MINUTES OF MEETING IN-COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY, 16TH APRIL, 2018 AT 3.00 P.M.

Chair: David Fitzgerald

Cllrs: Eamon Aylward, John Brennan, Tomás Breathnach, Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Peter Cleere, Fidelis Doherty, Matt Doran, Michael Doyle, Pat Dunphy, Ger Frisby, Pat Fitzpatrick, Breda Gardner, David Kennedy, Andrew McGuinness, Patrick McKee, Joe Malone, Michael McCarthy, Pat Millea, Malcolm Noonan, Patrick O' Neill, Maurice Shortall and Sean Tyrrell.

Officials: Colette Byrne, Mary J. Mulholland, Sean McKeown, Tim Butler, Martin Prendiville, Denis Malone, Nicolaas Louw, Michael Delahunty, Eimear Cody, Pat Crotty, Martin Mullally, Seamus Kavanagh & Anne Maria Walsh.

Apologies: Cllr. Melissa O'Neill.

Item 1:   Castlecomer Discovery Park [CDP]
Mr. Martin Prendiville advised that a request has been received from the Castlecomer Discovery Park for additional funding. Discussions have been ongoing with the Directors in relation to the operation of the facility. Kilkenny County Council asked Mr. Dermot Gaynor to review the operation and prepare a report with recommendations on improving the operation of the facility. Due to adverse weather conditions over the last year the income was substantially reduced. Following these discussions the option of providing a repayable grant of €100,000 to be repaid over 3/4 years is being recommended for approval by the Members.

Contributions were received from Cllrs. Doran, Cavanagh, Kennedy, Tyrrell, P. O'Neill, Dunphy, Breathnach, Gardner, Noonan, McKee, Malone, Fitzpatrick, Shortall, Doyle, Brennan, Aylward & Fitzgerald.

Members spoke about this tourist attraction as a flagship project in North Kilkenny and the need to keep the facility operational. Concerns were expressed in relation to the following:

- Cost of using the facility.
- Ongoing intervention to fund operational costs and the need for the facility to be sustainable.
- Precedent for others to seek financial support.

Ms. Byrne advised that weather has affected the operation in 2017. The Board is prepared to implement the recommendations in the review report. There are up to 47 staff employed at the peak each year. The company is prepared to pay back the money over 3/4 years. This is a social not for profit enterprise with significant economic benefit in Castlecomer and surrounding area.

It was proposed by Cllr. Maurice Shortall, seconded by Cllr. John Brennan and agreed that:

"Approval is hereby granted to the issue of a repayable grant of €100,000 to Castlecomer Discover Park. The grant is repayable over four years from the initial drawdown."

Item 2:   Butler Gallery
Mr. Prendiville advised that the tenders have been received for the new construction of the Butler Gallery at Evans Home. The amount of the successful tender is €4,348,000. The estimated total project cost is €5.5m which is higher than the estimated cost and is primarily due to increase costs in the construction sector. Grants have been approved by the Department of Culture, Heritage & Gaeltacht & Failte Ireland. Kilkenny County Council will have to fund the balance of €2,400,000 in the Capital Account. It is intended to proceed with this project and make provision in the Capital Budget for 2018 – 2020, which will include borrowing for this project.

Item 3: Variation for Housing Projects

Ms. Mary Mulholland advised that Housing has identified two plots in Kilkenny City for infill housing. She outlined the location of these sites in her PowerPoint Presentation. These sites are currently zoned for "open space and amenity" and "community facilities."

The indicative number of houses for the sites are as follows:

Site 1: 8 units
1/2 bed houses and 4 bed homes – suitable for decongreation.

Site 2: 17 units
Mix of 1/2/3 bed – opportunity to improve this open space to make it more usable.

For these projects to proceed variations of the City & Environs Development Plan are required.

Members welcomed these two infill proposals and asked that public consultation take place as soon as possible. Members agreed to allow the variation process to commence. The projects will be subject to Part 8 planning processes.

Item 4: CLÁR

Ms. Mary Mulholland outlined the main requirements of the CLÁR Scheme for 2018. She advised that the closing date for submission to the Department is 30th April, 2018. The Council can make up to 15 applications. She stated that the schedule of school safety proposals under Measure 1 has been largely prepared from the 2017 unsuccessful proposals. The Council advertised for proposals under Measure 2 [Play Areas]. One proposal was received by the closing date on 13th April, 2018.

Staff are currently preparing the full schedule of proposals for submission to the Department.

Item 5: Third Level Education

Ms. Colette Byrne advised that the Council had engaged Consultants to do research/study on the provision of Third Level Education and campus in Kilkenny City. She stated that Maynooth University will be leaving the campus at St. Kieran's College in May 2018.

The Report is complete and the launch of the Report will take place on 30th April, 2018. It is hoped that Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor will launch the Report.

Ms. Colette Byrne advised that there is ongoing discussions on a multi-campus Technological University for the South East between Waterford IT and Carlow IT.

The Abbey Quarter Partnership has carried out a Feasibility Study accommodating a campus for approx 1,000 students in the Abbey Quarter. It has determined that three blocks would be required for a campus and can be accommodated on Plot 7.

Mr. Sean McKeown advised the Members that there is a growing demand for Third Level spaces into the future. The estimated demand is 57,000 additional spaces. A campus to cater for a minimum of 1,000 is desirable in order to offer the full student experience within the one location.

Cllrs. Fitzpatrick and McKee requested clarification on proposed location of campus and provision of student accommodation.

Ms. Byrne responded to these queries.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

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