

**PLACEMAKING**

**STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of Placemaking Strategic Policy Committee Meeting**

**held via Microsoft Teams on 17 October 2022 3pm**

**PRESIDING**: Councillor Paul Ross Chairperson

**PRESENT**: Councillors – Martin Monaghan, PJ Reilly and Colm Murray

Breda Murphy

**APOLOGIES** : Councillor Gerard Farrell

Louise Lovett, Matt Farrell, Niamh Donlon, and Vincent Fay

**IN ATTENDANCE:**  Ms. Barbara Heslin, Director of Services

Mr. Ciaran Murphy, Senior Executive Officer

Mr. Michael Nevin, A/Director of Services

**MEETINGS**

**ADMINISTRATOR**: Ann Marie Mc Keon

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

On the proposal of Councillor PJ Reilly seconded by Michael Nevin it was unanimously agreed to adopt Minutes of Placemaking Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on the July 2022 as circulated.

**MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

None.

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

None.

**UPDATE ON PLAYGROUNDS PROGRAMME**

Senior Executive Officer, Ciaran Murphy provided an update on the playgrounds and replied to queries raised on works completed, work programme, Playground Passport initiative, sensory gardens and CLÁR funding for MUGAs.

* Longford County Council working with Local Community Groups
* Longford has the second highest ratio of playgrounds per person in the Country
* 25 locations
* Playground Passport implemented – great initiative

Funding methods include:

* Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)Programme
* Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) CLÁR Programme
* Local communities and Longford County Council
* Future funding required for upgrading /refurbishment of existing playgrounds, future proofing and improving accessibility
* Focus will be on CLÁR funding for new playgrounds

CLÁR:

* Developing Community Facilities & Amenities
* Contribute to the enhancement of existing, and/or the development of new, accessible Community Recreation Facilities
* Examples of interventions that may be supported:
* Multi-Use Gaming Areas (MUGAs)/Astro-Turf Facilities, Skateboard Parks, Playgrounds, Handball Alleys, Tennis Courts, Basketball Courts, Community Gyms, Community Cinemas, Sensory Gardens, Community Gardens, Outdoor Bowling Areas, Walking / Running Tracks, Outdoor Toilet Facilities, Car Parking, Public Lighting

CLÁR Funding:

* 90% funding is available for any individual project, with a minimum grant of €5,000 and a maximum grant of €50,000 applying to this measure
* The remaining 10% or balance of the cost should be provided through local authority/community/other resources.
* All newly developed community facilities and amenities funded under the programme must be disability-friendly
* 2022: Measure 1 Funding €293,308 and €236,832.47 plus matched funding

Play & Recreation Capital Funding:

* Local Authority can apply for one project, with funding being capped at €18k for each Local Authority
* The awarding of this funding is contingent on the Local Authority funding 25% of awarded amount for each successful project
* 2022: Newtownforbes playground upgrade €13,784 grant from Dept of Children
* (DCEIDY) plus minimum of 25 % matched funding required from Longford County Council

Local Authority Funding:

* Local Authority funding now focused on the refurbishment and upgrade of existing playgrounds
* Plan of works in individual Municipal Districts (in rotation)
* Maintenance, repair and upgrade of existing playground equipment
* Matched funding for approved DCEIDY projects

Role of Local Authority:

* Apply for Department funding to upgrade existing playgrounds
* Assist Community Groups with CLÁR applications
* External Health and Safety Audit of all playgrounds – included in the schedule of works
* Technical employees do a visual inspection once a week
* Provide insurance for LCC playgrounds
* Work Programme
* Green Gyms in Mall and Edgeworthstown
* Equipment repaired and replaced
* Assisted Community Groups in accessing CLÁR funding for playgrounds in Cullyfad and Dromard

Longford County Council Priorities:

* Ensure that playgrounds are maintained to a high standard
* Identify opportunities to improve existing playgrounds and respond to the needs of children using our playgrounds
* Increase accessibility of playgrounds for children with disabilities
* Initiative to include QR codes to improve accessibility of the Outdoor Gym Equipment (eg at the Mall)
* Provide new communication boards in all playgrounds
* Provide quiet area for children with autism

The SPC agreed that the future focus must be on the maintenance, upgrade and improvement of existing playgrounds and increasing accessibility for young people and children with disabilities.

**TERRITORIAL PLAN UPDATE**

A/Director of Services, Michael Nevin updated the members on the Territorial Plan and the START technical assistance process which is primarily targeted at municipal authorities:

Outcomes – National Just Transition Fund

* The Department has now finalised grant agreements with successful projects through the Fund
* The Department is supporting 56 projects, which includes 16 projects which started project delivery in September 2020 and 40 projects which started project delivery in June 2021
* Supported projects are diverse and cover a range of opportunities for the region. They include new enterprise hubs, supporting local business development, research and exploratory studies, tourism and heritage projects, and opportunities for reskilling
* The Fund is providing €22.1 million in grant funding to the projects
* These projects will support an estimated 178 direct and 999 indirect jobs, as reported by the grantees

EU JTF & the Operational Programme

* EU JTF €84.5M matched by exchequer to bring to €168M •
* Both the Territorial Plan and the Operational Programme must be agreed with Commission by 31.12.2022
* Alignment with article 8 of EUJTF regulation and overall conformity to EU regulations

Key Findings of the Consultation Process

* Broad consensus that the development needs identified in the draft Plan were strong and synergistic
* Need to address rural decline and offer a sustainable future for young people in the Midlands
* Youth consultation highlighted a desire for more sustainable transport options to avail of new employment and skills opportunities in the Region
* Potential for EU JTF to be a tool to create/sustain viable communities, through supporting local enterprise and SMEs in agribusiness & tour

Priority Areas

* Generating employment for former peat communities by investing in the diversification of the local economy
* Supporting the regeneration and repurposing of peatlands and related land
* Providing former peat communities with smart and sustainable mobility options to enable them to benefit directly from the green transition

Next Steps

* Ongoing discussions with the European Commission to be completed by mid-September
* Finalisation of TP & Operational Programme and submission to European Commission
* Finalisation of the SEA process including public consultation
* Programme Monitoring Committee to be established

EU Coal Regions in Transition Platform

* Just Transition Platform Conference 24‒26 October 2022
* The conference, organised by DG ENER and DG REGIO, will bring together European decision-makers and representatives from coal, peat, lignite and oil shale regions (“coal+ regions”) as well as carbon intensive regions to discuss making use of European tools to facilitate just transition

Michael outlined the details of the [EU Initiative for coal regions in transition](https://scanner.topsec.com/?d=1424&r=show&u=https%3A%2F%2Fenergy.ec.europa.eu%2Ftopics%2Foil-gas-and-coal%2Feu-coal-regions%2Fsecretariat-technical-assistance-regions-transition-start_en&t=bcc2962ac009c397bd3811c75776096063591a35) which is launching a new call for applications for technical assistance (“START”- Secretariat Technical Assistance to Regions in Transition - applications) to support just transition-related activities in coal, peat, and oil shale regions across the EU.

The call for START applications will open on **17 October 2022,** with delivery of support planned to begin in Spring 2023.

It was agreed that Michael would circulate a copy of his presentation and details on the START applications to the Members. Michael provided comprehensive responses to the questions raised by the members. Barbara recommended that any business transitioning from peat should engage with their Local Enterprise Office for advice and direction.

Martina Needham suggested that experience and learnings from a proposed UNESCO project in Clara could inform plans for the development of the proposed biosphere Wilderness Park in Longford.

Barbara provided the Members with an overview of the Just Transition project – Climate Action Midlands Training and Mentoring Programme. The project is being led by the CARO with support from the 8 Local Authorities.

The programme is aimed at building capacity and empowering impacted communities. Its objectives are to

* Create a targeted programme of education, training and mentoring based on differentiated priorities, needs, knowledge, strengths and capacities of impacted communities.
* Assist in building the capacity and empowering impacted communities to explore and capitalise on opportunities to generate, leverage and realise positive economic opportunities from delivering on low carbon and climate resilient objectives.
* Support impacted communities to honour, build upon and enhance their historical, cultural and community identity as part of the diversification of changing economic circumstances and the transition away from peat extraction industry.
* Work through existing economic and community development structures of Local Authorities to strengthen dialogue, nurture collaboration, create synergies and networks and build a strong foundation for successful capacity-building partnerships.
* Foster a participative approach within impacted communities to build a shared climate action vision that works at local and regional levels aligning with local development policy to deliver on national climate obligations.
* Highlighting the importance of ‘learning by doing’ by developing a mechanism for the evaluation and tracking of implementation and progress providing for updates and feedback to inform the Just Transition processes.

**CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT TWINNING POLICY – AS CIRCULATED**

Director of Services, Barbara Heslin informed the members that in April 2022 the Cathaoirleach and CPG requested that the Local Authority carry out a review of existing twinning arrangements and develop a protocol on Twinning.

Barbara outlined some of the feedback obtained and challenges identified during the consultation phase including:

* The importance of having a local committee in place to support and manage the work associated with town twinning and ensure that links are sustained and deliver on the twinning objectives.
* Need for a policy on twinning.
* Need for clear objectives, action plan and KPIs – partner committees in France are now very much focused on this.
* Work involved in maintaining the twinning arrangement.
* Age profile of existing twinning committee members.
* Challenge getting new people, and in particular young people and schools, involved.
* Change in languages being taught in schools – move from French to other languages.
* COVID-19 and impact on hosting arrangements.
* Need for Municipal District support through funding. Fund raising has become more challenging.

Councillor Paul Ross confirmed the challenges faced by twinning committees based on his engagement with the Ballymahon Twinning Committee.

Barbara highlighted the key elements of the draft policy to the members.

* Purpose of the policy
* Requirement that legislative requirements are met
* Twinning is a reserved function of the Local Authority
* Roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority, Council, Municipal Districts, CPG, SPC and Corporate Services
* General principles underlying the policy
* Criteria for assessing new and existing twinning arrangements
* Process for assessing twinning applications and the role of the SPC
* The policy clearly sets out the criteria which must be met in order for an application for twinning be progressed
* The policy outlines the Twinning arrangements which are in place, those that have lapsed and those that are not active.
* Twinning events – Guidance and direction will be provided by Longford County Council to community groups and committees arranging twinning events
* Funding – central and Municipal District. Local committees will be supported by the Municipal Districts. Funding should be allocated from the General Municipal Allocations in each Municipal District for twinning arrangements.
* Each committee should have an action plan where specific actions and KPI’s can be delivered on.
* Emphasis on the importance of community involvement in the twinning
* There is a huge focus on youth and attracting new people on to twinning committees

Barbara responded to the questions raised by the members.

Councillor Paul Ross said that it was an excellent document and clearly outlines what is required. The Members complemented the draft policy and on the proposal of Councillor PJ Reilly, seconded by Councillor Martin Monaghan the members unanimously agreed to accept the policy as circulated and to forward the document to the Corporate Policy Group and Council meeting for consideration with their recommendation for approval and adoption.

**CONSULTATION ON DRAFT COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES AND MONUMENTS POLICY – AS CIRCULATED**

Director of Services, Barbara Heslin informed the members that in July 2022 the Cathaoirleach and CPG requested that the Local Authority develop a policy on Commemorative Plaques and Monuments. A new Protocol and Procedures Committee was established by the Council. At their last meeting they reviewed this policy and asked for it to be forward to the SPC for consultation.

The policy sets out the process by which Longford County Council will consider the commemoration of events or individuals who have shaped the County, either by the naming of infrastructure or by the installation of monuments, memorials and plaques in the public domain.

Longford County Council recognises the need for a policy to manage commemorative plaques and monuments. It is important for Longford County Council to establish a policy on this matter because of:

* The need to have clarity regarding the policy and procedures for the consideration of proposals from individuals and interest groups
* The increased level of demand for the naming of infrastructure and the erection of plaques, memorials and monuments
* The emotive nature of requests where people are recently deceased
* The need to ensure that a proliferation of memorials and plaques does not detract from the wider amenity and enjoyment of public spaces

Barbara highlighted the key elements of the policy to the members.

* Purpose of the policy
* Roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority, Council, Municipal Districts, CPG, SPC and Place Naming Committee and Corporate Service.
* General principles underlying the policy
* Criteria which will be considered when assessing an application for a civic memorial, monument or plaque
* Procedures for dealing with proposals

Barbara explained to the members that they have until Friday week to make a submission on the policy document. The members welcomed the policy and Barbara replied to questions raised on sponsorship of roundabouts. Barbara clarified that this policy should not impact on sponsorship arrangements and that is will not impact on existing infrastructure which is already named.

The Members complemented the draft policy and on the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross, seconded by Councillor PJ Reilly, the members unanimously agreed to forward the document to the Corporate Policy Group and Council Meeting for consideration, with their recommendation for approval and adoption, if there were no changes to it following the final stages of the consultation process.

**CONFIRMATION OF DATES FOR THE 2023 MEETINGS – as circulated**

Senior Executive Officer, Ciaran Murphy outlined to the meeting that it may be necessary to hold a meeting of this committee prior to 23 January 2023 as the Socio-Economic Statement and associated high level goals are out to public consultation. The members unanimously agreed to Ciaran’s request.

On the proposal of Councillor PJ Reilly, seconded by Martin Monaghan, the members unanimously agreed the dates of the 2023 meetings.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

**Confirmed and adopted at Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on the**

**23 January 2023.**

**AnnMarie McKeon**

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

**Ann Marie Mc Keon**

**Meetings Administrator**

***Paul Ross***

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

**Chairperson.**