



# **KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **CLIMATE ACTION**

### **STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE 13<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023**

**10AM COUNCIL COMMITTEE ROOM**

#### **PRESENT**

Councillors: Cllr. Bill Clear (Chair), Cllr. Peter Hamilton, Cllr. Naoise Ó Cearúil, Cllr, Fiona McLoughlin-Healy, Cllr. Ciara Galvin

Sectoral Interests: Sinead Rowan, Thomas Malone, Nathan Flattery

Officials: Marian Higgins, Director of Services  
Paula O'Rourke, Climate Action Office Coordinator  
Victoria Kavanagh, Community Climate Action Officer

Speakers: Dr. Ursula King

Apologies: Cllr. Fintan Brett, Louise Rawlins Traynor

#### **AGENDA ITEM 1: TO DECLARE ANY (A) CONFLICTS OF INTEREST OR (B) PECUNIARY OR BENEFICIAL INTERESTS UNDER SECTION 177 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001, AS AMENDED.**

No conflicts registered.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 2: TO NOTE THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON 10<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2023**

Minutes of meeting of the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2023 were adopted by all members present.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 3: TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

No matters arising.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 4: TO RECEIVE AND WELCOME OUR NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS NATHAN FLAHERTY AND LOUISE RAWLINS TRAYNOR**

Nathan Flaherty introduced himself as the Chairperson of Naas Biodiversity Group and was welcomed by the committee.

Louise Rawlins Traynor was not present at time of introduction.

## **AGENDA ITEM 5: TO RECEIVE INTRODUCTION TO CLIMATE ACTION OFFICE TEAM.**

The full Climate Action Office Team could not be present, so the committee did not receive an introduction.

## **AGENDA ITEM 6: PRESENTATION FROM DR. URSULA KING; OUR CLIMATE GOALS AND CONSERVING, PROTECTING AND RESTORING KILDARE'S BIODIVERSITY**

Dr. Ursula King gave a presentation to the committee on conserving, protecting, and restoring Kildare's biodiversity. Some of the issues to note were as follows:

- Biodiversity includes all living things (not just flora and fauna) along with the living communities they create.
- What is biodiversity and the 3 levels of biodiversity (genetic, species and ecosystem biodiversity)
- Biodiversity in Ireland. Ireland is a small island and therefore has a genetic uniqueness.
- Biodiversity vulnerabilities to invasive species, pests, and pathogens.
- Consumption and plastic proliferation
- Tourism and increasing footfall in high nature value areas.
- Climate change and biodiversity loss
- Green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.
- Tree planting goals – increasing numbers of pests and diseases.

Further details of which can be found in the attached slides.

### **Members raised the following points:**

#### Cllr. Ciara Galvin

- Asked who is responsible for the protected sites as listed in presentation.
- Dr. King answered National Parks & Wildlife are responsible for protected sites but more could be done.
- Proportional presentation – feedback given to Dr. King suggesting that in future she gives more advice on how to implement change and what can be done going forward.

#### Cllr Fiona McLoughlin-Healy

- Commented that it was a very well-done presentation and that she can appreciate the need and ability of the uncomfortable truth.
- Stated we need actions to really land.
- Commented on the easiness of online ordering of wildflower seeds for example and had a question for Dr. King asking is online ordering of plants and seeds regulated?
- Dr. King replied that online shopping is extremely difficult to regulate and a clear statement on the use of wildflowers is needed.
- Comment made on the responsibility of developers to maintain hedgerows.

#### Marian Higgins

- Commented on shock value and advised that Kildare County Council now has a new biodiversity officer and tree specialist in post in the Parks Department.
- Commented that education is key for future improvements and change.

#### Tom Malone

- Commented on how a holistic approach is required.
- Dr. King replied that education is key however policy can be conflicting.

#### Cllr. Bill Clear

- Commented on his involvement in Naas Tidy Towns and spoke about the conflicting information groups can be given in relation to biodiversity best practices.

#### Cllr. Peter Hamilton

- Commented on Dr. King's presentation gave a very broad canvas and was unsure of how to move forward with the information.
- Stated people are shocked into awareness, many people have not committed for decades as it hasn't suited.
- Political & public support isn't there for some required climate action initiatives.

#### Nathan Flaherty

- Commented on the tree situation – can Councils set up own nurseries.
- Dr. King replied that it's not just about planting trees.

#### Cllr. Naoise Ó Cearúil

- Question relating to Tidy Towns. Where does the recommendation of bug hotels, wildflower seeds come from? Is it in retrospect now that it is bad advice.
- Dr. King answered it really depends on the background of the judging panel in relation to Tidy Towns recommendations.

### **AGENDA ITEM 8: TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM PAULA O'ROURKE (CLIMATE ACTION COORDINATOR) ON THE CLIMATE ACTION PLAN AND MAYNOOTH DZ.**

Paula O'Rourke gave a brief presentation to update the SPC on the Climate Action Plan and Decarbonisation Zone.

#### **Members raised the following points:**

#### Cllr. Bill Cleere

- Asked if the motorway was included in the transport emissions baseline.

#### Cllr. Peter Hamilton

- Thanked The Climate Action Office for their input and hard work.
- Stated tokenism is not what we need.
- Commented on whether or not the motorway should have been included or omitted from the Transport emission baseline for Maynooth.

#### Thomas Malone

- Asked if the predicted future weather patterns would mean there is more rainfall but occurring less often.
- Paula answered that the frequency of rainfall events will be less often but the levels of rainfall during those events will be higher.

#### Sinead Rowan

- Commented on the trojan amount of work that went into the development of the climate action plan.

### **AGENDA ITEM 9: ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- Use of a H.E.A.T (Health Economic Assessment Tool) was discussed to help implement behavioural change in relation to active travel.

### **AGENDA ITEM 10: TO NOTE DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- Next Meeting date noted as 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023.