

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE DLR

2021 – 2024 DEVELOPMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK

Executive Summary –	2
Section 1 – Context	3
1.1 Overview / 4-year outlook for enterprise development in the LEO Area	3
1.2 Review of 2017-2020	6
Section 2 - Vision/Mission and Overarching Objectives.....	10
Business Information & Advisory Services:	10
Entrepreneurship Support Services:	13
Local Economic Development Services:	14
Section 3 - Strategic Priorities	14
3.1 Strategic Priorities for LEO DLR 2021-2024	14
Entrepreneurship.....	14
Competitiveness and Digitalisation	15
Green/Sustainability	16
Innovation	17
Exporting/Internationalisation.....	17
Networks and Clustering	18
3.2 Capacity and Capability Development	19
Management Development Capability.....	19
3.3 National LEO Programs	20
Section 4: Associated Actions and Activities.....	23
4.1 Protocols.....	23
Department of Social Protection:	23
Credit Review Office.....	23
Fáilte Ireland.....	23
Microfinance Ireland	23
Skillnets	24
Education and Training Boards (ETBs)	24
Revenue	24
National Association of Community Enterprise Centres (NACEC)	24
Leader.....	24
Údarás na Gaeltachta	25
4.2 Other Initiatives.....	25
Section 5 Risks and New Initiatives:	26
Section 6 Delivering the Strategy	26
<i>LEO Vision</i>	26
<i>Mission Statement:</i>	26

Executive Summary –

- Supporting businesses in DLR is a Corporate Goal of DLR.
- A new leadership team for the LEO and Economic unit was put in place late 2017 which has expanded the outlook and ambitions of the previous plan.
- There is a more unified approach towards supporting the DLR economy in general which includes Enterprise (LEO), Economic (companies outside of the traditional LEO micro enterprise client designation), place making (in line with the Regional Spatial and Enterprise Strategy) and Tourism.
- A key change includes a stronger focus on technology companies (in line with the type of business in the region), which has resulted in an increased support for high potential businesses which have significant capacity to create additional jobs in the county. A high number of these companies have transferred to Enterprise Ireland as part of their funding journey. This is not at the expense of other types of businesses which have also seen increased levels of support and the offer of innovative products.
- The increased level of direct financial support from the council in conjunction with the increased level of supports from EI have allowed us to introduce more innovation into how and who we support.
- We have introduced two new key roles into the teams to specifically rollout new Management Development Programs and supporting the bricks and mortar businesses in the county, ensuring that DLR is an attractive place for people to setup and do business.
- We have consistently hit our LEO direct jobs targets (and others) agreed with Enterprise Ireland (who directly fund the LEO activities) and introduced many of the innovations described in this document during the prior period of 2017-2020. The next four years will see a considered effort in rolling these out.
- COVID has featured strongly in the prior period and still impacts businesses at the time of writing. A significant effort was made to support businesses with new COVID specific programs (BCV, Restart Grant, Expanded TOV, Stimulus Grant and others) that has required massive efforts on behalf of the team who met the challenges while still delivering on delivering on the pre COVID business outputs. These COVID products have expanded our reach into the business community and helped us reach out to a wider business audience.

A Brief summary of the Strategic Priorities of the Local Enterprise Development Plan over the next 4 years is as follows;

- To meet the requirements of the SLA with Enterprise Ireland and particularly to directly fund job creation in the region.
- To support the delivery of goal 6 in our Corporate Plan.
- To provide a new focus on Management Training for businesses in the region to increase general productivity.
- Increase engagement with the business community and internal stakeholders to understand their needs and innovate accordingly.

- To have a positive impact on the delivery of place making projects in the county.
- To develop our tourism sector.

Section 1 – Context

1.1 Overview / 4-year outlook for enterprise development in the LEO Area

- The years ahead will see a continued strong level of support for enterprise development in the area. While the LEO team grows in strength and experience there is increased contribution from the council itself to support our local businesses which is reflected in the expanded Economic Development Team and budget. The council are aware of the importance of a vibrant business community and are directly supporting a growing Economic Development Team as well as prioritising key place making and infrastructure projects to attract and retain businesses in the region.
- The council has committed to directly resource key strategic roles to support the rollout of management programs including; an expanded LEAN program, expanded mentoring, financial literacy and leadership programs meeting some of the shortfalls identified in the recently published OECD Report on SME and Entrepreneurship Policy in Ireland.
- We have also resourced a position to support place making and the general physical environment to improve foot fall and the general physical environment. This position supports the needs of our broader business community and has resulted in a significant uptake in the shop front improvement grant, development of outdoor seating grants for food outlets, vacant premises grants and others.
- We actively support the retail community in their digital transformation efforts.
- Our draft County Development Plan looks to address the future needs of employers and employees to maintain and grow the region’s business base using best practices.
- We proactively work with key stakeholders in the region including DLR Chamber of Commerce and the 16 business associations to rollout strategic initiatives across the County. Significantly these engagements allow us to understand the needs of the businesses and act as an important sounding board for their voices within the council.
- As with the previous Regional Enterprise Plan for Dublin we will be active in the preparation and roll out of a new plan(s) for the period.
- The council runs a rate reduction program for qualifying businesses which is actively promoted and has become increasingly popular.
- We have a tourism team in place led by our Tourism Officer and a tourism strategy in place.
- As of March 2021 we're still seeing good interest in Brexit training and will continue to monitor this demand and provide services as required. DLR has a relatively small manufacturing base and are therefore less impacted by the supply chain issues that result from Brexit but distribution/ retail companies are impacted by these issues. We will continue to provide training to those impacted.

SWOT

- Strengths
 - DLR has now recorded the lowest unemployment rate in the State for the two most recent Census, 11.2% for Census 2011 and 7.4% for Census 2016.

- Up until the impact of Covid-19, the overall trend of unemployment in the County was one of continual decline, from a peak in 2010 associated with the financial and property crash, to near full employment by year end 2019.
 - Census 2016 confirmed the continuing trend in the County towards a high proportion of residents employed as managers/professionals. The County had the highest proportion (26%) of persons classified as Employers and Managers.
 - The occupational composition of the County is characterised by a significant number of residents employed in the knowledge economy and high value growth sectors.
 - There are 63 IDA client companies located in the County, primarily operating in the financial services, software, ICT and medical devices sectors.
 - The County Development Plan supports the expansion of key strategic employment locations at Sandyford, Cherrywood, Carrickmines and seeks to retain and enhance the important role of employment in the County's Major Town Centres.
 - There is a coordinated approach to economic supports developed by the Council in cooperation with key business stakeholders in the County.
 - The presence of UCD and IADT in the County. UCD is Ireland's largest University with c. 30,000 students and is ranked within the top 1% of higher education institutions world-wide while IADT is Ireland's only institute of art, design and technology and comprises c. 2,500 students. Both are active in the area of entrepreneurship with UCD Nova and the Cube part of a growing ecosystem of Incubation and co working centers. The new joint New Frontiers program between both providing a significant opportunity for early-stage entrepreneurs in cooperation with the LEO.
 - 12% of all the Co working centers are located in DLR making us the second highest in Dublin.
 - Very active business representative groups including Sandyford Business District, DLR Chamber of Commerce and 16 Business Associations across the county.
 - A well networked county with a significant number of business networks.
 - A relatively well connected county with strong public transport links to the City.
 - Modal shift in general transport underway
 - A strong and stable LEO and Economic Development Team in DLR and a dedicated Tourism team.
 - The Council is directly Funding Management development programs for non LEO clients.
- Opportunities
 - 34,291 DLR residents travelled to work to Dublin City centre many of which are business owners, COVID has presented an opportunity to encourage these business owners to locate their businesses locally which creates an opportunity.
 - Significant opportunities exists for locating new employment in Cherrywood with planning for c. 47,000 sqm of High Intensity Employment granted.
 - Significant opportunities also exist for realising the development potential in Sandyford Business District.
 - Development of the Ferry Terminal as an Co working space with visibility of at least two more significant Co Working projects in the planning stage in the County
 - Creation of a network of high net worth individuals to co- fund startups in the region

- Development of Dún Laoghaire Town as a startup location
- Develop our Tourism potential particularly in the areas of our coast and mountains and the promotion of our heritage
- Capitalise on the fact that DLR is a very desirable location to work

- Weaknesses
 - We have not consciously developed any clustering activities in the county
 - High cost of home ownership
 - The labour force participation rate for DLR remains the lowest of all four Dublin Authorities. This relatively low participation rate is primarily due to (i) the high numbers of DLR residents in the retired age cohorts, and (ii) the relatively large proportion of third level students in the County.

- Threats
 - The economic outlook post COVID and BREXIT.

1.2 Review of 2017-2020

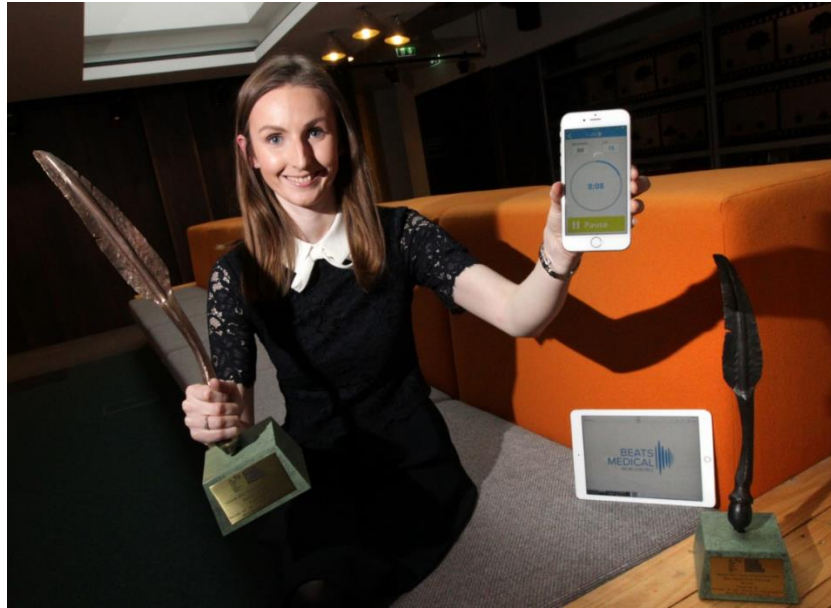


- Between 2017 and 2020, LEO DLR approved financial assistance of €3,482,021 (Feasibility Study Grants, Business Priming Funding, Business Expansion Funding and Technical

Assistance for Micro Exporters Grants) to qualifying businesses to support the creation of 227 jobs.

- 51 client companies were transferred to Enterprise Ireland as part of the inter-agency Progression Pathway, 36 of these had received direct financial support from LEO DLR and 183 jobs were associated with this transfer (the other 15 clients had availed of a mixture of training and mentoring supports).
- We approved 973 Trading Online Vouchers to the value of €2,192,156. The majority of these approvals (770) occurred in 2020 where we saw a huge demand for online trading support in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Annual targets previous to 2020 would have been between 50-80 approvals.
- Through LEO DLR's protocol agreement with Microfinance Ireland, 64 applications were referred to MFI for approval.
- We delivered 266 different training programmes, initiatives and Networking event to 9,286 participants to meet specific business requirements. 19 Start Your Own Business Programmes were delivered to 269 participants along with other training programmes and workshop covering topics such as Online Marketing & Social Media, Sales, Marketing, Branding, PR, Negotiation, Pitching, Finance and Accounting, Pricing, Investment, Intellectual Property, Leadership, HR, Employment Law, Brexit, GDPR and Procurement.
- We also ran sectoral training programmes for the Food, Retail and Craft Sector and were involved with regional and national programmes such as The Food Academy, Food Start Programme, Hi-Start Programme, Accelerate Management Development Programme & LEAN for Micro.
- We ran 13 Brexit, Customs Import and Export related seminars with 298 participants during the period. 28 clients also availed of Brexit related mentoring.
- We matched the knowledge, skills, insights and entrepreneurial capability of experienced business mentors with small business owners and managers who needed practical and strategic one-to-one advice and guidance for their business. 1422 clients received One-to-One Mentoring support through our Mentoring Programme and One-to-One Business Advice Sessions. A further 381 clients availed of a Group Business Information Session.
- LEO DLR received 462 Business Continuity Voucher Applications in 2020. 336 of these were approved and successful clients availed of a maximum voucher of €2,500 which they could use for 3rd party consultancy costs. A mixture of LEO DLR mentors and 3rd party consultants were used to provide this support.
- We provided enterprise education supports to 4,838 local secondary school students participating in the Student Enterprise Awards.
- DLR hosted annual Enterprise Week's, with tailored events, enabling LEO DLR to showcase supports and opportunities for starting and growing businesses throughout the County with more than 70 events and 2,800 attendees.

- We hosted a large regional event for National Women’s Enterprise Day at Leopardstown Pavilion in September 2017 with over 200 attendees.
- 102 entries were received by LEO DLR for the ‘Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur’ Competition in 2017 and 2019. Beats Medical won Best Established Business and Overall Winner in 2017, Glowfox won Best Established Business and Overall Winner – (2018) and in 2019 UCD based Company Output Sports won the National Best New Start-up Award.

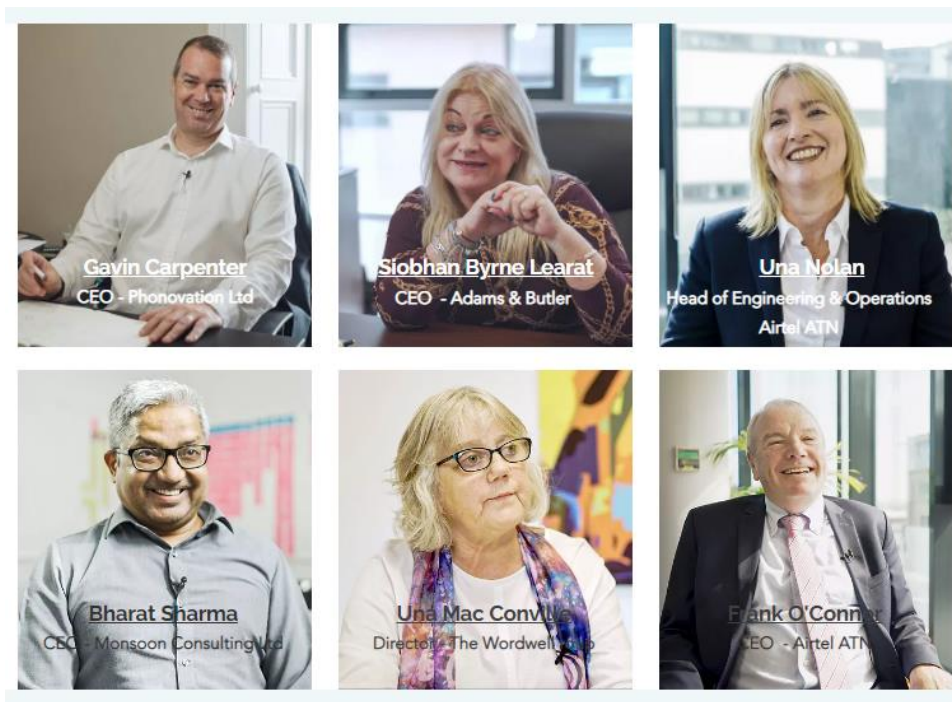


Ciara Clancy (photo attached), Beats Medical, Best Established Business and Overall Winner – (2017)



Conor O’Loughlin (two photo’s attached), Glofox, Best Established Business and Overall Winner – (2018)

- In 2017 LEO DLR received 32 applications for the LEO Innovation Investment Fund and 5 out of the 7 shortlisted LEO DLR clients were awarded investment through this new initiative, in the total amount of €125,000.
- A DLR Creative Business Program was launched in 2019 and is positioned to help people in the creative/ arts sector to grow their businesses.
- In 2019 we partnered with LIFT Ireland, a not-for-profit initiative aimed at increasing the level of positive leadership in Ireland. We are actively promoting this initiative throughout the County which is getting strong traction.
- Launched LEANDLR.ie to get businesses of all sizes in DLR thinking and acting LEAN.



- We developed the innovative “peer to pier” networking walks, advanced Katapult Program for High Potential start-ups and a world class event around training mentors.



Home Team About Apply



INVALUABLE INPUT FOR STARTUPS

Katapult is an Accelerator Program for early stage companies/ founders that will provide critical advise and the

- Annual targets for job creation, training, mentoring and other supports were met each year.

Section 2 - Vision/Mission and Overarching Objectives

Business Information & Advisory Services:

- **First Stop Enterprise & Business Support Solution**

Provision of first stop shop activities in respect of Business Support, **Enterprise** Development and Promotion, including Signposting.

The Local Enterprise Office Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown LEO DLR is the ‘First Stop Shop’ for people seeking advice, information and support when starting or growing a business in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown area.

We run ongoing One-to-One Business Advice Sessions which can often be the first point of contact for clients looking to start or grow a business. At these sessions clients can avail of general advice based on the stage they are at and are provided with information on the various supports available to them through the LEO, DLR County Council and other support agencies including, but not limited to Enterprise Ireland, Microfinance Ireland, Dept. of Social Protection, Southside Partnership, Revenue, Company Registration Office, Health & Safety Authority, Credit Review Office, Failte

Ireland, Skillnets and ETBI. Clients are signposted to the most suitable supports to begin their journey.

We are in direct contact with clients on a daily basis to answer more specific questions, either by phone or through email. Our Business Advisors meet with all clients intending to apply for financial support in advance of them submitting an application to advise, assess eligibility and readiness to apply.

We are in the process of creating online material to guide clients at all stages in their entrepreneurial journeys.

We issue regular newsletters to approximately 2,500 subscribers with information on upcoming training, events, initiatives and supports available through the LEO and other support agencies.

Our website localenterprise.ie/DLR is kept up-to-date with information on all supports, advice, templates, publications and signposting to other agencies. The website went through a major redesign to encourage increased engagement.

We run annual Enterprise Weeks to promote Entrepreneurship with many innovative and targeted events to meet the needs of clients and educate them in areas they may not have considered before and a range of networking events.

We are in the process of introducing a number of new initiatives for the retail sector and broadening out our mentoring offer to include longer term mentoring with an expanded reach.

We will continue to expand on our service offerings to meet identified needs of our regional businesses.

- **Make It Easier to do Business**

Provide supports, guidance and solutions that make it easier for entrepreneurs, owners and managers to identify opportunities and implement actions to start-up, grow and survive within a competitive business environment.

Our Mentoring Programme matches the knowledge, skills, insights and entrepreneurial capability of experienced business mentors with small business owners and managers who need practical and strategic one-to-one advice and guidance for their business. The mentor will listen, advise, provide direction and help the promoter identify problems and suggest areas for improvement. They can discuss solutions and innovative ways of improving business activity, help with the decision-making process and share experience and knowledge. To date, typical assignments consist of 3-6 hours mentoring. We understand how valuable this support can be to our clients and from 2021, we are putting plans in place to lengthen this mentoring engagement, where appropriate so that suitable clients can avail of a longer, ongoing relationship with a mentor in cases where we believe it will have a positive impact.

To assist the small business community in meeting the challenge of the business world, we provide a wide range of high-quality training and development programmes which are tailored to meet specific business requirements. As well as Start Your Own Business Programmes, we have provided training in the following areas: Online Marketing & Social Media, Sales, Marketing, Branding, PR, Negotiation, Pitching, Finance and Accounting, Pricing, Investment, Intellectual Property, Leadership, HR, Employment Law, Brexit, GDPR, Procurement and more.

We have actively promoted LEAN to our clients to help them increase performance and competitiveness in DLR and particular focus and additional resources are in place for 2021 and is funded directly by the council. The LEANdlr.ie initiative seeks to encourage larger companies to engage through novel LEAN training approaches as well as promoting LEAN for Micro.

In 2019 LEO DLR launched the Katapult Programme (www.katapult.ie) for start-ups with global ambition. This training programme supports high potential companies in the region who have a product or service that is capable of being exported. It is led by a team that has significant success themselves in technology businesses and supporting these businesses both raising millions and exiting companies successfully. In addition the different subject matter experts supporting the program are highly rated in their areas providing actionable and relevant advice. Participants go through an intensive process to validate themselves and their business. The programme also covers finance, business models, route to market, sales, marketing and finishes with the opportunity to plan and present an investor ready pitch. 10 business promoters took part in the pilot of this programme and the feedback was excellent. A second programme was delivered toward the end of 2019 and we plan to continue the roll out of this programme with the third programme commenced in January 2021. Many of these companies go on to raise finance and also feed into the New Frontiers Program in DLR ultimately progressing to LEO/ EI funding.

Along with the various supports we provide we have also implemented improvements to our application system, changing to an online system for submitting and processing of financial applications. From 2021 our Mentoring Application process will also be going online using this system.

We are continually seeking to improve our internal processes to streamline and make it easier for clients to avail of our services. We take note and act on any feedback received from clients where possible.

We actively support Shop Local initiatives providing banners and social media content and have developed a local street furniture grant to support cafes/ restaurants to trade as allowed during COVID restrictions.

Interactions with stakeholders across the county is central to how we work with each Business Association having a point of contact with us.

We will support the rollout of an Age Friendly business program with three pilot locations identified.

- **Collaborate with Enterprise Ireland**

We have a very strong relationship with Enterprise Ireland and consistently transfer clients each direction between the LEO and EI to ensure clients have the most appropriate supports available.

We actively promote Agile Innovation grants, IPStart, Innovation Partnership Programs, Innovation Partnerships, New Frontiers, CSF, Export Development Programme, HPSU and other relevant EI schemes. We work closely on key projects such as the Sandyford BD Innovation Week and other events to raise awareness of these programs.

We regularly meet on a Dublin regional basis with EI to support each other and share best practices.

We have also facilitated LEO clients in availing of EI services including accessing the EI Mentoring Programme, Market Research Centre and Overseas Offices.

We will continue to foster this important relationship into the future.

Entrepreneurship Support Services:

Promote a Best Practice Enterprise Culture

We continuously promote entrepreneurship as a viable career choice and back it up with a very high level of relevant and current training/ support in a broad range of areas. We have developed a reputation for bringing the best talent that we can find to deliver value to our clients. We have brought over top expert in entrepreneurship Bill Aulet from MIT on an all Ireland training program for mentors, David Meade to train our entrepreneurs on Leadership, LIFT Ireland for continuous leadership training, developed Katapult.ie for aspiring entrepreneurs with high ambitions using highly talented tutors and have invested in dedicated staff to rollout LEANDLR.ie and Financial literacy meeting many of the shortfalls identified in the recently published OECD Report on SME and Entrepreneurship Policy in Ireland.

Our Student Enterprise Programme provides a range of interactive enterprise activities which are organised each year to encourage students from 1st – 6th year to learn more about entrepreneurship and what's involved in setting up and running a business.

We partner with IADT in the delivery of Springboard programmes such as Bachelor of Business in Entrepreneurship and a Post Graduate Diploma in Digital Entrepreneurship (as part of the Labour Market Activation Fund), providing mentoring support to students on the programme.

We support the IADT/ UCD New Frontiers program, sitting on the approval committee, funding clients and feeding client to the program.

Our Head of Enterprise sits on the Board of Sandyford Business District and is an advisor to the Cube in IADT.

Local Economic Development Services:

- **Environment for Start-Ups**

We have an Economic Development Team in DLR dedicated to place making to enhance the environment for businesses. This team is deeply embedded in the council and led by the head of Enterprise and Economics and the Director of Finance and Economics. The importance of place has never been so important for businesses and is a high priority for the council in DLR. The team actively engages externally with DLR Chamber of Commerce, Sandyford BD, and the 16 Business Associations in DLR supporting footfall to our local towns and villages.

Studies that were commissioned on increasing the attractiveness of Dún Laoghaire Town for employers and the future direction of Dún Laoghaire harbour are to be published in April 2021 which will highlight the opportunities to build on the potential of both for developing the local economy.

A unique partnership approach towards place making was undertaken with Sandyford Business District which will see significant impacts in the region from mid 2021 onwards encouraging the attraction and retention of companies and talent.

We actively financially support the rejuvenation of shop fronts and the use of vacant premises with grants for same with a significant uptake in 2019- 2021.

We run a rates rebate scheme to encourage the timely payments of rates and support our local businesses.

At the time of writing we hope to see the opening of one of Ireland's biggest co working spaces in the Ferry Terminal in Dún Laoghaire which has the potential to prominently position Dún Laoghaire Town as a destination town for entrepreneurs.

Section 3 - Strategic Priorities

3.1 Strategic Priorities for LEO DLR 2021-2024

Entrepreneurship

- At DLR we run a program called Katapult.ie which is currently for HPSU potential clients (differentiating itself from the standard SYOB program) only and some of our client companies who have been approved funding are required to undertake this program.
- In terms of inclusion our programs are open to all and importantly strive to provide participants essential skills required to succeed in a highly competitive landscape. We will

continuously support third parties in the delivery of programs tailored for specific clients needs such as disability and long-term employment. We have referral programs for people who require support for social enterprises which is the most practical approach given the strains on the office meeting the current demands.

- We actively engage with Enterprise Ireland and the regional New Frontiers programs ensuring that clients are signposted towards the most relevant training and funding that meets their needs.
- We operate a client first policy as the clients needs are carefully considered in partnership with Enterprise Ireland to ensure they are receiving the right level of funding.
- We have a well connected County in terms of broadband and the council has a broadband officer to monitor and improve where possible and necessary. It is envisaged that the rollout of the national broadband plan will address any shortcomings in the medium term.
- We work closely with DLR Chamber, Sandyford BD and the 16 Business Associations in the county to understand the needs of the business community.
- We have consistent engagement with trainers to understand the opportunities to increase the level of skills in the business community.
- We regularly upskill our staff to ensure they can signpost clients to the most appropriate supports and indeed advise them on their businesses generally.
- We have an active schools program culminating in schools competition for the best business award. This program plants the seeds which may encourage future school leavers to follow an entrepreneurial path.
- The IBYE program is designed to encourage younger entrepreneurs, while positioned as a competition there is a very important training and networking element to this program which has real impact.

Competitiveness and Digitalisation

- LEO Micro and Small business clients demonstrated great agility when faced with the challenge to survive and sustain their businesses during the past year in particular. Many businesses embraced the opportunity to add digital capability during the COVID pandemic. Having the opportunity to explore and adopt these initial changes many of these business owners have been awakened to the fact they need to introduce further digitalisation in order to better serve their customers' on one part and become more efficient and productive on the other.
- We will continue to support our SMEs to face challenges in boosting productivity, rapidly adopting digitalisation and actively pursuing innovation to increase competitiveness. In particular we have recently recruited a senior staff member to rollout management programs as previously discussed. We will also continue to work closely with Enterprise Ireland to signpost client take up on relevant Enterprise Ireland products and services to drive competitiveness, accelerate the adoption and implementation of sustainable business.
- Key actions reflect wider LEO National strategy and include:-
 - Increase one-to-one client engagement to identify on-going client needs.
 - Continue to promote the LEAN for Micro programme to LEO clients to drive efficiency and improve productivity.

- Rollout the new LEAN program for larger businesses, LIFT Ireland, Financial literacy and extended mentoring to the broad business community in the county.
- Deliver the LEO non-financial supports to firms up to 20 employees.
- Work with EI HPSU Section to drive scale within identified LEO enterprises.
- Develop and deliver sectoral initiatives/networking programmes at local level to maximise local sectoral strengths and ambitions.
- Ensure Management Development Programmes include Competitiveness and Digitalisation modules.
- Provide expertise to SMEs in respect of digital tools that are available to grow their businesses.

Green/Sustainability

Green for Micro:

The 'Green for Micro' initiative will help small businesses decarbonise and become more sustainable. Making businesses more sustainable is not just the right thing to do from an environmental point of view, it also makes good business sense. The Triple Bottom line will become a consideration for many businesses considering not just profit but their impact on people and the planet also.

Recent survey results *show that 33% of respondents plan to switch to businesses which are doing more about sustainability, while 49% also said they intend to become better informed about the impact their purchasing has on the planet. With climate change, changing regulations, rising resource costs and changing customer expectations, adopting a more eco-friendly approach is the best way forward for business.

The Green for Micro Programme will begin the journey to greater sustainability for many micro businesses and lead to further initiatives and investments over the 2021-2024 period.

(*Survey source: AIB Sustainability Index, December 2020)

MODOS

Modus is a circular economy training programme for micro, small and medium size enterprises. It emerged as a joint initiative of the Economic Development Office (EDO) of Dublin City Council and the Eastern Midlands Waste Region Office (EMWRO). MODOS has garnered interest from stakeholders countrywide and will be a key resource to assist businesses meet their obligations under the green/sustainability agenda.

Over the coming years the Dublin region will be able to continue to develop such programmes in a collaborative way to best meet the needs of businesses.

When firstly launched in 2019, MODOS was the first Circular Economy Training Program for micro, small and medium enterprises ever developed in the country. While initially targeting Dublin-based businesses, the program rollout has subsequently been successfully promoted nationwide and has grown to include circular economy events and webinars, a mentoring service and a CE Innovation Award.

While Green for Micro and MODOS are two key approaches, the Dublin LEOs will also be working closely with key representatives within their Local Authority structure to consider how sustainability can be continuously be promoted and implemented.

Innovation

Innovation in product, service, management and selling are increasingly important in the connected environment that Irish Businesses operate in. There is a challenge in raising the awareness of the need to be innovative as a starting point and to get companies to take the steps to be innovative which often requires reflection, change and financial/ time risk which is not always embraced. LEO DLR are committed to raising the level of innovation of companies in the region and will do so by;

- Ensuring that the supporting and promoting of innovation is a key delivery of the office.
- Promoting Feasibility Study Funding for early stage companies and Agile Innovation funding for more established companies to encourage innovation.
- On a broader economic front continued partnership with EI on delivering seminars/ information sessions on innovation and particularly promoting the Agile Innovation Program.
- The Breakthrough Innovation Program will be widely publicised and participation will be encouraged with other programs to follow where appropriate.
- Innovation in business thinking and processes will be supported by the LEAN For Micro program and other management programs such as LIFT Ireland and an expanded LEAN offering.
- Mentors will be encouraged to signpost innovative clients to the most appropriate supports and will be made aware of these supports as they develop to ensure they are receiving the highest level of encouragement.
- Mentors will be supported in improving their mentoring skills through initiatives such as www.mentorsupport.ie once COVID allows.
- Engagement with third level institutions will continue to seed fund innovative companies coming out of this system where they are close to market. DLR have strong ties with UCD Nova and IADT and having funded several companies from these institutions.

Exporting/Internationalisation

We will continue to increase the awareness levels and skillsets of our clients around exporting signposting clients to Enterprise Ireland where relevant. We have seen a reduction in the uptake in TAME grants in 2020 due to COVID but expect a strong demand post COVID. Any business approved for a TAME will be travelling overseas to develop new market opportunities. DLR will seek to assist these businesses with links to EI research and overseas offices, as appropriate.

The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly enhanced consumer confidence in E-commerce and the capacity of business owners to take their business online and continue to meet consumer demand, where possible. While writing this strategy, LEO DLR approved 973 Trading Online Vouchers over 11 months, showing the resilience and capacity of businesses in the DLR region to pivot and develop their business online. These businesses are now in a prime position to attract new customers and continue to grow their business online, to a potential global market.

LEO business advisors will continue to review their portfolio of LEO supported clients on a regular basis and identify initiatives that will help these clients with their exporting activities.

Over the next four years support will be provided to capitalise on the growth of e-commerce and assist entrepreneurs to exploit such opportunities. LEO DLR will achieve this via the following strategic actions:

- Development of a digital training programs
- Monitoring of portfolio Clients to establish those with greater potential.
- Provision of online workshops with high potential clients and EI Advisors
- Promotion of TAME to encourage greater participation at international trade events.
- Staff development to assist with identifying LEO clients with greater export potential.

Networks and Clustering

We operate two active networks for entrepreneurs and small business owners in our county.

Our networks are hosted by trained facilitators who, through various forums, provide members the opportunity to promote their business, exchange ideas and meet potential suppliers, partners and clients in a friendly environment. The monthly meet ups have continued online during Covid19 and they endeavour to provide interaction and networking via zoom rooms and chat in addition to a learning workshop element at each session.

Our **Enterprising Women Network** celebrated its 20th Birthday in 2019. Enterprising Women Network DLR is a peer-to-peer business support network for female-run businesses. The network meets monthly with a mix of guest speakers on practical business topics, practical workshops and member-led discussions. Members exchange ideas and share experiences with other entrepreneurs. They can avail of opportunities to build contacts and win business. The Network is further supported online with active social media pages and groups and their particularly successful Instagram account has over 1000 highly engaged followers. The network issues a quarterly newsletter featuring 20+ member promotions each quarter and subsequently shares individually stories daily across all social media channels which significantly boosts their members online engagements.



Enterprising Women Network Celebrated its 20th Birthday in June 2019

Our **Link Network** was launched in March 2019. It meets monthly and is open to businesses of all stages and types. Members receive expert advice on business strategies from guest speakers, exchange ideas and share experiences with other entrepreneurs and avail of opportunities to build contacts and win business.

This network operates a LinkedIn Group which provides an additional closed forum for attendees at the monthly session to communicate, share good content and grow their own business network through interaction and learning within the group.

3.2 Capacity and Capability Development

Management Development Capability

The COVID 19 Pandemic greatly challenged the founders and promoters of our Micro and Small client businesses and highlighted deficits in their general management capability. Key challenges including; Productivity, Leadership, Financial literacy, Sales and Marketing (including Digital Marketing) emerging as areas of particular concern and limiting companies' ability to grow.

As previously mentioned in the plan we have developed a number of unique management development programs and will continue to develop these as the need arises.

The key programs developed and promoted by DLR LEO are;

- Katapult.ie
- Lift Ireland.ie (supported by DLR)

- LEAN programs LEANDLR.ie
- Extended mentoring
- Financial literacy

In addition we also promote innovative national management development programs designated by Enterprise Ireland and will constantly review where we can add value to our client base.

3.3 National LEO Programs

Below is a summary of the key National programmes and actions to be progressed by LEO DLR from 2021 through 2024. It is anticipated that additional National initiatives will be rolled out in due course, to address the ever-changing needs of clients and entrepreneurs.

- **Student Enterprise Programme**

The Student Enterprise Programme is the biggest enterprise competition for students in Ireland. It helps students to grasp real life skills associated with running an enterprise, including working as part of a team, managing production and finances, organising a sales and marketing campaign and liaising directly with customers, judges and the media. Each year some 20,000 students all over Ireland get to find out what it's like to run their own business by taking part in the Student Enterprise Programme. In DLR, between 2,000 and 2,700 students participated in the programme each year from 2017 to 2020, from an average of 25 secondary schools. It is anticipated that this level of participation will be maintained, ensuring that DLR youth have a positive learning business learning experience with exposure to real-life start-ups.

- **National Enterprise Awards**

The Enterprise Awards Competition is designed to recognise and reward the commitment, dedication and entrepreneurial spirit of small businesses at local and national level. The competition for the awards involves two stages: a local competition, at County level, with the winner then representing the County at a National Final. The competition is open to businesses that have received financial or soft supports from the LEO.

- **Showcase**

Showcase at the RDS is the first major trade event of each year, organised by the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland and promoted internationally by Enterprise Ireland. The dedicated Enterprise Zone on the balcony area, co-ordinated by the Local Enterprise Offices, has become known as the home for emerging designers and craftspeople in recent years. A wide range of creative sectors is represented within the Enterprise Zone, such as ceramics, knitwear, jewellery, interiors, skincare and giftware. A number of DLR clients will participate in this initiative each year. Owing to COVID-19, the trade show was held online in January 2021. It is hoped that the event can proceed in the RDS in January 2022 and each year thereafter, so that DLR craft and artisan producers have an opportunity to market themselves on a global stage.

- **Food Sectoral Initiatives**

Three National initiatives are currently offered through the 31 Local Enterprise Offices and will continue to be provided to encourage and enable food production start-ups:

- Digital School of Food: an online learning resource to assist individuals to learn about how to set up a successful food enterprise
- Food Starter: A "Start Your Own Business" programme aimed at food sector
- Food Academy: The Food Academy is an initiative designed collaboratively with Bord Bia, Musgraves/SuperValu and the Network of Local Enterprise Offices. It aims to "Give Small

Producers a Big Chance”. The Food Academy works with and nurtures small businesses through their journey from start up to getting their products on SuperValu shelves

- **National Ploughing Championships**

The National Ploughing Championships is held in September each year. As part of its National Programme the Local Enterprise Offices host a Local Enterprise Village to provide an opportunity for clients to take full advantage of this unique consumer event. This is an opportunity to showcase the quality and high standard of goods and services supported by the LEO. Post-COVID19 it is hoped that LEO DLR will continue to support suitable clients at this promotional event.

- **Local Enterprise Week**

LEO DLR has hosted a packed schedule of events during the LEO “Local Enterprise Week” each year, in the first week of March. The event was run online in March 2021. It is envisaged that the initiative will feature a blended approach of online and in-person events in future years.

Typically the programs focuses on providing supports for individuals at all stages of business development, from those with business idea to individuals starting up a new business or growing an existing enterprise.

- **National Women’s Enterprise Day**

In October of each year 2017 to 2019 the four LEOs in the Dublin region organised and promoted a major networking event as part of “National Women’s Enterprise Day”. In October 2020, owing to COVID-19, the event was held online as a single National event. Post-COVID, LEO DLR will continue to support the regional initiative which will rotate annually between each of the 4 x Dublin LEOs for the period 2021-2024.

- **Trading on line Vouchers**

In recognition of the increasing importance for local small businesses to exploit online sales opportunities, DLR will continue to roll out the Trading Online Voucher scheme, actively promoting the programme to eligible small businesses with a view to maximising online sales among local suppliers. In the period 2017 through 2020, 973 TOVs were approved by us, of these, 750 were approved in 2020. This phenomenal growth was a direct consequence of COVID-19, whereby the scheme saw huge demand as small businesses focused on online selling. As well as continuing to provide the TOV scheme to DLR businesses during the period 2021-2024, LEO DLR will focus on identifying previous TOV recipients that have strong potential to accelerate their digital marketing strategy.

- **Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE)**

LEO DLR will ensure that previous finalists and winners are given every support necessary to maximise their prospects of success. Existing programmes and supports will also be promoted to IBYE applicants that did not emerge as finalists.

- **Micro-Finance**

Microfinance Ireland provides small loan facilities to businesses that have difficulty raising finance from other sources. LEO DLR works very closely with MFI and has a dedicated resource to ensure that start-up and existing businesses have access to this source of funding, regardless of the business sector.

- **LEAN for Micro**

In conjunction with EI, LEO DLR will continue to roll out the LEAN programme to enable small businesses with real growth potential to streamline their business processes and give them an

opportunity to enhance competitiveness. It is anticipated that the numbers of participants will grow year on year in the period 2021-2024.

Section 4: Associated Actions and Activities

4.1 Protocols

The following protocols govern dissemination of information, information signposting and inter-organisation referrals. Local Enterprise Office DLR will continue to implement these protocols on an on-going basis and review locally as required. The aims of the Protocols are:

- To establish a structured link between the Local Enterprise Offices and Protocol Partners to support the provision of information and guidance measures for enterprise development;
- To provide for an efficient customer service in response to LEO clients' queries;
- To provide for informing and updating staff from both organisations of respective programmes and services;
- To provide for cooperation on awareness and promotion activities;
- To provide for exchanges between the parties on the uptake and operation of the measures and levels of demand for information/guidance by clients of the LEOs;
- To provide for periodic review of the operation of the protocol;
- To Provide for collaboration and efficiencies in the provision of training programmes where appropriate.

Department of Social Protection:

Agreed between the Department of Social Protection and The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (on behalf of Enterprise Ireland). This protocol aims to maximise the recruitment of appropriately skilled persons from the Live Register by enterprise agency client companies.

Credit Review Office

Agreed between the Credit Review Office and The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (on behalf of Enterprise Ireland). The Credit Review Office provides a simple, effective review process for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, including sole traders and farm enterprises, who have had requests for credit refused or existing credit facilities reduced or withdrawn.

Fáilte Ireland

Agreed between Enterprise Ireland and Fáilte Ireland. Fáilte Ireland is the National Tourism Development Authority, whose role is to support the tourism industry and work to sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourism destination. Fáilte Ireland also works with other state agencies and representative bodies, at local and national levels, to implement and champion positive and practical strategies that will benefit Irish tourism and the Irish economy.

Microfinance Ireland

Agreed between Microfinance Ireland and The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (on behalf of Enterprise Ireland). Microfinance Ireland, as a not-for-profit lender, has been established to

deliver the Government's Microenterprise Loan Fund. All business sectors are eligible to apply. Companies may be Sole Traders, Partnerships and Limited Companies with fewer than 10 employees and an annual turnover of less than €2 million. Loans may be used to fund the start-up of a business, the purchase of stock, equipment, machinery, and business vehicles and are also available to established enterprises.

Skillnets

Agreed between Skillnets and The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (on behalf of Enterprise Ireland). Skillnets actively supports and works with businesses in Ireland to address their current and future skills needs on the basis that training and up-skilling are key elements in keeping Irish companies competitive. Skillnets funds groups of companies in the same region/sector, and with similar training needs, through training networks that deliver subsidised training to Irish businesses.

Education and Training Boards (ETBs)

Agreed between Enterprise Ireland and Education & Training Boards Ireland. The ETBs are statutory authorities which have responsibility for education and training, youth work and a range of other statutory functions. ETBs manage and operate second-level schools, further education colleges, multi-faith community national schools and a range of adult and further education centres delivering education and training programs. Further education and apprenticeship training is also provided through 16 training centres nationally. ETBs are active in local communities through the direct provision of training and education programs delivered in training centres, colleges and other training and educational settings.

Revenue

Agreed between The Revenue Commissioners and The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (on behalf of Enterprise Ireland). The role of the Revenue Commissioners is "to serve the community by fairly and efficiently collecting taxes and duties and implementing customs controls". Specifically, in relation to business, Revenue provides information and support under three headings:

- A comprehensive range of information and guidance on taxation issues, customs and Revenue requirements relating to starting and running a business, including the Revenue Online Service
- Tax Simplification Initiatives for Smaller Businesses
- Supporting Job Creation and other Enterprise Supports.

National Association of Community Enterprise Centres (NACEC)

Agreed between Enterprise Ireland and The National Association of Community Enterprise Centres. The National Association of Community Enterprise Centres is a strong representative body of 120 community enterprise centres in the Republic of Ireland. Its primary role is to support and develop the interests of community enterprise centres on a national basis.

Leader

Agreed between The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The aim of the protocol between Local Enterprise Offices and Local Action Groups is to ensure that the available enterprise supports are complementary, are configured to meet local needs and ultimately, maximise the impact of both development bodies in their local areas.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Agreed between Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta. The rationale for the development of this proposal was to ensure that all client enterprises of Údarás na Gaeltachta and LEOs have equal access to services and funded programmes and benefit from enhanced collaboration and information sharing between the organisations. Údarás na Gaeltachta manages its client base in the Gaeltacht and use its core funding (exchequer and own resources) to service existing commitments & Údarás led schemes (grant-based supports for employment and capital projects). LEOs in the eight Local Authority areas comprising of Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas continue to operate in the county and city areas outside of the Gaeltacht and Údarás na Gaeltachta continue to deliver enterprise support in the Gaeltacht.

4.2 Other Initiatives

- During 2020 LEO DLR collaborated with the other three LEOs in the Dublin region and Dublin Business Innovation Centre (DBIC), to provide the “Breakthrough Innovation Programme” to small businesses that are seeking to adopt strong innovative practices and processes in their business. This programme, funded by the Regional Enterprise Development Fund, will continue to be provided to suitable businesses employing 3 to 50 staff in the period 2021-2024.
- Dublin Food Chain is a collaborative initiative of the four Local Enterprise Offices in the Dublin region, supported by Bord Bia. It offers a network of food producers, wholesalers, foodservice operators and food retailers, and is part of an ongoing effort to harness the power of the 'collective'.
- A pilot **Sport to Start-Up** programme was run on a Dublin regional basis in early 2020, offered to full-time sportspeople. A second intake saw professional sportspeople from across Ireland participating in the intensive programme to help them build entrepreneurship skills and see how they can transfer their existing skillset into a potential new business.
- LEANDLR.ie was piloted in 2019 and we have committed a dedicated senior member of staff to roll it out over the next three years and have targeted 60 companies to partake in the program in 2021.
- LIFTIreland.ie – This is a management training programme which is highly time efficient and effective with over 15000 people taking part in 2021. DLR have sponsored the programme since 2019 getting it into the business community.
- We have dedicated a budget to rolling out a Digital competence for Retailers program in 2021 after getting a very high engagement on a pilot program.
- Financial Literacy, we are rolling out a three year program in 2021 on increasing the financial literacy in target companies.
- We are rolling out an extended mentoring program in 2021 over the next three years based on the feedback from companies availing of the BCV and general mentoring in 2020 during COVID.
- Katapult.ie as previously described continues to be in demand.

Section 5 Risks and New Initiatives:

Identified Risks:

Risks that can adversely affect the achievement of the objectives outlined	Actions to mitigate this risk
Movement of Key Staff	Specialisation of roles

Section 6 Delivering the Strategy

LEO Vision

“To develop and sustain a positive enterprise ecosystem at local level throughout the country that will in particular drive new added-value start-ups, the further growth of small and micro enterprises and enhance local economies.”

Mission Statement:

We aim to promote entrepreneurship, foster sustainable business start-ups and develop existing micro and small businesses to drive job creation and to provide accessible high-quality supports for your Business ideas. Entrepreneurs and Businesses are supported to:

- Increase exports
- Build resilience
- Increase productivity
- Prepare for the Low carbon economy
- Embrace the Digital economy
- Innovate
- Be managed by ambitious & capable individuals
- Fuel regional growth

Funding

LEO DLR is funded annually by Government through Enterprise Ireland from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE). LEO DLR will continue to work with Enterprise Ireland and DETE on its annual funding and resourcing requirements to drive our strategy. LEO DLR commits to maximising its budget allocation ensuring value for money in fulfilling its objectives and strategic priorities.

Training

LEO DLR commits to the 2021-2024 Learning and Development plan for LEO staff and managers to ensure we have the necessary business development skillset to support our clients evolving needs to survive and thrive in the ever-changing business environment. A collaborative approach between Enterprise Ireland and the LEO's is taken to design programs to support us in achieving the strategic priorities across Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness and Digitalisation, Green/Sustainability, Exporting/Internationalisation and Innovation. A best practice approach is adopted to deliver programs such as the Professional Business Advisor program, Green for Micro, Finance, Social Media and other business pillar programs accordingly.

Communications

Local Enterprise Office DLR communications strategy will be fully aligned with the national 'Making It Happen' marketing and communications strategy for the Local Enterprise Offices, as set out by the LEO Communications Committee and LEO Communications Team in Enterprise Ireland.

This strategy will focus on four key pillars:

- Promoting LEO-led programs, supports and initiatives and those open to LEO clients from local authorities, Enterprise Ireland, protocol partners and other stakeholders
- Showcasing LEO and client announcements, regular profiling through case studies and thought leadership
- Rolling-out brand communications campaigns locally, to include 'Pre-Start', 'Start' and 'Grow' themed campaigns
- Increasing the LEO's digital footprint online and enhancing social media presence and reach.
- The Local Enterprise Office DLR Communications Strategy will continue to support National Initiatives such as those focused on Exporting, Innovation, Green, Digitalisation and Look for Local'.

Customer Service Charter

The Local Enterprise offices' Customer Service Charter is a very important strategic framework which LEO DLR operates within. It can be found at; <https://www.localenterprise.ie/DLR/About-Us/Customer-Service-Charter/> and it is also framed and displayed in the LEO DLR Office.

Mission Statement

Below is the Mission of the Local Enterprise Offices as outlined in the LEO Customer Service Charter.

OUR MISSION

We aim to promote entrepreneurship, foster business start-ups and develop existing micro and small businesses to drive job creation and to provide accessible high quality supports for your business ideas.

The products, services, and operational structures adopted by LEO DLR are all chosen to align with this mission statement. The Service charter is a commitment to the quality of our service delivery and sets out what we will do for the customer, how we propose to do it, and in what time scale. The Services available from LEO DLR are clearly outlined in the charter. LEO DLR ensures these service are provided in a number of ways.

First point of contact

- Phone access is via a direct line number (as opposed to being routed through a main switch board).
- The LEO contact number and email addresses are displayed clearly on the website, in email signatures, and other marketing collateral.
- Fully trained staff are the first point of contact. New Staff have access to 'a shadow experienced staff member' to enable their skill levels develop.
- Training 'procedural sheets' are available for a number of the regular customer service processes.
- Social media platforms are actively managed with continuously improving engagement (LEO DLR currently has 8268 followers across four platforms, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn).
- LEO DLR's office provides an open public reception area with access to private meeting rooms, linked to the main County Council customer service Hub.

The Staff of LEO DLR consistently provide a very high standard of service;

- Mystery Shopper report 2020 provided LEO DLR with 100% rating for walk-in services
- LEO DLR Staff, and the Evaluation & Approvals Committee members all operate under a code of non-disclosure and confidentiality at all times.
- GDPR and Privacy policies and procedures are all managed in line with the County Council's policies and procedures.
- Staff are encouraged to identify improvements and efficiencies to processes (eg. online application processes) with plans to bring in the LEAN operations model into the office in 2021.

LEO DLR received very few complaints (approximately two annually). A strict process is followed in handling a complaint;

- Complaints are managed by senior Staff members.
- The complaint is immediately acknowledged, and Staff arrange to speak with the complainant.
- An apology is provided and alternative service options are made available to the complainant with a plan of action agreed.
- Follow-up written confirmation of actions being taken are provided.
- The complaint is noted and closed.

End

Author: Owen Laverty, Head of Economics and Enterprise

