



**Minutes of the Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee Held on  
2<sup>nd</sup> September at 11.00am in The County Chamber, Civic Office, Thurles**

<b>Members of Council in Attendance</b>	<b>Sectoral Interests in Attendance</b>	<b>Staff in Attendance:</b>
Cllr. Marie Murphy <b>Chairperson</b>	Mary Spillane, PPN	Anthony Fitzgerald, Head of Enterprise
Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose	Sean O Farrell, Environment North Tipp Association	Kathleen Prendergast, Economic Development Officer
Cllr. Annemarie Ryan	Michelle Aylward, Business Pillar	Mairead Winters, EU Just Transition – Tourism Activator
Cllr Kay Cahill Skehan	Thomas Cooke, Development Construction Pillar	Donough Leahy, Clerical Officer
Cllr. Declan Burgess		
Cllr. Tom Acheson		
<b>Guest Speaker:</b> Robert Malone, Irish Farmers Association		

**Apologies:** Brian Beck; Director of Services, Cllr. Roger Kennedy, Cllr. John Carroll, Cllr. Louise Morgan Walsh, Cllr Liam Browne & Cllr. Eddie Moran. **Absent:** Cllr. Joe Hannigan, Pat Carroll; Farming Pillar, Sean Reidy; Development Construction Pillar, Seamus Hoyne; TUS & Adrien Bartels, Business Pillar.

**1. Welcome**

Cllr. Marie Murphy, Chairperson open the meeting. Marie welcomed and introduced everybody both in attendance to the Economic Development & Enterprise SPC meeting. It was noted that there was no declaration of a conflict of interest.

**2. Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The Minutes of the last meeting were considered. The adoption of same was then proposed by Cllr. Tom Acheson and seconded by Cllr Kay Cahill Skehan. There were no matters arising.

**3. The Agriculture Sector and the Impact on the Economy of County Tipperary**

Robert Malone, Irish Farmers Association (IFA) gave a presentation on the Agriculture Sector and the positive impact it has on the economy of County Tipperary. Robert provided the committee with a number of statistics which showed Tipperary is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest farming county in Ireland with 182,000 dairy cows – 2<sup>nd</sup> largest in Ireland (11.4% of total), 50,000 beef cows – 5<sup>th</sup> largest in Ireland (5% of total) and over 170,000 pigs – 3<sup>rd</sup> largest in Ireland (10% of total). Robert advised that there is over 15,000 people either directly or indirectly employed in the agriculture sector in the County which equates to 20% of employment, with Over 10% of the working population in Tipperary work directly in farming. Agriculture in Tipperary contributes €2.6bn to the local economy which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest in Ireland. Robert then mentioned a Selection of Agri-business firms in Tipperary, which include ABP, Centenary co-op, Coolmore and C&C Group to name just a few. Some of the challenges faced within the county include;

- **Land Prices** – 3<sup>rd</sup> most expensive land purchase price in Ireland
- **Nitrates Derogation** – Tipperary economy heavily dependent on the dairy sector
- **Succession** – Low income levels of vulnerable sectors (dry-stock/tillage) may impact negatively. Tipperary faces similar challenge to other counties on this.

- **Sustainability** - ensuring farm businesses are sustainable across the 3 pillars of social, environmental and economic sustainability

Robert concluded by stating the overall message to the Government is that the Section needs support, being one of the most important indigenous sectors and opened to the floor for questions.

Cllr. Tom Acheson asked in relation to the cost of land being restrictive for new entrants and expansion. Robert advised that people are free to sell land where-ever they want but policy restricts inheritance tax for agricultural relief to genuine farmers.

In response to Thomas Cooke, Development Construction Pillar's query on land use policy going forward in regard non-agricultural sectors seeking to utilise land as a way to meet carbon emission targets. Robert stated that land owners are free to do what they wish with land but cited you cannot blame farmers for rising cost of food, if there is challenges for farmers not having land for food production

Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose noted the concerns regarding to generational farming and the average age of farmers being 59 years old. Robert advised a succession plan fund will to be established in 2027, which will be very important to promote the passing of managerial responsibility and assets to the next generation.

Cllr. Declan Burgess asked if there were any areas this Strategic Policy Committee should be focussing in on with the work-plan that they could do in relation to agriculture, in order to better support agricultural families. It was agreed that this could be considered in 2026 under the topic.

Cllr. Kay Cahill Skehan stated that the banks are still not making it easy for farmers to obtain money especially with the amount of regulations required to obtain a loan. Robert advised that funding is a big issue and last year they had to pressurise banks to make sure there was enough working capital for profitable farms to have enough cash flow to pay their bills.

Sean Farrell, Environment North Tipp Association had four areas of concern relating to the farming sector - water quality, food production, soil health & nature restoration and sustainability & climate change. He stated that we need to devise a policy for nature restoration and to get that strategy to the EU. Anthony Fitzgerald asked about the nitrate derogation in Tipperary being twice the output of Kilkenny and Waterford, asking if that is related to the area of the country. Robert stated on soil health that compact soils are not good soils for water quality. Well farmed land, has the better ability to filter out nutrients, whether that is spreading slurry on it or grazing animals, etc. In relation the bio-diversity, Robert said that farmers are keepers to the country-side, so it is part of their remit to try and maintain a good bio-diverse eco climate around them. Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose, along with Cllr. Tom Acheson, acknowledged the work of Anthony Coleman who is the Director of Service of LAWPRO for the huge amount of work he has done with farmers on this theme.

#### **4. Adoption of the Vacant Business-property Reopen Scheme. (VBRS)**

Chairperson Marie Murphy advised a sub-committee was set up a number of months ago to draw up the new Vacant Business-property Reopen Scheme (VBRS). A number of meetings have since taking place since where they have come up with a proposal which is being brought forward by Kathleen Prendergast today. The proposed scheme details were presented and Chairperson Cllr. Marie Murphy thanked Kathleen for the comprehensive presentation and recognised the time put in from all members on the sub-committee. She then opened it up to the committee for questions.

Following a number of clarifications and queries from Cllr. Ann-Marie Ryan, Cllr. Tom Acheson and Tom Cooke, the Adoption of the Vacant Business-property Reopen Scheme was proposed by Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose and seconded by Cllr. Tom Acheson.

The new scheme proposed would be presented to the Plenary meeting of Tipperary County Council on October 15<sup>th</sup> seeking adoption and implementation.

#### **5. Tourism in County Tipperary – An update**

Mairead Winter, Tourism Activator in Tipperary County Council gave a presentation of the updates from the Tourism Section relating to Tipperary Tourism and her role as tourism activator. A roadmap is being developed for Tipperary tourism and it will be the strategic plan over the next 5 years.

She also discussed the new 'Time for Tipperary' Discovery guide, which is now available at all airports including Dublin airport and the online order system for brochures which has gone out to all the trade. QR codes are now available which links the activities in the County to the website. An A3 pull off map which has been circulated and available to order through the tourism team which also features a range of activities and experiences.

Mairead discussed the work she is currently doing for the Just Transition Scheme B Investment Grant Aid Scheme for Private and Community SMEs. Working closely with Fáilte Ireland, with funding available to only Thurles & Carrick-on-Suir MD's, Tipperary has received funding of €1.6 million for projects such as; Barnane Rectory Project - €300,000, Forest Lane Lodges - €300,000, Noan Country House €248,000, Carrick on Suir Heritage Centre - €353,646, Cloncannon Biofarm - €122,560, Blueway Bike Hire - €47,200 and the Carrig Hotel €300,000. This is in addition to the digital development funding awarded to Hayes Hotel, Holycross Abbey and Noan Country, amounting to a total of €90,000.

Cllr. Declan Burgess complimented the work done by Tipperary Tourism and welcomed the website upgrade, citing online content being really important to promote a destination. He noted that there is currently no mention of the High King Loop walk or the Littleton Labyrinth trail. In terms of agri-food and rural tourism, he said there is a massive opening for Tipperary Tourism, Tipperary Food Producers and the local authority to collaborate together and deliver of a food festival. In relation to food festivals, Mairead advised there was a very successful long table event in the Cashel Palace recently which was very successful and supporting the Food Producers is in the road map to continue to support them with a food festival in the future.

He also requested that an elected representative be added to the Tipperary Tourism Board, which Cllr Marie Murphy acknowledged has been raised previously by Cllr. Phyll Bugler. However, it has not been raised since the new Chief Executive took on her role and thus should be raised at the next plenary meeting.

Cllr. Siobhan Ambrose said because Tipperary is such a big county, in her opinion, it is futile selling it as one package as visitors won't do a day trip by starting in Nenagh and finish in the South of the county. In response to Siobhan, Mairead advised that it is important to promote the county as a whole, however cluster development enables local packages to be developed.

Sean Farrell was pleased to hear the piece on regenerative tourism and clustering. He asked about Tipperary Heartland Tourism and the potential of using the excellent rail service to bring visitors to Thurles. He highlighted the need to upgrade a bus system to bring them to the prime micro enterprises in the area. In response to Sean, Mairead advised she has spoken with Anthony Moroney who works in the Local Link Office of County

Tipperary about a tour bus that would bring visitors from the railway station and unfortunately, they do not have funding available currently.

#### **6. Tipperary Local Enterprise Mid-Year Update**

Anthony Fitzgerald, Head of Enterprise gave an update on the work done by the Local Enterprise Office for the first part of 2025. Anthony provided the committee with the statistics of all the supports the office has provided for this period.

To date they have given out 19 Financial Support Packages which is at 45% of their yearly target. In terms of training they have currently provided 69% the target for the year and have already surpassed the target for the year with Mentoring, provided with over 398 sessions which highlights the number of enquiries received.

In terms of Lean, Green, Digital, Grow Digital and Energy Efficiency grants all are ahead of target, with the exception of the Grow Digital Voucher, however as this is a recently launched product, it is expected be utilised a lot more.

To date, 18 Micro Finance Loan applications have been submitted which is one of the strongest in the country. He then gave a breakdown of the figures which can be seen below.

Quarterly Grant Payment Performance Metric			
LEO			Target
	Cumulative	112%	80%
	M1 (Business Expansion, Priming, Feasibility, Market Explorer Grant, TAME)	EEG	Grow Digital
M1 Allocation	€733,591	€153,000	€228,550
Approved to Date	€681,616	€104,801	€14,952
Drawdown to Date	€292,500	€45,000	€45,000
Payments to Date	€339,378	€89,483	€0
Balance	€441,091	€108,000	€183,550
%	116%	199%	0.00%

#### **7. Digital Strategy Sub-Group of Economic Development and Enterprise SPC**

Kathleen advised that because of the length of time of this meeting that the next meeting would suffice for selecting interested members for the new Sub Group.

She asked that if any member was interested in joining this group to let her know in the meantime.

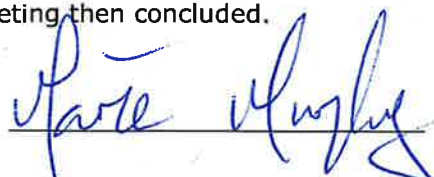
#### **8. AOB & Date of next Meeting**

Chairperson Cllr. Marie Murphy confirmed there was no other business to discuss and proposed that the next meeting would take place on December 9<sup>th</sup> 2025 in the morning time.

Cllr. Marie Murphy thanked everybody for their attendance.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed:



Date:

9/12/2026