

MINUTES

Transportation, Safety and Emergency Services

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

01 October 2020

Attendees:

Councillor Joseph Neville
Councillor Anne Connolly
Councillor Angela Feeney
Councillor Colm Kenny
Councillor Nuala Killeen
Councillor Mark Stafford
Cormac Browne
Brian Purcell
Gerry Dornan

Also Present

Tadhg McDonnell, Director of Services
David Reel, Municipal District Engineer -Naas
Michael Hurley, Health and Safety Officer
Declan Keogh, Roads Safety, Cycling and Sustainable Transport Officer.
Pamela Pender, A/Senior Executive Officer
Marie Kelly, Assistant Staff Officer.



Apologies:

Councillor Paul Ward
John McGowan (SEE)

Item 1. Introduction

Cathaoirleach Joseph Neville welcomed all the members of the SPC to the meeting and welcomed Councillor Colm Kenny to the Roads, Transportation & Public Safety SPC on the departure of Councillor Peter Hamilton to the Climate Action SPC. The members of the SPC proceeded with round the table introductions.

Item 1 – Minutes-26 June 2020

On the proposal of Councillor Nuala Killeen and seconded by Councillor Mark Stafford the minutes of 26 June 2020 were approved and taken as read.

Item 2 – Declarations of Interest

No Comment.

Item 3 – Update from Director of Services

The Director of Services, Tadhg McDonnell gave the members a briefing in respect to various road projects around the county. Members were advised that a meeting was held between Iarnród Éireann and Kildare County Council on the proposal for the Dart expansion on the Maynooth line. He informed the committee that Irish Rail proposal to extend the Dart rail to Maynooth. The project will expand beyond Maynooth to facilitate a depot just outside Kilcock. The project will not continue to Kilcock but Kildare County Council will make a case of this in the next round of discussions. Iarnród Eireann are driving this project and that they hope to multiply current capacity on the rail network. Considering this, Kildare County Council agree and highlight the importance of preserving the road from Dublin to Maynooth. A change in modal shift by commuters would see the necessity for a Park & Ride facility for Maynooth/M4 near the Station. Currently a public consultation for this proposed project is on display. The Director assured the committee that Kildare County Council would be making a submission and encouraged others to do so. Councillor Neville agreed to circulate and e-mail the link to the members to assist in making an individual submission, or as a group.

The members of the committee were advised of a pilot scheme for a hard shoulder Bus Corridor on the M4 from Maynooth towards South Dublin County Council boundary. The aim being to reduce journey time from Maynooth to the city centre.

The Director informed the members of the approaching Budget. The impact of Covid-19 and the new Programme for Government would bring about a change in emphasis on how funding and projects are prioritised for Transport.

NTA have identified a list of schemes for provision/enhancement of cycling facilities as part of the Greater Dublin Area. Kildare falls into this category. The Programme for Government commits to provide funding of €360m per annum, totalling €1.8bn over 5 years. Kildare County Council estimates it will receive a budget of 3%, €50m over the period.

NTA/TII/Department of Transport issue Guidelines/Circulars and Manuals which must be considered by Engineers in determining warrants/standards for items such as yellow boxes, linage etc where a warrant must be established before progressing. Technical documents are drafted and will be signed off by the Director in the coming weeks.

In relation to the Covid 19 funding, he assured the members that €1.8 million was received by Kildare County Council, the challenge to Kildare County Council was delivering those projects in a very short timeline.

Item 4 – Health and Safety Officer

Michael Hurley, Health and Safety Officer was welcomed to the meeting. The Director of Services reiterated that Michael was also the Access Officer for the Kildare County Council. Michael informed the committee members of the key objectives for 2020 and the Covid 19 safety measures in place.

- Drive health and Safety best practice through staff consultation, communication and proactive monitoring.
- Continuous improvement of our Health and Safety management system and adherence to legislation.
- Monitor Health and Safety Performance and advise on how improvements can be made.

He confirmed to the members that the number of safety site inspection for 2020 had a target of 72 set but inspections carried out was 100 to deal with Covid 19. He assured them that the commitment of Health and Safety Core is Staff Training. The members were advised of the Covid Safety measures developed for staff and members.

- Employee Health and Wellbeing Programme
- Return to Work Protocol
- Return to Work Induction
- Remote Working Policy and Working from home guidelines.
- Covid Specific Risk Assessments
- Standard Operating Guidelines.

He assured the members that safety committee meeting with lead worker representative have taken place with quarterly updates to the Senior Management Team. The Cathaoirleach welcomed the very robust procedures in place for dealing with Covid 19.

The Director of Services discussed the current situation and the impact of Covid 19 and he highlighted that now is not the time to become complacent.

Item 5- Road Safety, Cycling and Sustainable Transport Officer

Declan Keogh, Road Safety, Cycling and Sustainable Transport Officer was welcomed to the meeting and he updated the members on work to date and forthcoming events

The members asked him various questions about areas covered in the presentation.

Declan gave the members a brief background to the work in his remit.

- Road Safety
- Cycling
- Sustainable Transport

He informed the members of the campaigns over the Covid period:

Reckless driving for Tik-Tok fame were highlighted on national media with young drivers speeding down a road with their hands and eyes glued to the phone, video calling people and performing dance routines while driving.

The Stay Safe on your Staycation, this Regional road safety campaigns promoted staying safe while on the road to your staycation. He highlighted that 57% increase in people touring Ireland during the post -lockdown period, planning a safe journey, vehicle safety and scenic safety were promoted.

With reference to the Road Safety week, Declan outlined the agenda for this event and details will be available on the Council's website and local media.

On the advice of Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), the school wardens have little or no interaction with children at their crossing. Covid -19 social distancing signs were painted at School Warden crossing and on pathways leading into school gates reminding people to adhere to Covid 19 guidelines. School Wardens are operating on staggered times in the morning and afternoon to coincide with new school time schedules. The School Warden Training will commence on 29th October 2020 subject to Covid -19 guidelines at that time.

The Road Safety Officer is also working with AnTaisce's Green Schools coordinators for a number of Walkability Audits and Cycle Route initiatives for schools. Declan confirmed that the Cycle Forum meeting is scheduled for November 2020.

Declan assured the members that funding application was approved for cycle cafés but due to social distance concerns and restrictions it was not possible to launch a Cycle Café. However, bicycle shelters and repair units have been installed in some of the cycle café location and when they are all established a more suitable launch will be done, when it is deemed safe to do so.

He informed the members that Bike week was held from 19th -27th September 2020. The council promoted Bike Week on the council website, social media platforms and local radio.

He highlighted that so far this year, 3,800 bicycles were reported stolen to An Garda Síochána. Many of these thefts occurred in public service areas. A joint initiative 'Lock it or Lose it' campaign between Kildare County Council, An Garda Síochána and Irish Rail was undertaken to encourage cyclists to ensure that they leave their bicycles safely and securely in a public place. A video was produced and shared on social media and parts of it were also used for Monday night's Crimecall on RTÉ. He assured the members that this campaign would be revisited again after the October bank holiday and approaching the Christmas period.

The Committee was also given an update on the 'School Street' pilot scheme for Athy and Monasterevin. Declan assured members that the school street initiative aims to provide school goers, parents and guardians with a safer and easier route to school making it a healthy, active and sustainable means of transport to school, by walking, cycling or scooting. He has made contact with some of the business owners in Athy- Mount Hawkins in Athy and outlined the School Street Programme to them. In consultation with the Principal of the Primary School in Athy, the school has installed a pedestrian entrance which has resolved some of the parking issues. Remedial measures were undertaken by Municipal District Engineers recently to provide additional space on pathways for student outside schools.

In Kildare Town, the engineer and general operatives carried out work on Academy street in Kildare Town which included widening the footpath to 3m and also making it a one-way street and installation of a raised zebra crossing to encourage students to walk or cycle to school. Parking in the area has been reduced.

Councillor Connelly complimented all those concerned with the work that was carried out on Academy street from the school cycle programme to a feel-good factor for Kildare Town. Gerry Dornan requested clarification on whether Academy Street allows for cyclists to use this road and if signage is in place. Councillor Killeen requested updated on what percentage of schools have completed the cycle safety skills. Declan assured them that he would revert back to them with clarification.

The Director of Services reiterated that generally in most cases there is adequate parking in the towns. He also highlighted that we must condition drivers to park in designated areas.

Declan concluded his briefing that road safety- together with everyone working together and bringing people together to make it a safer county.

Item 6– Briefing on Winter Maintenance Plan

David Reel, District Engineer on behalf of John McGowan (SEE) gave the members an update in respect of the Winter Maintenance Plan. The objective of the Winter Maintenance Plan is to keep all principal roads in the County open to traffic, free from ice and safe to travel on. The season for salting starts in mid-October and runs up to the end of April approx. 200 days with salt runs being carried out twice a night depending on the weather conditions. Winter Maintenance Plan makes reference to Priority 1 (routine treatment), Priority 2 and Priority 3 routes so that we have a guide as to how we would operate in event of severe weather necessitating treatment of roads outside outside of our standard rota.

The members raised the following points:

- Review of the Council's Winter Maintenance Plan
- Clarification on the salting of cycle lanes/cycle paths
- Budget allocation
- Provision of Salt Bunkers countywide

Following a review of the Council's Winter Maintenance Plan in 2018/19, Kildare County Council has increased its Winter salting programme, effective from Spring 2019 increasing the existing route lengths by up to 70km. National Primary and Motorway routes (143km National Primary roads) are dealt with by contractors on behalf of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and Kildare County Council roads department treat 31% of all public roads (2,654km). Staffing of the trucks during the salting period is a very critical issue as they will not be available to do their normal daily duties. The council applies various assessment criteria in determining whether the addition or removal of a route is viable from traffic volumes, history of winter accidents, road alignment with regional and local primary roads given priority. There are no plans at present to add further salting runs to existing schedule as it would not be possible allowing for existing resources and availability of drivers and plant. He

informed the members that cycle lanes/cycle paths are not part of the Winter Maintenance plan.

Kildare County Council Budget allocation for the maintenance plan is €690,000 with an allocation from TII of €35,000. It is a tight budget and any excess is put towards purchase and renewal of lorries and salt gritters.

The provision of Salt Bunkers countywide will not be included in the Winter Maintenance Plan for the following reasons resources and public safety to name but a few.

Item 7-The Naming of Roundabouts

Pamela Pender (A/SEO) referred to a Motion in the name of Councillor Duffy 'That the council write to Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) to request the naming of a roundabout at Junction 14 on the M7 motorway. The roundabout located at Junction 14 southbound is in an area locally known as Snipe Bog and residents in the area have requested that the roundabout be named 'Snipe Roundabout'. Post December 2019 Kildare /Newbridge Municipal District meeting, there has been conflict of replies received. With reference to the roads department 'Policy on Roundabouts' this location would not fall into our remit. She confirmed that a letter was issued to TII for clarification on the ownership of this roundabout and upon receipt of same she would revert to the members on the outcome.

Item 8- To Consider Work Programme for 2020

The Cathaoirleach advised the members of the SPC that their role was to influence policy. He outlined the content of the work programme for 2019 asking the members for their vital input into deciding the work programme for 2020.

The Director of Services reiterated that the SPC is not a meeting to report on policies. He encouraged members to identify items for inclusion in their work programme and prioritise accordingly. He advised Councillor Neville that the Roads department would prepare a position paper for each item, to envisage if they are warranted or not. The roads department will communicate to the members on the findings in terms of finances and resources.

The next meeting will be held on 05th November 2020.