

Chairman's Report of

Meeting of Economic Development, Enterprise Support and Tourism (SPC1)

Held via MS Teams on Friday 18th September 2020

1. Mr. Sean McKeown provided an update on the challenges that Covid-19 were posing for the local economy, in particular, the Retail and Hospitality sectors, with 26% of the workforce availing of support in the form of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) or the Wage Subsidy Scheme. He stated that there has been a 70% drop (3,250) in people applying for the PUP since May and a 20% drop in people availing of the Wage Subsidy Scheme, with the South East Regional Office forecasting that a total of 26,500 jobs across all sectors, could be lost by the end of 2020 in the South East. Mr. Mc Keown stated that the main priority for the Local Authority at present was to continue to support local business.
2. Mr. Martin Prendiville provided an update on the Restart Grant stating that the closing date for this grant was the end of August and 966 applications had been submitted, 826 processed totalling €2.95M. Mr. Prendiville stated that as part of the July Stimulus Package, a further support was available in the form of the Restart Plus Grant with a minimum payment of €4,000 and a maximum payment of €25,000, with 812 applications submitted of which 134 have been processed totalling €8M. Mr. Prendiville also noted that the current 6 months Rates Waiver Scheme would end on the 27th September.
3. Ms Martina Comerford provided an update on the work of the Kilkenny Tourism Recovery Taskforce, stating that Fáilte Ireland had launched their National Media Campaign entitled – “Ireland ~ Make a Break for It” and that Kilkenny has featured strongly in its TV, Print Media and Social Media platforms. Ms. Comerford also provided details of other areas related to Tourism:
 - Fáilte Ireland supports available namely the Covid-19 Safety Charter and the Covid 19 Adaptation fund;
 - Update on the Kilkenny Welcome Team;
 - Medieval Audio Guide;
 - CONNECTED Sculpture Trail;
 - Butler Art Gallery open with free admission;
 - occupancy in the city is currently between 40-50%, however, the forecasted occupancy figures for Q4 are weak;
 - The WolfWalkers Film to be screened in the IMC Cinemas during Kilkenny Animates Festival on 1st weekend of October with walking and sketching tours being arranged by Cartoon Saloon throughout the month of October with artwork displayed in Butler Gallery launching at the end of the month;
 - Kilkenny Day taking place on 11th October;
 - Launch of Kilkenny Tourism's Autumn PR & Marketing campaign entitled “Loving History... Loving Culture”.
4. Ms. Fiona Deegan provided an update on the following:
 - Key Performance Indicators for the Local Enterprise Office - take-up on supports had increased dramatically for Training Programmes, One to One Mentoring, Trading on Line Vouchers and Business Continuity Vouchers;
 - Brexit and the range of supports available including Customs Training Workshops, 1:1 Mentoring Clinics and Webinars;

- New County umbrella brand and website www.kilkenny.ie initiated by the City Centre Task Force under the tagline 'The Best of Ireland'.
 - #TasteKilkenny Tour in partnership with KCLR and Carlow County Council which aims to promote all things food and drink over the coming months in County Kilkenny;
 - Micro Enterprise Grant, which provides supports from €500 to €1,000 for eligible businesses as a contribution towards the cost of re-opening or keeping a business operational and re-connecting with employees and customers.
5. Mr. Denis Malone provided an update on the City and County Development Plan, stating that there is now one plan with two volumes – County and City. Mr Malone went through the process and indicated that the Draft Plan is now ready to go to the members for approval before it goes for public consultation for a period of 10 weeks. Targets are to be set out in the plan, with measured results, with regards to Climate Change. Rural Housing Policy, Renewable Energy Strategy and the Transport Plan are all to feature in the Policy for Climate Change.
- Mr Malone also provided an update on the following Masterplans:
Loughmacask – Work is underway.
St Canice’s Campus – Joint Plan with the HSE. Early Stage of consultation.
Fairgreen – Appointment Finalised.
6. It was agreed that the next meeting of the SPC1 would take place on Friday 4th December 2020

CLLR. Ger Frisby
Chairman

Date: _____