

ANNUAL REPORT
FOR
MEATH LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
(LCDC)
2022



1.0 Chief Officer's Statement

LCDC's are required under Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2014 (S128B of the Local Government Act 2001) to prepare, adopt and submit an annual report to the Local Authority no later than the 31st March each year in respect of the performance of its functions in the previous year.

This report outlines progress in respect of the various LCDC functions during 2022.

Since the submission of the last report, Meath LCDC and its sub-groups had a busy and productive year which saw the national response to the Ukrainian war and a focused response to help Ukrainians who re-located to Co. Meath. The LCDC meetings transitioned from taking place fully remote to a blended approach with ongoing use of the Zoom platform. Each member has continued to embrace this way of working and the committee continues to deliver on the commitments for each of the programmes.

The current Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is ongoing with Meath Partnership as the Programme Implementer. With the arrival of the Ukrainians in Co. Meath, their immediate needs were addressed through a co-ordinated approach from relevant agencies including the SICAP team. Despite the challenge, the actions set out in the 2022 Annual Plan were completed and significant progress was made with the relevant groups. The sub-committee continue to work constructively in its review and monitoring of the SICAP programme.

The LCDC acts as the Local Action Group (LAG) for the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 in Meath. The LEADER programme has added to the already significant role played by the LCDC in the oversight of public funding to bring about the improved social, economic and community development of the County.

The 31st December 2022 saw the end of the Transitional LEADER programme which comprised of a total budget allocation of €1,412,003 plus a EURI budget of €627,557. At the end of 2022, the total budget had been committed and there were thirty-four projects approved. Claims continued to be paid out to the applicants with fifty-five claims processed during 2022. Work on projects continued however covid has had an ongoing impact on the delivery of projects and a number of promoters sought extensions to the term for project completion, these went to a postal vote and term extensions were granted in all cases.

The LCDC managed, implemented and collaborated in relation to a number of public-funded programmes under its remit which included the Community Activities Fund and the commencement of Round 4 of the Healthy Ireland Fund. The LCDC ensured

that these schemes complied with and were compatible with the existing Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

2022 also saw the commencement of the development of the next Meath Local Economic and Community Plan with the appointment of the consultancy group Hub Planning. Extensive consultation on the socio-economic statement and draft high-level goals took place in 2022, including on-street surveys, interest group meetings and various social media platforms, with the feedback on the consultation being used to finalise the high-level goals and help with the development of an implementation plan. The LECP Advisory Steering Committee, which includes representatives from the LCDC and from the community, will continue working on the development of the LECP with Hub Planning in 2023 and it is expected that the LECP will be completed and adopted in mid-2023.

The Meath LCDC has 19 members and during 2022 there was 3 changes in membership with Lorraine Flynn from the Health Service Executive (HSE) filling the vacancy left by Tom Oxley's retirement at the end of 2021. Lorraine's first meeting was 25TH November 2022. Sharon Curran, Dept of Employment Affairs & Social Protection filled the vacancy left by Paul Carroll's resignation. Sharon's first meeting was 25TH March 2022. Shola Yahya, Social Inclusion Pillar filled the vacancy left by the resignation of Anna Melnick. Shola's first meeting was 29th April 2022.

I would like to sincerely thank the outgoing members for their contribution to the LCDC during their tenure.

The Membership of the LCDC at 31st December 2022 was:

- Ms Jackie Maguire, Chief Executive, MCC
- Cllr Yemi Adenuga
- Cllr Elaine McGinty
- Cllr Mike Bray
- Ms. Sharon Curran, Dept of Employment Affairs & Social Protection
- Ms Sadie Ward McDermott, Louth / Meath Education & Training Board
- Mr. Lorraine Flynn, Health Service Executive
- Vacant, Údarás na Gaeltachta
- Mr Joe English, Local Enterprise Office
- Mr Michael Ludlow, Meath Partnership
- Mr Gareth O'Brien, Community Sector
- Vacant (Community Sector)
- Ms Susuana Komolafe, Social Inclusion Sector
- Ms Shola Yahya, Social Inclusion Sector
- Vacant, Business Sector
- Ms Suzanne Brady, Environmental Sector (Chairperson)
- Mr Seamus McGee, Farming Sector

- Mr Noel Maguire, Trade Union Sector
- Ms Geraldine Hogarty, Youth Work Ireland Meath

During 2022 a total of 7 LCDC meetings were held. Dates of the meetings are listed below:

- 28th January 2022
- 25th February 2022 (LAG only)
- 25th March 2022
- 29th April 2022
- 27th May 2021
- 29th July 2022
- 23rd September 2022
- 25th November 2022 (LAG Only)
- 16th December 2022

As set out in the Standing Orders, the quorum for LCDC meetings is 11 and for LAG meetings is 10. All meetings that took place in 2022 met the requirement for the quorum. No meetings during 2022 had full attendance and the meetings in June (LCDC & LAG) had to be cancelled due to lack of a quorum. The LCDC meetings in February and November did not proceed due to lack of a quorum.

I look forward to supporting the LCDC in carrying out its functions during 2023 which will see the adoption of the new LECP, commencement of the implementation of the LECP, development of a new Local Development Strategy (LDS) and commencement of the new LEADER programme.

Fiona Fallon
Chief Officer

2.0 Progress on the Community Elements of LECP

The Guidelines for the preparation of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) were published at the end of 2021. During 2022 consultants, Hub Planning were appointed to prepare the LECP for Meath. Work commenced on LECP with a review of the previous LECP carried out. This review informed the development of the draft socio-economic statement and the high-level goals. Extensive consultation took place in Q3 of 2022 through the following channels:

1. Social media campaign
2. Online public and business surveys
3. Online Meath Consultation Portal submissions
4. Pop-up/Pop-in street consultation
5. Online information and feedback session
6. Targeted community and sector focus groups.

Over six hundred people got directly involved with the consultation, the results of which are being used to and revise the wording of the high-level goals and inform the development of the implementation plan. 2023 will see the identification of the actions to be delivered and the relevant agencies who will need to work in collaboration to deliver the actions. It is hoped to have the Meath LECP adopted in Q2 2023.

3.0 Implementation, Management & Oversight of Public-Funded Programmes

- **LEADER (RDP) 2014 – 2020 and Transitional LEADER Programme**

The Transitional LEADER programme was completed on 31st December 2022 with 100% of the budget, €1,720,841.04 committed at this date.

At the end of 2022, which signified the end of the Transitional LEADER programme, there were 34 projects approved by the LAG. Fifty-five claims were submitted by the promoters and paid during 2022. In total 80% of approved grants (LEADER & Transitional LEADER programme) have been drawn down by the end of 2022. Submission of claims will be ongoing over the 12 months.

Eligible Expressions of Interest's continued to be received under the rolling calls under the Transitional Programme.

The Rural Development Programme monitoring committee met once, in December 2022 to review progress of the programme.

The Department of Rural and Community Development sought expressions of interest for the role of Local Action Group for the next programme LEADER 2023-2027. It was agreed that Meath LCDC and Meath Partnership would submit a joint EOI with the LCDC to act as LAG for the next LEADER Programme. Subject to confirmation that the EOI is eligible, a Local Development Strategy will be prepared during 2023 with the next LEADER programme expected to commence in late 2023.

- **Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022**

SICAP is a national programme which aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnership between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies. The aim of SICAP is to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality through local, regional and national engagement and collaboration. The 2022 SICAP Budget saw an increase in the budget for Meath to €405,136.

The war in Ukraine started in February 2022 and saw large numbers of Ukrainian citizens arrive in Ireland seeking accommodation and support. The Community Response Forum was reconstituted to assist with the crisis and facilitate agencies working together in a co-ordinated effort to ensure that the Ukrainians received all the necessary support. A large part of the response was under the SICAP programme the staff of which have ensured that support and help was provided to Ukrainians housed in Meath. The main supports related to language, employment and wellbeing. The DRCD provided additional funding of €144,235 specifically for the Ukrainian response. The SICAP 2022 Annual Plan was updated to include the actions specifically for the Ukrainian response.

The SICAP sub committee met a number of times in 2022 with the programme implementer to review mid-year progress, budget spend and progress for the year. The targets set under Goal 1 (groups) and Goal 2 (individuals) were exceeded in 2022. There has been very good engagement between the SICAP sub-group and the PI in raising issues that should be addressed or progressed. However, transport and housing continue to be the two main barriers facing those participating in SICAP programmes in 2023.

The Department of Rural and Community Development have provided additional funding for the Meath Wellness Hub which is linked to the SICAP programme. Meath Wellness Hub continues to support the culture of a modern recovery community orientated mental health system and work with various organisations that represent and engage with the client groups that

will benefit from the Hub services. It should be noted that clients of Meath's SICAP programmes have an 89% chance of having one of more barriers to Social Inclusion with no access to transport and living in a jobless household being the two most common. The national average is 70%.

- **Funding Schemes**

A number of funding initiatives were made available to the LCDC in order to recommend funding allocations to applicant groups.

Community Activities Fund

The Community Activities Fund (CAF) was announced at the end of 2021 with an allocation of €285,786 to Meath LCDC. This scheme was to provide small grants to community groups impacted by Covid and supported groups with their running costs such as utility or insurance bills as well as improvements to their facilities. Grants to the successful recipients, 95 in total, were approved at the March LCDC meeting. This ongoing funding has been a welcome investment in the communities at a time when traditional fund-raising options were curtailed and any work that was carried out was very restricted.

Heathy Ireland Fund Round 4

In June 2022, round 4 of the Healthy Ireland Fund commenced. The allocation to Meath was €40,000 for the delivery of priority health and wellbeing projects. The Healthy Ireland Co-ordinator for Meath was also appointed in August of 2022 and will work to preparing the Meath Healthy Ireland strategy which is to be rolled out between 2023-2025.

4.0 Joint Louth Meath Migrant Integration Strategy

The Migrant Integration Forum continued to meet on a quarterly basis with meetings taking place on 3rd March, 6th June, 9th September and 12th December 2022. There has been substantial progress in delivering on the actions as set out in the strategy however challenges remain in receiving updates from all the agencies involved. The next meeting of the Forum will take place on 30th March 2023.

I look forward to working with all members of the LCDC to continue to deliver on the programmes and strategies which will ensure a better quality of life for everyone living in County Meath.

Suzanne Brady, LCDC Chairperson