Local Community, Cultural and Integration Strategic Policy Committee

Minutes

Thursday 14 May 2026

10.00 a.m. – 12.00 p.m.

Council Chamber, Level 2, Áras Chill Dara

Attendees: Councillor Veralouise Behan (Chairperson), Councillor Pat Balfe, Councillor Bernard Caldwell (via Teams), Councillor Rupert Heather, Councillor Brian O'Loughlin, Councillor Declan Ryan

Majella O'Keeffe (Sectoral Representative) (via Teams), Caroline McDonald (Sectoral Representative)

Marian Higgins (Director of Services), Joe Boland (Director of Services) and David Creighton (A/Director of Services).

Also in attendance: Tony Shanahan (Senior Executive Officer- Community), Éilis Lavelle (Arts Officer), Sally Anne McFadden (Creative Communities Arts Officer), Mario Corrigan (Senior Executive Librarian), Brian O'Gorman (Administrative Officer) and Joanna Woodhouse (Assistant Staff Officer).

Apologies: Councillor Suzanne Doyle, Maureen Bergin (Sectoral Representative) and Dr. Deepak Kumar (Sectoral Representative),

Item 1

Declaration of Conflicts or Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of (a) conflicts of interest or (b) pecuniary or beneficial interests under section 177 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended.

Item 2

Minutes and Matter Arising

The members considered the draft minutes of the minutes of the Local Community, Cultural and Integration SPC meeting held on 12 February 2026 (previously circulated) and considered any matters rising.

Resolved: on the proposal of Councillor Balfe, seconded by Councillor Heather and agreed by the members that the minutes of the Local Community, Cultural and Integration SPC meeting held on 12 February 2026 be confirmed and taken as read. There were no matters arising.

Item 3

Correspondence.

There was no correspondence received.

Item 4

To note Progress Report

The members noted the Progress Report.

Item 5

Referrals from Full Council

26/0326 (March 2026)

To consider referral – Welcoming Kildare – Councillor Rupert Heather

Recognising the diversity of Kildare's communities, that the council develops a 'Welcoming Kildare' policy that sets out measures to achieve equitable access to services and civic participation for residents from diverse language and cultural backgrounds, and implements initiatives proposed by communities to strengthen community integration and social cohesion. To achieve sustainable and effective outcomes, that this policy is developed in collaboration with communities.

Councillor Heather explained that he had been working alongside the Intercultural Women's Network and that his motion was referred onto the SPC from Full Council to ask the council to develop a 'Welcoming Kildare' policy to improve integration and help reduce the feeling of isolation for people new to the area. Kildare has seen an increase in the number of people from different ethnic backgrounds and such a policy would help t integration within local communities and give an opportunity for individuals to incorporate their skills and expertise and strengthen communities.

The members expressed their support and raised the following

- that a lot of work had been done to date with liaison teams
- raised the importance of multi-cultural integration and that this should also include Irish people who have moved to Kildare from other counties.
- That this would be a positive news story and an opportunity to look at what skills migrants have to strengthen Kildare.
- would like to the policy expand into the area of Arts and Culture

Ms. M. Higgins welcomed the positive discussions noting that this would help with cohesion and strengthen communities. She explained that the council were waiting for the governments Integration Strategy for guidance, which is due to be introduced in Q3. Once the strategy was introduced then local strategies could be investigated to look into how the needs could be met and what supports would be required.

Councillor Heather asked if this group could get involved with the formation of local strategies.

Mr. T. Shanahan explained that there was already a Kildare Integration Network (KIN) set up, which is active throughout the municipal districts, members of the group also sit on the Steering Group for the County Integration Strategy. Mr Shanahan suggested a that he would contact KIN regarding the new group, share contact details and ask that KIN engaged with them and assist.

Mr. D. Creighton explained that the Integration Team were working on the topic of cultural awareness including cultural barriers.

Ms. M. Higgins referenced the recent successful multi agency Trauma Informed Practice seminar, which had over 200 people in attendance.

18/0126 (January 2026)

Community Department Update – Resident Association Grants

Councillor Tracey O'Dwyer

Can the council confirm when it is planned to introduce the revised update to local authority resident association grants that was applied to private residential estates in the previous term as was agreed to by the Local Community, Cultural and Integration Strategic Policy Committee.

Ms. M. Higgins noted the benefits of resident association grants especially in Local Authority Estates and how it aids community cohesion. She explained that it could be difficult to bring in a system that covers both private and local authority estates.

Mr. C. O'Toole referred to the circulated email to members explaining that it was sent to try gather data and feedback for the parameters of the review. He raised the importance of careful consideration of all aspects of the grants process, giving an example that if it was to be decided to go with solely maintenance then a lot of community and environment projects would no longer get funding in local authority estates and therefore there would be a loss in community engagement and this would negatively impact cohesion, in already disadvantaged areas.

The following was raised:

- was there a way to monitor how funding was being utilised and to look at impact and rate success
- appreciate the difference in needs dependent on estates applying for funding

Ms. M. Higgins explained that allocating funding and the benefits varied, certain communities benefit from support in empowering Residents Associations. Awards such as the Pride of Place work in building communities, in estates experiencing deprivation funding can be seen to bring better outcomes. It was recommended that a subcommittee in this area would be beneficial to discuss in more details all options available. A committee of this type would require 2 councillors, 1 member of the PPN and a community Department representative.

Item 6

Director of Services Update Reports.

A. Community

Ms. M. Higgins, Director of Services, gave the Community update which was circulated to members:

Age Friendly Programme

The recent launch of the Age Friendly, Climate Friendly Village initiative in Ballymore Eustace was noted, reflecting an integrated approach to accessibility, age-friendly planning, biodiversity and climate awareness. The project was identified as a strong example of community-led and data-informed delivery, with targeted improvements supporting inclusion, participation and quality of life, particularly for older people and persons with disabilities.

Kildare Local Community Safety Partnership

The establishment and early progress of the Kildare Local Community Safety Partnership were outlined as a significant strategic development in local governance and cross-agency collaboration. The work underway to develop a three-year Community Safety Plan for Kildare, informed by consultation and public engagement, was recognised as an important step in identifying and responding to local safety priorities in a structured and evidence-based way. It was noted that both Ms. Marian Higgins and Mr. David Creighton sit on the KLCSP.

CLÁR Funding

The update on CLÁR funding was outlined as a significant strategic opportunity for rural development, particularly following the inclusion of Ballitore as the County's only eligible area. The potential for this programme to support targeted capital investment in accessibility, safety and community infrastructure, and the importance of maximising external funding opportunities to benefit rural communities, were highlighted.

LECP Implementation

Continued progress on the implementation and close-out of the Local Economic and Community Plan 2024–2026, together with the preparatory work underway for the next cycle, was outlined. The integrated approach to end-of-cycle reporting and planning for the 2027–2029 Implementation Plan was recognised as an important strategic process that will support continuity of delivery, stronger evidence-based planning and alignment of future actions with local needs and priorities.

Kildare Sports Partnership

Local Sports and Physical Activity Plan

The adoption of the Kildare Local Sports and Physical Activity Plan 2026–2031 was outlined as a significant strategic milestone, providing a coordinated framework for sport, physical activity, inclusion and wellbeing across the county.

RTÉ Tracks & Trails – Kildare Waterside Episode

The strategic value of the RTÉ Tracks & Trails Kildare Waterside episode in promoting Kildare's outdoor amenities, heritage assets and recreational infrastructure through partnership working was outlined.

Youthreach Exercise and Educational Fitness Programme

The delivery of the Youthreach programme ‘Foundations of Fitness’ was outlined as a positive targeted initiative supporting youth engagement, health and wellbeing through physical activity and skills development.

Women in Sport Week

The success of Women in Sport Week 2026 was outlined, supporting increased female participation in sport and physical activity across the county.

Volunteer in Sport Awards – Federation of Irish Sport

Recognition received by Kildare representatives at the Volunteer in Sport Awards was outlined, reflecting the important contribution of volunteers and inclusive clubs to local sports development.

KSP Club Grants Scheme

The strong level of interest in the 2026 KSP Club Grants Scheme was outlined, highlighting continued demand for support for local sports development, inclusion and participation initiatives.

KSP Hosting Sport Ireland Coordinators Meeting

It was outlined that Kildare Sports Partnership had been selected to host the national Sport Ireland Coordinators Meeting, reflecting recognition of local leadership and good practice in programme delivery.

Kildare Inclusivity Festival 2026

The continued development of the Kildare Inclusivity Festival was outlined as a significant countywide initiative promoting accessibility, inclusion and community participation through strong cross-agency collaboration.

Councillor Heather commended the work of the Department across its broad remit and welcomed the Inclusivity Festival as a positive example of collaboration between organisations and community groups across the county.

B. Integration

David Creighton, A/ Director of Services, gave the Integration update which was circulated to members.

EU Pact on Migration

The enactment of the International Protection Bill 2026 and the preparatory work underway by the Integration Team in advance of the implementation of the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum framework were outlined.

Numbers of New Arrivals

A continued reduction in the number of new arrivals seeking Temporary Protection and the associated changes in accommodation provision within the county were outlined, including the closure of Newhall Accommodation Centre and the cessation of Kill Equestrian Centre as a Designated Accommodation Centre. Punchestown remains the only Designated Accommodation Centre in Kildare.

Extension to the Temporary Protection Directive

The formal extension of the Temporary Protection Directive until March 2027 was outlined.

Proposals for International Protection Accommodation Centres

It was confirmed that there were currently no new proposals for International Protection Accommodation Centres referred to Kildare County Council.

Changes to Entitlements for Persons Seeking Temporary Protection

Recent national policy developments relating to accommodation and support arrangements for persons seeking Temporary Protection were outlined, including proposals under consideration by Government in relation to the withdrawal of tourist and commercial accommodation and changes to the Accommodation Recognition Payment scheme.

Ryevale House

The closure of the Leixlip centre, which had previously accommodated single women under the IPAS system, was noted.

Local Authority Integration Team (LAIT)

The ongoing work of the Local Authority Integration Team was outlined, including the delivery of regular drop-in information clinics in accommodation centres, which continue to provide targeted one-to-one support and strengthen engagement with service users and providers.

Key Achievements to Date in 2026

The level of activity delivered by the Local Authority Integration Team to date in 2026 was outlined, including one-to-one and group information clinics and the resolution of a significant number of service-user queries.

April Programmes and Supports

The range of targeted supports delivered during April was outlined, including education guidance, ESOL supports, physical activity programmes, health promotion initiatives, swimming supports and wellbeing workshops, delivered in collaboration with a range of partner organisations.

Community Integration Forum

The bi-monthly meeting of the Community Integration Forum took place on 7 April 2026.

Persons with Temporary Protection

The current number of persons with Temporary Protection accommodated in Kildare and the continued support being provided through Day-14 clinics to assist residents in sourcing longer-term accommodation were outlined.

Persons Applying for International Protection

The current number of International Protection Applicants accommodated in Kildare, including the number of children currently residing in State-funded accommodation, was outlined.

Programme Refugees

Continued progress under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme was outlined, including the resettlement of programme refugees in the county and the extension of integration supports pending the completion of the final family resettlement.

C. Libraries, Arts and Culture

An update was received from the Mr. M. Corrigan, Senior Executive Librarian, Ms. Éilis Lavelle Arts Officer and Ms. S. A McFadden Creative Communities Arts Officer.

Library Performance – 2025 KPIs

Strong library performance in 2025 was outlined, including high levels of visits, issues, events and digital usage, reflecting the continuing role of libraries as key community hubs for learning, culture, access to services and inclusion.

Kildare Library Service – 100th Anniversary and 1926 Census Exhibition

The centenary of Kildare Library Service was outlined as a significant milestone, to be marked through a programme of events including the Story of Us: 1926 Census Exhibition in Naas Library and Cultural Centre, linking local history, archives and community engagement.

Skills for Life and Community Programming

The broad range of Skills for Life and community programming across library branches was outlined, with a strong focus on sustainability, digital inclusion, employment supports, health awareness and accessibility. Ongoing initiatives such as conversational English classes, EmployAbility clinics, Age Action digital skills, Deaf outreach and Healthy Ireland programming were highlighted as supporting inclusion and community wellbeing.

Literacy, Children and Families

The continued delivery of literacy and family-focused programmes was outlined, including Ireland Reads, Spring into Storytime, My Little Library Bags, Summer Stars, Cruinniú na nÓg, Beyond the Book, TTT Spring 2026 and POP! – Power of Play. These programmes support literacy development, school readiness, inclusion and creative engagement for children and families.

Capital Projects

Progress on key library capital projects was outlined, including the commencement of the Clane Library project, the planned progression of the Newbridge Library, Archives and Local Studies development, and delivery of the new Mobile Library. Temporary service arrangements in Newbridge and extended opening hours in Kilcullen were also outlined to maintain service continuity during the capital works programme.

Arts Grants Programme 2026

The scale of demand under the Arts Grants Programme 2026 was outlined, with strong interest across all five Municipal Districts. The programme was identified as an important support for local creative activity and artistic development, notwithstanding the gap between the level of funding requested and the funding available.

Creative Places Athy

The confirmation of Creative Places Growth Award – Phase 2 funding for Athy was outlined as a significant strategic achievement, supporting the continuation of the programme with a focus on local capacity building, partnership development and long-term legacy planning.

Public Art Commissions

The progression of a number of public art commissions in Naas, along the M7 corridor and in Newbridge was outlined, reflecting continued investment in placemaking, public realm enhancement and creative engagement in local communities.

Strategic Context

All activity under the Creative Communities and Creative Ireland programme was outlined as being aligned with the Kildare Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023–2027, supporting cross-departmental collaboration and broader Council priorities.

Internal Strategic Partnership Projects 2026

The investment in internal Creative Communities projects was outlined, with initiatives focused on creative wellbeing, integration, climate action, accessibility, language and professional development. The range of projects demonstrated the strategic use of creativity as a tool for inclusion, engagement and cross-service collaboration.

External Creative Communities Fund 2026

The allocation of funding to locally developed projects across all Municipal Districts was outlined, with a strong emphasis on accessibility, inclusion and broad participation across a range of artforms.

Cruinniú na nÓg 2026

Preparations for Cruinniú na nÓg 2026 were outlined, including a countywide programme of free creative activities for children and young people, together with additional funding secured through Night-Time Economy and Shared Island initiatives. The outreach approach was noted as particularly important in reaching marginalised young people.

Additional Developments

Further funding applications and partnership initiatives were outlined, including proposals under the Creative Climate Action Fund and Creative Health and Wellbeing, together with continued support for the Naas General Hospital Artist in Residence initiative.

Item 7

Forthcoming Integration Strategy: To discuss specific policy initiatives relating to enhancing social inclusion on part of migrant women.

Matter discussed and agreed at Item 5 above (ref. 26/0326)

Item 8

Embedding Integration into Arts and Culture

The members received a report on the role of libraries, arts and creative programmes in supporting integration across the county. It was noted that several relevant themes had already been outlined as part of the Department update earlier in the meeting, particularly in relation to inclusion, accessibility, participation and the use of creative programmes to support engagement across diverse communities.

In the discussion that followed, members highlighted the importance of continuing to embed integration across library, arts and culture initiatives through inclusive programming, promotion of available supports and resources and partnership working to encourage wider community participation.

The potential to further develop inclusive and culturally responsive programming through partnership working and targeted outreach was also emphasised.

Item 9

To members noted the future presentation from the Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) - Provisional for July meeting

Members highlighted the need to support young people in the county, noting Kildare's young population profile. The potential for a more coordinated countywide approach was raised, including consideration of a focus group, working group or sub-committee to examine initiatives and projects, such as youth outdoor spaces.

Ms. M. Higgins advised that the CYPSC Network brings together statutory, community and voluntary services to support children and families and agreed to bring the matters raised to its next meeting on 21 May.

Ms. Higgins suggested that CYPSC attend a future SPC meeting and noted that a new county plan is currently being developed, with councillor input being important. In relation to youth spaces, she advised that the Parks Section has a plan in place, although challenges remain in identifying suitable locations.

Item 10

The members noted the forthcoming meetings:

- 09 July 2026
- 08 October 2026

This concluded the business of the meeting