Planning, Enterprise and Economic Development
Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)
Draft Minutes of meeting held at 3.00 p.m. on Wednesday 17th of June 2026
online via Teams

Cathaoirleach; Cllr. Ivan Kealtey

Present online; Cllr. Mark Leigh, Cllr. Padraig. McEvoy, Cllr. David Trost, Mr. Colm Kenny – PPN Environmental/Conservation, Mr. Patrick (PJ) Fagan – PPN Social Inclusion

Apologies; Cllr. Evie Sammon, Cllr. Tom McDonnell, Cllr. Claire O'Rourke, Mr. Anthony Neville, Development Construction Pillar, Mr. Evan Arkwright – Business/Commercial Pillar, Alan Dunney - Director of Services Jane O' Reilly, A/Senior Planner. Amy Granville, Senior Planner, Ger Maher, Senior Executive Officer

Also Present: Eileen Hanlon – Director of Services, Barbara Sweeney – Financial/Management Accountant, Catalina Alkhatib - Financial/Management Accountant, Jacqui McNabb - Head of Enterprise, Mary Mc Carthy - Administrative Officer, Catherine Ryan - Administrative Officer

1. Declarations of (a) Conflicts of Interest or (b) pecuniary or beneficial interests under section 177 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended.

The Cathaoirleach advised the members that it was a requirement at all strategic policy committee meetings for members to declare any potential conflicts of interest or pecuniary or beneficial interests under section 177 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended for items under discussion at the meeting.

There were no declarations.

2.To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on

- **19th of February 2026**

  The Minutes were proposed by Cllr. David Trost and seconded by Cllr. Mark Leigh and agreed by the meeting.

- **10th of March 2026**

  The Minutes were proposed by Cllr. David Trost and seconded by Cllr. Mark Leigh and agreed by the meeting.

3. Proposed Rates Waiver Scheme for 2027

The Cathaoirleach advised that the Commercial Rates Waiver Scheme has been considered by the Finance Committee in March 2026 with a view to extending its application into 2027 and who had recommended that the scheme be approved by the members of the Planning, Enterprise and Economic Development SPC for continuation into 2027. Approval by the SPC is sought before the 30th June each year under the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019 if a rates waiver scheme is to be enacted. The Cathaoirleach noted that the scheme was adopted by the Council in 2025 and was in operation from January 2026 and sought an update on the scheme since its commencement.

Ms. Catherine Ryan advised that the current scheme runs from the 1st of January 2026 to 31st December 2026 and is applicable to commercial properties in town or village centres that have been previously occupied and vacant for at least 2 years, or properties not previously occupied and vacant for 5 years. The waiver applicant must be the rateable occupier of the property. The waiver is only applicable where there is a net increase in occupation in the County, i.e new businesses or those expanding into a new location Relocation from one property to another does not qualify in full. Where there is a relocation, only the differential increase in the rates charge will be eligible for the waiver. Where an existing property is extended into an eligible vacant unit, the waiver will apply to the additional area occupied only. Actual occupation of less than one year will not qualify for the waiver. The use of the property should comply with appropriate planning guidance. The Applicant must be able to submit a copy of their Tax Clearance Certificate. Year one of the scheme is defined as either the year that the applicant first took up occupation or the following year. Ms. Ryan advised that they had received twelve applications so far.

Ms Eileen Hanlon advised that the scheme had been promoted through advertising, online social media, the website, through the Revenue Collectors, through letting estate agents/letting agents and noted that there was engagement with the Revenue Collectors.

Cllr. Leigh noted that there were restrictions to some businesses. Ms. Ryan advised that section 4 set out the ineligible businesses which included off-licenses, vape shops, betting shops as examples.

Cllr. McEvoy made reference noted that the example in section 6 referred to an example for 2026. Ms.. Ryan advised that they would amend that example in advance of going out on public consultation. Cllr. McEvoy referred to Section 15 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019 where the Elected Members can make a waiver scheme. Cllr. Keatley noted that the Waiver Scheme had to come before the SPC every year. Ms. Hanlon considered that the legislation was weak and it was safer carry out a review and get approval each year.

Cllr. Trost considered there should be better feedback when the public consultation took place. Ms. McNabb observed that in some cases it was difficult in ascertaining the owners of some vacant buildings. Ms. McNabb also advised that the five Members who were involved in the shopfront Scheme were very supportive and that her Department would promote the Rates Waiver Scheme at the MD Roadshows.

On the Proposal of Cllr. McEvoy and seconded d By Cllr. Trost, the Members of the SPC approved the 2027 Commercial Rates Waiver Scheme.

4. Referral from Full Council 30th of March 2026

20	**Councillors Aoife Breslin, Suzanne Doyle, Nuala Killeen and Tracey O Dwyer** Working group to review means of supporting our SME rates sector	Agreed to refer to ***Planning, Enterprise and Economic Development SPC***	Enterprise & Economic Development/ Finance

Ms. Hanlon advised the SPC that the Members had been satisfied with the report provided at the Council Meeting on the 30th of March 2026 and noted there was a comprehensive suite of business support in place including, training, mentoring and financial assistance provided by Kildare's Local Enterprise Office in addition to the Council's Rates Waiver Scheme and considered that the Members did not actually want a working group.

The Members were satisfied that there was enough support in place without the need to set up a working group.

Updates from Enterprise, Economic Development & Tourism

Ms. McNabb provided an update on the following,

- Circular Economy Hub in Athy, advising the Application was submitted for Phases 2 and 3 of the Circular Economy Hub in Athy under the SMART Pobal Fund on the 2nd of June 2026 and the Structural Construction Tender is 65% complete with an estimated opening timeframe of September 2026,
- the Fashion, Textile Fashion, Textiles & Design Hub to be known as the “The Sustainable Fashion House” .81% of the construction contract was complete with an opening earmarked for September/.October 2026.
- the Tech Pre-Accelerator Programme that concluded in June
- Focus on Craft, there were four craft businesses chosen to represent the county at the LEO showcase 2027 in the RDS in January.
- 35 applications approved for grant aid in the sum of €107,275.89.
- Kildare County Council is developing a coordinated calendar of tourism offerings to support year-round visitor activity and maximise economic benefit across the county. The first of this will be seen in the Shackelton Autumn School festival 2026, followed by Brigid 2027 .
- EU JTF grantee Zipit Forest Adventures will officially open to the public on July 3rd.
- EU JTF grantee Lullymore received their new electric train funded through the programme.

- European Funded Project, Repower Regions (Erasmus+) - Good progress is being achieved in the development of EQF aligned training curricula at Levels 4–6. Advancement has also been made in establishing Regional Industry Alliances and Partners are currently preparing for the first round of regional alliance meetings, scheduled for delivery by end July 2026.

5. **Agree date for SPC Meeting in Athy.**

   The Members agreed to hold the SPC meeting in the food hub in Athy on the 19th of November 2026.

6. **A.O. B.**

   Cllr. McEvoy advised that The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly has commenced the review process of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region and advised that a Director's Summary Report on the submissions received during the pre-draft public consultation stage would be prepared. Cllr. McEvoy considered that Kildare's input could be discussed at the SPC.

Schedule of 2026 Meetings

3rd September 2026 and 19th November 2026

This concluded the meeting