actions.

Cllr John King, Cllr Paschal McEvoy, Linda Tynan, PJ Campbell, Robbie Quinn, Mary White and Joe Thompson agreed that payment should be made subject to resolution of outstanding matters with Pobal. Cllr Gerry Lodge abstained from the vote in order to comply with Standing Orders and legislative requirements.

Any Other Business

Cllr John King welcomed the allocation of €50,0000 under a Rural Economic Development Zone Pilot Initiative and thanked Laois County Council, Laois Partnership Company, Laois Local Employment Office and Carlow Institute of Technology. The purpose of this initiative will be to promote sustained economic development in Rathdowney and surrounding areas.

Several members expressed concern about the sheer volume of information being presented and their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Ian McCormack agreed to look at some training options with a view to organising some training sessions for members.

Time and Date for next meeting

Tuesday, 20th October, 2015 at 11.30 am.

Venue: Parish Centre, Portlaoise

This concluded the business of the meeting.

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John King Ian McCormack

Chairperson Chief Officer

Laois LCDC Laois LCDC