

**Minutes of Meeting of Planning, Economic Development and Infrastructure Strategic
Policy Committee held in MS Teams on Tuesday, 20 February 2024.**

Members Present:

Councillor Sean McDermott (Cathaoirleach)
Gerry Creamer
Councillor Brendan Barry
Councillor Enda McGloin
Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire
Councillor Justin Warnock

Officials Present:

Emer Connolly
Lorraine McMorrow
Michelle Reynolds, Staff Officer
Justin Fannon, Senior Executive Officer Housing Capital

Apologies:

Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn
Stephen Clancy
Colm McGrath

1 Adoption of Minutes

Proposed: Gerry Creamer

Seconded: Councillor Finola Armstrong Maguire

2 Matters Arising from Minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3 Update on PEACEPLUS

Marian McGovern presented an update on the new PEACEPLUS Programme. Leitrim has received an allocation of €3.3 million which will be used to fund projects in the county under Three Themes - Theme 1: Local Community Regeneration and Transformation, Theme 2 Thriving & Peaceful Communities and Theme 3: Building Respect for all Cultural Identities. Marian provided an overview of the projects that will be supported across each theme. Leitrim County Council is also involved in application under Theme 1.4 – large regional capital projects. An application has been submitted for funding for the delivery of a community sports pavilion on site on Castlecara Rd, outside Carrick-on-Shannon. She is working with the Shannonside Regional Campus Committee through the application assessment phase.

Discussion followed between the members regarding the PEACEPLUS programme.

Gerry Creamer asked if the funding has already been pre-allocated?

Ms McGovern confirmed that there is flexibility on how funding can be distributed currently.

Cllr Sean McDermott queried how much the Shannonside Regional Campus could receive from PEACEPLUS.

Ms McGovern confirmed that €9 million has been sought.

4 Update on LEADER

Ms Michelle Reynolds from the Economic Development Department delivered a presentation on the LEADER Programme 2014-2020 with a total of over €6.6m allocated to 145 projects. A total budget of €6.3m has been allocated for the new Leader programme 2023 – 2027. The Leitrim Local Development Strategy has been approved. The operating rules have been received from the Department and work has now commenced at local level on the preparation of the procedures manual. The Leitrim Development Company are currently accepting EOIs and it is envisaged that the new LEADER Programme will be open for applications in April 2024.

Discussion followed between the members on the LEADER Programme.

Cllr Enda McGloin questioned on whether there was a cap on funding that an organisation can apply for?

Ms Reynolds stated that the Rural Development Observational Committee, a sub committee of the LAG will decide on the minimum and maximum grant levels once the LEADER operating rules have been finalised.

Cllr Justin Warnock noted that there has been a very long waiting time for the new programme.

Ms Reynolds confirmed that the Department are approving the programme in stages by county.

5 Update on Hedgecutting

Mr Justin Fannon, Acting Director of Services presented the updated Hedge Cutting Policy and Hedge Cutting Grant Scheme from Leitrim County Council supported by Mr. Terry McGovern. The updated policy and grant scheme includes an additional €50 grant top up per km for dealing with overhanging tree canopies on public roads. Emergency funding equal to 5% of the agreed annual hedge cutting fund budget shall be set aside for use in emergency situations, with strict eligibility criteria for use concerning the loss of essential services and recoupment of any expenditure to be sought through the courts. This emergency fund will be released for general usage if not utilised by the end of January each year. He also outlined that Leitrim County Council will increase activity in pursuing landowners that do not act upon

advisory hedge cutting notices.

Cllr Enda McGloin queried whether the grant is unique to Leitrim County Council?

Mr Terry McGovern confirmed that very few counties run a hedge cutting grant scheme and are not as generous as Leitrim.

Cllr Justin Warnock stated that it was good to have an emergency fund and that the money should be spent in the month of February each year. He also questioned if writing out to the same people every year who apply, is beneficial?

Cllr Enda McGloin highlighted that central funding is needed to tackle ash dieback.

Seán Ó Conláin stated that it is expected that 95% of Ash trees will die due to Ash Dieback disease and there is a danger that top branches will rot and fall down leaving a stump behind. A major campaign is needed separate from hedge cutting and a central government scheme to support Local Authorities is needed.

Cllr Sean McDermott noted that in the case of large overarching trees, traffic management may be required which can cost a lot of money.

Cllr Brendan Barry confirmed that following a meeting with the Department of Agriculture, the issue of Ash Dieback lies with the local authority to resolve.

Mr. Justin Fannon confirmed that the grant scheme exists to incentivise landowners to cut hedges and branches not trees.

He stated that he doesn't foresee any application being rejected if the landowner is not available to sign the grant form, as long as the leaseholder has signed.

Following further discussion by the members it was agreed to approve the updated

hedge cutting policy.

The new hedge cutting policy was agreed on the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Finola Armstrong Maguire and **SECONDED by** Councillor Enda McGloin.

6 Any Other Business

Seán Ó Conláin stated that he represents the PPN on this SPC and highlighted the importance of public participation. He described the difficulties currently being faced by the PPN and how he feels the PPN are not actively participating in the agenda.

He made some recommendations on how this could be improved. He inquired whether the agenda could be issued earlier before the meeting?

He also highlighted that plans and policies do not come back to the committee for review.

Gerry Creamer stated that presentations should be issued in advance of each SPC to allow members to review the content, this will allow for greater input by members.

Ms Lorraine McMorrow confirmed that often presentations are agendas may change at last minute or presentations are not always made available in advance of each meeting. She confirmed that she would work with speakers to ensure that as many presentations are provided in advance of each meeting.

Ms Emer Connolly confirmed that the standing orders of the SPC dictate the timelines for the issuing of the agenda for each meeting.

The next Planning, Economic Development and Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee meeting will take place on Tues 16th April 2024 at 10am.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

SIGNED: _____
Councillor Sean McDermott
Chairperson

SIGNED: _____
Lorraine McMorrow
Economic Development
Planning, Economic
Development and
Infrastructure Strategic Policy
Committee

DATE: Tuesday, 16 April 2024