

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

CLIMATE ACTION

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE 8TH SEPTEMBER 2021

10AM VIA MS TEAMS

PRESENT

Councillors: Peter Hamilton (Chair), Fintan Brett, Ciara Galvin, Naoise O’Cearuil.

Sectoral Interests: Judith Browne, PPN – Community/Voluntary
Ali Sheridan, PPN – Environmental/Conservation
Allan Shine, Business/Commercial

Officials: Joe Boland, Director of Services,
Alan Dunney, Regional Coordinator
Paula O’Rourke, Climate Action Officer,
Peter Mulhern, Energy Efficiency Officer
Ciara O’Flynn, Climate Action Graduate
Annette Keaveny, Public Realm
Sharon O’Gara, Public Realm

Apologies: Bill Clear

Agenda Item 1: To note the draft minutes of the Climate Action Strategic Policy Committee Held
Minutes were approved on the proposition of Fintan Brett and seconded by Naoise O’Cearuil.

Agenda Item 2: To consider any matters arising from the minutes (Peter Hamilton, Chairperson)
No items were raised.

Agenda Item 3: To receive update on Maynooth as nominated Decarbonizing Zone (Peter Hamilton & Alan Dunney)

Cllr. Peter Hamilton gave an update on the Maynooth DZ. In particular, he highlighted the Maynooth Energy Master Plan that was currently under development. He stated that there will be a final draft version created shortly, accompanied by a shortened brochure to aid community engagement. He highlighted that the focus will be on energy opposed to strictly decarbonisation, and that retrofit will be a key aspect of the plan. He mentioned that the group are still waiting on what the exact definition of a decarbonisation zone is from the Department of Heritage, Local Government and Housing and more clarity can be given once this is received.

He stated that the establishment of a steering group for the plan has been discussed on several occasions and he will come to the next SPC with more information on this structure.

Cllr. Hamilton highlighted that when the proposal to the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage was made, the retrofit aspect was high on their list of priorities, as well as community and health also being high on the list.

Currently, there are c. 5 local authority projects ongoing for the Maynooth area and work is ongoing to link these projects with DZ concept. For instance, Carton Avenue is an area that has been earmarked as a positive space for nature and the DART+ which will have links with the DZ.

Ali Sheridan mentioned Phibsboro SEC as an example to draw from as they weaved their Energy Master Plan into other aspects of sustainability. She also suggested green procurement and embodied carbon should be considered.

Cllr. Galvin asked when the Town Health Check was completed for Maynooth as this process is currently underway for Celbridge. This question was answered by Cllr. Hamilton and the relevant officials who noted that they are constantly taking learnings from this process and that any positive information arising from Maynooth will apply to Celbridge. Action: It was agreed that all these matters would be progressed when the official guidelines were received.

Agenda Item 4: To receive a presentation from Public Realm Team (Sharon O’Gara & Annette Keaveney)

Sharon began her presentation by giving a brief overview of the Public Realm Team. The team was established in April 2019 and comprises of colleagues from a multi-disciplinary background. Over the last few months, their primary focus was responding to covid-19. The team have 60 active projects and 14 Town Renewal Plans underway.

The presentation focused on the following areas:

1. Progression of open space projects, such as the Grand Canal and Blue Way Projects.
2. Recently they were successful in getting funding from the Urban Regeneration Renewal Fund for Maynooth and will be looking at several options at implementing it, such as through a district heating grid or revitalizing existing lane ways.
3. The importance of considering placemaking as a means to reduce carbon.
4. The concept of Tactical Urbanism Projects is a great vehicle for the Public Realm Team to trial changes to public spaces – Kildare Market Square and Popular Square, Naas were two prime examples of successful projects.

Annette then developed the presentation and spoke of the Green Ways and Blue Ways in Kildare. The presentation focused on:

1. The importance of having such infrastructure in place as these contribute to low carbon agenda, reduce reliance on cars and can be a safe, alternative means of Active Travel.
2. The project that will connect Grand Canal Docks to Shannon Harbour in Offaly. The Green Way will link in with Robertstown, Allenwood, and the Offaly Grand Canal Green Way.
3. She also updated on the Barrow Blue Way and the importance of an accompanying business plan for the project.

Cllr. Brett highlighted the importance of considering the 'silent majority' under the consultation phase as there can be a small cohort of individuals that don't support new public realm and infrastructure initiatives.

Ali Sheridan asked Sharon what the process is to make a Tactical Urban Project permanent. This question was answered by Annette and Sharon who stated that there are a number of statutory mechanisms which include the Part VIII planning process. Action: The work of the team was commended and should be developed where feasible.

Agenda Item 5: Local Communities Initiatives (Ciara O'Flynn)

Ciara O'Flynn introduced herself and her role as a Graduate on the Climate Action Team. Her role is centered around community activation at a community level and she will be working on a number of projects such as facilitating the submission of a funding bid to the ESB Brighter Future Ireland Fund, climate training for Age Friendly Communities and engaging with schools to make some citizen science opportunities available to them via the Alternative Maintenance of Open Spaces Research Project.

Joe Boland noted that there is a growing emphasis across the sector on bottom up, community led, climate action and that Ciara will be working with the 5 Municipal Districts in that regard.

Action: The committee welcomed Ciara in her new role and strongly supported these initiatives.

Agenda Item 6: Establishing the Climate Action Baseline - Update SECAP/CAP (Peter Mulhern)

Peter Mulhern gave an update on establishing the Climate Action Baseline in advance of developing the county's Climate Action Plan. Tenders were sought from suitable consultants to prepare Kildare's SECAP (COM) & CAP (Ireland's Climate Action & Low Carbon Amendment Act 2021) and this competition has concluded with the successful tenderer being The RPS Group Ltd. Pre contract signing discussions are ongoing and it is expected that work will commence in the coming weeks.

Ali Sheridan sought confirmation as to what the baseline year will be, and Alan Dunne confirmed that this is still under discussion at a national level but that it is likely to be between 2016-2019.

Alan also confirmed that CARO are working closely with the EPA and a number of other partners to prepare guidelines to aid the development of the required Local Authority Climate Action Plans following on from the enactment of the Climate (Amendment) Bill, 2021. These guidelines will be issued to the Minister for the Environment for his approval in November 2021.

Action: Alan will keep the SPC informed of any updates.

Agenda Item 7: Just Transition Plan status (Paula O'Rourke)

Paula O'Rourke updated on the Just Transition Plan Status. A tender competition has been finalized and the successful applicant is a consultancy called Urban Foresight. They are in the process of devising a concise plan, with particular focus in West Kildare. Shortly, they will be starting stakeholder engagement and will be finishing a draft of the plan by the end of October with a view of final completion by the end of December.

Joe Boland gave additional context to this project, noting that the three western MDs (Athy, Maynooth/Clane and Kildare/Newbridge) are working collaboratively on this project and that all three have made funding available.

Action: The SPC commended this initiative and looked forward to being kept informed on any updates. It was agreed that this was a very progressive approach on the part of the three MDs.

Agenda Item 8: To receive update on queries posed on Active Travel Roles and Status of the KCC Climate Action Plan (Paula O'Rourke)

Paula noted that recruitment is ongoing to build the Active Travel Team with Donal Hodgins recently appointed as Senior Engineer to lead the team; it is hoped that all vacancies will be filled by the end of the year.

It was also noted that the development of a work programme for the Active Travel Team is ongoing and that Donal Hodgins will present to the Climate Action SPC in early 2022 in order to advise the committee of current and future priorities for the programme.

Action: The SPC noted this update.

Agenda Item 9: Climate & Energy Week 26-29th September 2021 (Peter Mulhern)

Peter updated the group on the Climate & Energy Week. It will take place on the 26-29th October with a particular focus on having events that are fun, engaging, and interactive throughout the week. He gave an overview of the events and sub-themes of the week which includes Demystifying Energy, Biodiversity, Industry & Innovation, and Our Communities. Currently, the team are waiting on the branding assets and will have a launch date of the event on the 4th October.

Allan Shine mentioned he would like to get involved and noted that the County Kildare Chamber have partnered with Intel on a new campaign called Sustainable Kildare. This campaign will target employees with a view to promoting changes in lifestyle habits, to help reduce personal emissions and improve on their overall sustainability.

Action: It was agreed that the involvement of the local business sector would add significant value to the Climate & Energy Week.

Agenda Item 10: To receive update from Energy Management Team (Peter Mulhern)

Peter updated on the ongoing work of the Energy Management Team. The team currently meets monthly and key priorities are the analysis of KCC's top energy users and targeting activity to drive efficiencies across these users. He advised that ESB smart energy services have approached KCC to partner with the team to deliver larger energy saving projects in buildings such as leisure facilities, with full building lighting upgrades. Another priority for the team is around the topics of bills analysis, energy auditing, the basics on energy and carbon.

At the end of Peter's update, Ali asked if there will be a debrief with the four SECs so they can put forward learnings to the next set of SECs. Peter agreed to provide this.

Action: The SPC will be kept informed of any updates.

Agenda Item 11: AOB

Cllr. Peter H. confirmed the date of the next meeting will be 1st December 2021 at 10am – venue TBC.

Judith Browne mentioned briefly that she has been in conversation with Denis Mc Dermott on the greening of Resident Association Grants and the inclusion of a herbicide ban in any awarded funding.

The grant policies are coming under review in December so will be updated then. This was noted by the SPC.

Cllr. Peter Hamilton opened up the discussion on the continuation of virtual meetings. The general consensus was that future meetings would be continue in a virtual model.

The meeting closed at 12pm.