**Kildare County Council**

**Climate Action**

**Strategic Policy Committee**

**Minutes of Meeting of the 9th February 2022**

**11am via MS Teams**

**Attendance**: Cllr. Bill Clear (chair), Cllr. Peter Hamilton, Cllr. Fiona McLoughlin Healy, Allan Shine, Judith Browne, Thomas Malone, Paul Murphy, Joe Boland, Bridget Loughlin, Paula O’Rourke, Ciara O’Flynn (notetaker).

**Apologies**: Cllr. Naoise Ó Cearúil, Cllr. Ciara Galvin, Ali Sheridan, Cllr. Fintan Brett, Cllr. Kevin Duffy, Cllr. Brendan Wyse

1. **To note the draft Minutes of the Climate Action Strategic Policy Committee held on 1st December 2021 (copy attached)**

The minutes were approved.

1. **To consider any matters arising from the minutes**

No matters arising.

1. **To agree SPC Work Plan priorities for 2022 (copy of current work plan attached)**

Paula gave an update on the Climate Action SPC work plan to date.

By way of a brief background, she listed the key priorities of the Climate Action SPC from 2021:

* Kildare’s Climate Action Planning
* Climate Action Bill and its implications for Kildare
* County Development Plan & Climate Proofing Inputs
* Climate Action Training Pillars
* Mainstreaming across the council
* Drive broad community engagement

These priorities informed a total of 51 practical actions, with a reported 98% of them being ongoing or completed. She concluded her presentation with a summary of the group’s 2022 priorities, which include:

* Mainstreaming
* County Development Plan (CDP)
* Climate Action Plan (CAP) & Sustainable Energy Climate Action Plan (SECAP)
* Just Transition
* Training
* Funding

Paula asked the group for suggestions of any additional priorities to be considered. Peter raised that the cross-cutting nature of SPCs needs more consideration in 2022. This is based on the fact that the progression of climate action items are often dependent on other SPCs.

Bill and Judith thanked Paula and Peter for their efforts on the workplan. It was agreed that the workplan as circulated be approved.

1. **To receive presentation from Paul Murphy, CARO M&E Regional Executive Engineer, ‘Reimagining the Local Authority Fleet’** *[agenda item brought forward in order]*

Paul Murphy, CARO M&E Regional Executive Engineer, briefed the group on the ‘Reimagining the Local Authority Fleet’ project. The CMMA have formed a working group to explore opportunities surrounding reimaging the fleet which includes various stakeholders such as the Department of Transport, CARO, OPG and various county councils.

To inform their strategic work, the working group have devised a survey to gather data from fleet managers and about fleet inventory from the 31 local authorities. He briefed the group on the data obtained from the surveys, including specific data from Kildare County Council. At the time of the survey, we have 172 vehicles in operation, the majority of which are diesel but also includes one EV.

The data gathered from this survey will inform training and guidance related to fuel management, fleet manager training, alternative fuels and data monitoring. This document will be released in 2-3 months and its work will be presented to fleet managers at a national conference.

Bill thanked Paul for his presentation. A general discussion ensued related to the following topics:

* Clarification around the alternative fuel category
* The cooling and heating systems in light commercial vehicles its associated energy demands
* The importance of emphasising the cost saving for electric vehicle

The presentation was noted with thanks and the SPC members asked to be kept informed.

1. **To receive presentation from Bridget Loughlin, Heritage Officer ‘Update on Biodiversity Action by KCC’**

Bridget highlighted key projects she has been working on over the last two years.

* **Kildare Biodiversity Project- Biodiversity Action Plans:** The purpose of developing this plan was to support Tidy Town groups to coordinate action around local biodiversity goals. Expressions of interests were sought from towns who wished to avail of biodiversity training and a consultant was appointed to develop the Biodiversity Action Plans for the towns. Training sessions were arranged for interested groups and used as a forum to discuss future goals. These conversations then informed 10 local Biodiversity Action Plans in 2021.
* **Kildare County Council Pollinator Action Plan:** Training workshops were given on the All-Ireland Pollinator Action Plan to all service areas in the council. This informed Kildare County Council’s Pollinator Action Plan which contains 8 goals and actions related to each service area in the council.
* **Animations and training videos:** A series of educational videos around biodiversity and pollinators have been developed, such as ‘What’s the Buzz About Bees’.
* **Invasive Species Control:** Work continues around the control of American Skunk Cabbage and mapping Himalayan Balsam along the Liffey.
* **Planning Policy:** Habitat mapping data and national heritage policies are continuing to inform the County Development and Local Area Plans for Kildare.
* **Community Heritage Grants Scheme:** The administration of this grant scheme continues with a significant number of awarded projects being centered around biodiversity.
* **Future Projects**

Bill and Judith thanked Bridget for all her work. A general discussion ensued dealing with the topics of:

* The mechanisms for protecting 30% of land in Kildare for biodiversity
* Glyphosate usage at sub-contractor level in the council
* The legislation around invasive species such as hogweed and Japanese knotweed on private property
* The protective status of the Curragh and concerns related to scramblers and dumping
* The balance between the management of noxious weeds and pollinators

The presentation was noted with thanks and the SPC members urged that this area would continue to be prioritised.

1. **Items requested by PPN and Climate Action Linkage Group**

Judith gave a brief presentation on behalf of the Climate Action Linkage Group related to the upcoming County Development Plan and the alignment on of its climate and biodiversity related goals. She gave an overview of the groups involved in the linkage group and the group’s key areas of focus which are as follows:

* Energy Agency
* Local Food
* Sustainable Travel
* Industry & Business
* Data Centres
* Climate & Biodiversity
* Kildare’s National Peatland Park

She continued the presentation by stressing the importance of protecting 30% of land in Kildare to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change and the potential mechanisms for achieving this, including engaging Bord na Mona to place 33,000 hectares of peatland from its 82 bogs into the care of National Parks and Wildlife Service. She highlighted the ecosystem services and biodiversity benefits the National Peatlands Park initiative would bring to the Midland region. Judith concluded with ways that Kildare County Council can assist with the linkage group’s goals, including to act as an anchorage for stakeholders when creating an action plan for the rehabilitation of peatland.

Bill thanked Judith for her presentation and stated there will be a meeting with the Planning Department to assess the CDP’s alignment with the linkage group’s goals. Paula agreed to follow up with the Planning Department to arrange this.

1. **AOB**

No AOB arising.

1. **To note date of next meeting – 11th May, 2022**

The meeting closed at 1:00pm.