



KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

CLIMATE ACTION

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE 15TH APRIL 2021 TO CONSIDER THE DESIGNATION OF A PILOT DECARBONIZING ZONE.

10AM VIA MS TEAMS

PRESENT

Councillors:	Peter Hamilton (Chair), Bill Clear, Fintan Brett, Ciara Galvin, Fiona McLoughlin Healy, Naoise Ó Cearúil
Sectoral Interests:	Judith Browne, PPN – Community/Voluntary Allan Shine, Business/Commercial Ali Sheridan, PPN - Environmental/ Conservation
Officials:	Joe Boland, Director of Services Alan Dunney, Regional Coordinator CARO Paula O'Rourke, (Incoming) Climate Action Officer Claire Moran, Senior Staff Officer CARO Peter Mulhern, Energy Efficiency Officer Geraldine Morris, Clerical Officer
Apologies:	Tom Malone, Agriculture/Farming

The meeting was opened by the chair, Cllr Peter Hamilton. As he was party to one of the submissions, he absented himself from the entire meeting. Therefore, it was agreed that Cllr Fintan Brett would act as Chair.

The meeting was addressed by Mr Joe Boland, Director of Services, who gave a brief overview of ongoing key strategic initiatives relating to climate action. Decarbonising zones were important in this context particularly in relation to spatial planning, community aspects as well as a range of other energy reduction initiatives. He stressed that the matter at hand should be looked upon more as a collaborative than a competitive process particularly as there was opportunities for learning which could be replicated to the entire county. Notwithstanding the very tight timeframes, a brief period public consultation was undertaken. He did, however, stress that those towns which did not make submissions were in no way disadvantaged. A detailed report was compiled by a subgroup of the climate action team having regard to the criteria set out in the relevant circular. While the decision at hand was not a reserved function, it was preferable to get the support of the full council in relation to the selection of the candidate town. In turn, this would ensure buy-in on the part of the elected members, staff as well as the wider community.

The meeting was then addressed by Mr Alan Dunney, Regional Coordinator, who made a presentation encompassing the following:

- Context – All of Government Climate Action Plan 2019/New Programme for Government
- An overview of recent circulars and national seminar/workshop
- Relevant criteria and strategic considerations
- Approach taken to establishing the decision matrix
- Outcome of assessment process – Maynooth is recommended
- Next Steps – baseline analysis, implementation plan etc
- Scale of challenge – lessons learned from Portlaoise Town DZ initiative

A question and answer session ensued which encompassed a number of aspects:

- Clarification was given regarding the timelines. It was expected that the implementation plan for the DZ would be completed by end of 2021 and, in turn, feed into the new local climate action plans (which would encompass both adaptation and mitigation).
- There was no step by step guidance or indicative milestones available at this point and guidance was awaited. However, it was stressed that any proposed actions would have to be measurable. There would likely be some low hanging fruit in the short term to include: for example, retrofitting (already plans to retrofit 2,500 houses) incorporating key DZ objectives into the new Maynooth Local Area Plan, active travel initiatives, possible biodiversity corridor etc
- It was highlighted that the learning from this initiative would be replicated to the rest of the county over the coming years. Drawing up an implementation plan would be challenging and would require input from all sections of the council, the elected members as well as the local community. Given the very stretched targets at national level (7% reduction year on year), it was suggested that this impetus would have to move quickly.
- Further clarification was outlined regarding the selection progress. All of the criteria outlined in the circular were assessed in relation to the 11 qualifying towns. Full information of this assessment were set out in detail in the report circulated. Having regard to the criteria, it was considered by the subgroup that the town of Maynooth was best placed to be selected as the candidate DZ. Specially, this town had the following particular advantages:
 - A very progressive and active Sustainable Energy Community
 - Significant potential for strategic collaboration with the University
 - A local area plan that was about to commence
 - Significant public transport infrastructure
 - Ongoing proposals relating to the retrofit programme

- All other towns performed very strongly, and the submissions were really impressive. This was very encouraging from a strategic perspective.
- It was accepted that there might be better buy-in if there was a greater geographical spread. However, it was only possible to select one candidate town. In any event, the benefits would be replicated widely in due course. In this context, the council's Energy Efficiency Officer would be working closely with all towns to ensure the greater progression of Sustainable Energy Communities. This was considered to be a key point.

On the proposal of Cllr Naoise Naoise Ó Cearúil and seconded by Cllr Fiona McLoughlin Healy, it was agreed to accept the report and to endorse the recommendation for full council that Maynooth be recommended as the candidate DZ town.

The meeting then concluded.