



**Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall**
Donegal County Council



LCDC
Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Aitiúil
Dhún na nGall
Donegal Local Community Development
Committee

**Minutes of Donegal Local Community Development Committee Meeting
County House, Lifford & online via Teams at 10am on 23rd January 2024**

Members in attendance	John McLaughlin – DCC, Micheal Mac Giolla Easpaig – Údarás, Charlene Logue – PPN, Padraic Fingleton - DLDC and James O'Donnell - ICMSA
Members in attendance via Teams	Cllr. Niamh Kennedy – DCC, Brenda Hegarty – LEO, Shauna McClenaghan – IDP, Anne McHugh – ETB, Máire Uí Mhaoláin – Comhar and Aengus Kennedy - PPN
Apologies	Maria Ferguson – HSE, Paul Hannigan - ATU, Liam McElhinney – ICTU & Joe Boland – PPN
Chief Officer	Paddy Doherty
Attending	Liam Ward, Ciaran Martin, Adrienne Kelly and Charlene Gillespie

Welcome

Cllr. Niamh Kennedy welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

1. Draft minutes of the LCDC meeting of 13th December 2023

The minutes of the previous LCDC Meeting, as circulated with the agenda, were considered.

On the proposal of Shauna McClenaghan, seconded by Charlene Logue, the minutes of the LCDC Meeting of 13th December 2023 were adopted.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Local Enhancement Programme

Ciaran Martin advised members that the Local Enhancement Programme 2024 was launched on 6th December 2023 with a focus on small capital works and the purchase of equipment for community use such as improved access for persons with a disability; enhancing community participation for disadvantaged and marginalised groups and improving energy efficiency of community facilities to reduce ongoing costs.

Donegal LCDC have been allocated € 258,776.87 for award under the Programme. This total amount comprises of:

- **€215,647.39** capital funding to use towards carrying out necessary repairs and improvements to facilities, energy efficiency type projects, purchase of equipment etc.
- **€43,129.48** capital funding ring-fenced for Women's Groups. The funding is for community projects and groups that support the ethos of women's sheds and other such groups or projects aimed at providing social networks for women.
- The maximum administration fee allowed is 5% of the total allocation, and this fee is only permitted to be deducted from the €215,647.39 funds and any underspend in the 2023 Community Support Fund.

The Department had also released details of the programme as follows: -

- The LCDC are the decision makers on the successful applications for funding.
- The Department requests that LCDCs ring-fence 30% of its funding for grants of €1,000 or less. This is guidance only, and the LCDC can adjust this depending on the needs in its area.
- The closing date for applications no later than **8th March 2024**, with approved applications with the DRCD no later than **28th March 2024** and all monies must be drawn down by **31st December 2024**.
- The Department have indicated that the LCDC can make minor changes to the programme as long as they are in keeping with the ethos of the Programme and meet any audit, monitoring or evaluation requirement.

Following consideration of the fund criteria, Ciaran advised that Members were requested to consider the approval of the following amendments/actions for the Programme:

A. To Amend the application form as required

To facilitate administration of the fund within Donegal County Council financial regulations, minor amendments may need to be made to the application form. Due to the high volume of applications expected it was also proposed to restrict applications to Groups based in County Donegal only.

Recommendation

That the LCDC amend the guidelines and application forms as necessary to facilitate administration of the fund within Donegal County Council financial regulations and that only groups based in Donegal can apply for the programme.

B. Closing date

It was proposed to open the application process for the Local Enhancement Programme 2024 at latest by the week of January 29th 2024 and to keep the process open until 26th February 2024 at 3.30pm.

Recommendation

That the LCDC agree to set the deadline for receipt of applications to the Local Enhancement Programme 2024 for 3.30pm on Monday, 26th February 2024.

C. LCDC to decide on how the funds should be expended.

€215,647.39 in Capital grants

Two different levels of grant are being recommended by DCC to be available for award under the larger sum of €215,647.39.

- Small Grants up to a maximum of €1,000.
- Large grants in the sum of €5,000 to €10,000.

Previous similar funding streams were divided equally between each MD with €42,000 now being proposed for award in each MD as follows: -

- Small Grants up to a maximum of €1,000 €21,000 allocated per MD
- Large grants in the sum of €5,000 to €10,000 €21,000 allocated per MD

This would equate to €42,000 per MD or €210,000 of the total €215,647.39 going to Grants across the 5 MDs, with the remaining €5,647.39 (2.6%) contributing towards Administrative costs, staying well below the 5% fee permitted by the DRCD.

€43,129.48 capital funding for Women's Groups.

It was proposed that applications submitted under the €43,129.48 capital funding ring-fenced for Women's Groups be evaluated in totality at a countywide level as this is a more specific fund and may not have equal demand across the MDs.

Applications would be awarded as follows:

- Small Grants up to a maximum of €1,000.
- Large grants in the sum of €1,000 to €3,000

It was also proposed that the Women's Group funding be extended beyond Women's sheds and networks to include women's sports clubs and societies to increase participation in the fund.

Should grant applications for Women's Groups not reach the total of €43,129.48, it is proposed that any under allocation be added into the small grants scheme monies equally across the 5 MDs.

Recommendation

That the LCDC agree that monies be divided equally between each of the 5 MDs as set out above between small and large grants in the total of €210,000.

That Women's Group grants are evaluated at a county level between small and large grants, are extended to sports clubs and societies, with any under allocation being added into the small grants scheme monies equally across the 5 MDs.

Members asked that women's groups would be contacted on the programme to highlight the specific funds/

On the proposal of James O'Donnell, seconded by Brenda Hegarty, the proposed recommendations regarding the Local Enhancement Programme 2024 were approved.

4. 2022 DRCD funded programmes audit - SICAP and Community Activation Fund

Ciaran Martin updated members on the 2022 DRCD funded programmes audit. Following an audit of the SICAP and Community Activation Fund programmes in November 2023, correspondence was received from the Local Government Audit team on 20th December 2023 regarding the DCC management of the respective schemes. Ciaran advised the following issue was highlighted by the auditors:

- “Programme monitoring and performance management: The programme requirements provide for the monitoring of performance of the Programme Implementer (PI) by the LCDC. I noted that no audit as required by the programme requirements was undertaken in respect of the 2022 financial year for any of Lot 33-1, Lot 33-2 or Lot 33-3”.

The audit recommended the following action:

- “A system of annual independent checks of the financial records and activity of the PI needs to be implemented to ensure compliance with all the requirements of the programme. As previously recommended to the DRCD and the LCDC, the annual SICAP audits should be completed no later than the end of quarter 3 of the following year”.

The DCC response was requested to be noted at this LCDC and as sent to the members indicated that:

- DCC acknowledged that an annual check of the financial records and activity of the PI was not implemented in 2022 as it had been in the previous years.
- The reason for this was that the internal auditor of the DCC vacated the position in mid-2023 and the position is due to be filled at the end of January 2024, leading to a backlog in the completion of the associated workplan, one of which was the annual check of the financial records and activity of the PI.
- This matter will be brought to the attention of the newly appointed Internal Auditor, with a request that the annual check of the financial records and activity of the PI is a confirmed action of their respective work plan for 2024.

5. Community Development Programme - review of 2024 Annual Plan.

Ciaran Martin informed members that in 2021, the DRCD awarded seven applicant organisations funding under a €1 million, three-year pilot Community Development Programme to trial community led interventions that address poverty, social exclusion and inequality and promote human rights.

Donegal Intercultural Platform was approved funding under the theme Migrants to tackle racism and promote inter-culturalism, human rights, equality and inclusion across County Donegal. The LCDC has financial oversight of the development of the project locally and issued funding of €125,000 to Donegal Intercultural Platform in 2023.

As part of this oversight, the LCDC provide feedback on the 2024 Annual Plan of the group to both Pobal and the group themselves. Ciaran advised that some of the key findings were as follows:

- DCC noted the important emphasis placed on renewing and updating datasets within the county in terms of newer and underrepresented communities. As the landscape continues to evolve around newer communities, it is essential that these voices and needs continue to be heard and quantified.
- DCC also noted that it is critical that new and minority communities have both the capacity and confidence to engage in representative structures at local level and the development of Leaders within these communities is crucial, DCC therefore welcomed all capacity building measures that help develop local skills to engage in representative structures.
- The development of leaders in newer communities is also crucial in terms of demonstrating positive and engaged role models for others to follow.
- With Local Elections also occurring in 2024, the development of voter registration campaigns is crucial to ensure issues related to New communities and minority groups are promoted within the county.
 - Regarding this, the engagement of the DIP within recent consultations on the new Local Development Strategy and the emerging LECP has also been much welcomed as a means of ensuring strategic funding plans for the future development of Donegal are cognisant of the needs of new and minority communities.

6. Local Development Strategy update

Ciaran Martin stated that the LEADER funding agreement to deliver the new programme was signed by all partners and returned to the DRCD on December 14th, 2023. Donegal County Council have also submitted an updated LDS as requested by the DRCD, with some minor amends as required.

7. LECP update

Claire McCallan gave a short update to members on the current progress on the new LECP. Following the Joint LCDC/EEES SPC held in December, DCC were now working with FMA consultants to develop a series of actions linked to the agreed High-Level goals and Objectives. Claire also added that there had been several further engagements on a series of important sectors within the county, to include housing and transport. The draft actions would next be brought to another Joint LCDC/EEES SPC meeting, planned for February 7th 2024. Claire thanked all members for their huge input to date and advised that the comprehensive consultations were ensuring that the key areas of both opportunity and need were being identified in the emerging LECP.

8. Draft Schedule of Meeting Dates for 2024.

Ciaran Martin advised that a schedule of LCDC meetings for 2024 had been forwarded, and that these were the proposed meetings for 2024 for the LAG and LCDC. They were listed as follows:

Date	Time
Tuesday 27 th February	10.00 am
Wednesday 20 th March 2024	10.00 am
Wednesday 10 th April 2024	10.00 am
Wednesday 15 th May 2024	2pm
Wednesday 24 th July 2024	10.00 am
Wednesday 25 th September 2024	10.00 am
Tuesday October 15 th , 2024,	10.00 am
Wednesday 13 th November 2024	10.00 am
Wednesday 18 th December 2024	10.00 am

Ciaran further advised that the DCC were exploring the option to utilise sharefile for report storage for future LCDC meetings, to cut down on the need for printed documents sent out in advance of meetings. This would also ensure members had one online location to access all documents from upcoming and past LCDC meetings.

9. AOB

There was no other business raised and the meeting was concluded by Cllr. Kennedy.

Date of the next meeting

The Date for next LCDC Meeting was agreed by members for 10am on Tuesday 27th February 2024.

This concluded the business of the meeting.