

Transport, Mobility and Open Spaces Strategic Policy Committee

Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday, 06 February 2025 at 3.00p.m in the Council Chamber

Attendees: Cathaoirleach Kevin Duffy, Councillor Ger Dunne, Councillor Peter Melrose, Mr. Gerry Prendergast and Mr. Joseph Knox.

Also Ms Celina Barrett, A/Director of Services; Mr Mark McLoughlin, Senior Executive Officer; Ms Susan Donohoe, Assistant Staff Officer and Ms. Marie Kelly, Assistant Staff Officer.

Not Present: Councillor Noel Connolly, Councillor Tracey O'Dwyer, Councillor Paul Brooks, Councillor Paul Ward, Mr Cormac Browne and Eamonn Mahoney.

Introduction

The Cathaoirleach, Councillor Kevin Duffy welcomed all the members to the February Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) meeting and round the table introductions took place. He outlined to the members of the SPC that their role was to influence strategic policy which will be a challenge. There are four scheduled meetings per annum and full attendance is important to ensure the views of the entire membership is reflected in the decisions of the Committee.

The inaugural meeting which is a critical meeting in determining the direction of the committee for the 2025-2029 period, Cllr Duffy requested contact to be made with all members not attending the first meeting of 2025.

Item 1 – Declarations of Interest

Cllr Duffy expressed the importance of this practice particularly to the new members and noted. Mr Gerry Prendergast in his introduction expressed declaration of interest and he assured at times when this occurs, he will remove himself from the meeting.

Item 2 – Introduction from Ms Celina Barrett, A/Director of Services

The A/Director of Services gave the members a briefing on the following aspects of the Transport, Mobility and Open Spaces in the county. She reiterated that the following the Local Government elections in June 2024, Kildare County Council adopted and revised Strategic Policy Committees for 2024-2029

- Transport Operations
- Transport Projects and Planning
- Sustainable Transport and Traffic Management
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Administration
- National Roads Office
- Department of Transport Support Office

Members were advised that the Transport, Mobility and Open Spaces SPC is about developing policies, policy direction and to consider developing goals giving the example of the context of the Climate Action Plan

- Avoid
- Shift
- Approve

The committee members were informed that the delivery of the goals will be delivered by all sections of the transport department and filtered through the five Municipal District offices.

They were advised that they must be aware of the challenges facing Kildare County Council with severe weather response.

- Salting of roads and paths – currently 10 salting routes – details of which can be found of the Kildare County Council website.

<https://kildarecoco.ie/AllServices/Transport/WinterMaintenancePlan/>

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. Members were advised that the Machinery Yard has approximately 150 vehicles all of which need to be updated to provide a fleet decarbonisation with a move to more electric vehicles. The A/Director of Services informed the members that the Regional Salting Barn is new and in 2025/2026 it is providing salt for Co. Kildare but going forward it will provide salt for other Local Authorities.

There are approximately 28,000 public lights that are maintained by Kildare County Council, Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project (PLEEP) currently upgrading all public lights to LED. Killaree Lighting Service contracted along with Kilkenny County Council to complete this project. She reiterated that Kilkenny County Council is the lead authority in the Eastern Region of the Project (PLEEP). The PLEEP is a national project for the upgrading of Public Lighting infrastructure from incandescent light bulbs to energy efficient LED lanterns. With that in mind a lot of work will be required to examine, consider policies and the area of Public Lighting faces challenges to manage and maintain the LED Lights.

The committee members were advised the importance of Transport Strategies Area Based Transport Assessments (ABTA) incorporated into the Local Area Plans. The ABTA alone does not have statutory ground.

Ms Barrett informed the committee members of the following major projects all at different stages:

- Maynooth Eastern Ring Road (Stage 1 complete and gone to tender).
- Celbridge Hazelhatch Mobility Corridor circulated to An Bord Pleanála to planning stage.
- Newbridge Southern Orbital Relief Road (private planning permission in process at the moment).

She advised the members of the committee that under Sustainable Transport and Traffic Management the following work is being carried out with a budget of €9.5 m and bus stops have received a budget of €500,000 from the National Transport Authority.

- Royal Canal Greenway
- Craddockstown Road, Naas
- Mill Street, Maynooth

- Safe Route to School
- Capital Programme/Local Property Tax

She advised the committee that the Council were in the process of recruiting a Road Safety and Sustainable Transport Officer. She advised that the Transport Department has completed a draft EV charging Infrastructure strategy that will be listed on the May Agenda for consideration. The area of EV Charging Infrastructure is a challenge as the infrastructure is setting out that Kildare County Council must provide neighbourhood and amenity charging points but to name a few.

She discussed that parking bye-laws for the twelve towns needed to be reviewed and that policy on parking could be examined when considering the Work Programme for 2025-2026.

The members of the committee were advised of the pilot scheme to strengthen the hard shoulder Bus Corridor (Eastbound) on the M4 between Leixlip and Maynooth which would reduce journey times for public transport to the city centre. The design stage for the westbound is processing.

In respect of Open Spaces. Ms. Barret advised the Committee that there is huge demand for playgrounds and sports facilities in Kildare. The Council have received €3 million in funding from the Sports Fund and are seeking over significant additional funding to deliver:

Cherry Avenue, Kildare – has received planning permission.

Wonderful Barn, Leixlip – currently trying to secure funding.

Kildare County Council are competing both internally and on a national level for funding. Ms. Barret advised the committee members that there have been representations regarding trees in the county, particularly in light of the recent storms and the damage caused by falling trees. The Council receive many requests annually for both removing of trees and planting of trees, along with requests for hedge cutting. This may be something that could be considered for developing a policy.

Ms. Celina Barrett concluded her presentation that the National Roads Office (NRO) works within their remit is governed by Service Level Agreement with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). The National roads and motorways are under the remit of NRO whereas Kildare County Council works fall on regional and local roads.

The members raised the following issues:

1. Clarification on the different types of gases.
2. Kildare County Council to influence National Policies and to find a way Kildare could be a model.
3. Park and Ride policy.

The A/Director of Services confirmed the following points:

1. CNG-Compressed Natural Gas (Natural Gas for Transport) with large vehicles working as part of the Climate Action Plan. Hydrate Vegetable Oil that is captured in the machinery yard.
2. Ev charging infrastructure is capital budget driven with Municipal District office going forward driving the policy.
3. Park and ride policy is statutory policy. The principles are there, and we need to influence National Policies.

Ms. Celina Barret advised that there are already plans in place for Park and Ride facilities and some are now at Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) stage.

Item 3 –Annual Work Programme

A lengthy discussion did take place at the meeting on the Work Programme 2025.

To ensure that the next meeting to be held on 8 May 2025 is as productive as possible.

Items for consideration,

- Speed
- Traffic Calming
- Trees
- Public Lighting
- EV

Cllr Duffy encouraged members to identify items for inclusion on the work programme and to prioritise accordingly. The Cathaoirleach agreed that EV Draft Infrastructure Policy will be listed on the May Agenda.

Mr. Mark McLoughlin, Senior Executive Officer advised the committee members that referrals from Municipal District and Full Council meeting could also be placed on the Work Programme. He reiterated that it is a requirement of the Strategic Policy Committee Scheme for 2024-2029 to adopt a multi-annual Work Programme. The Work Programme can be updated as regularly as required during the lifetime of the

Committee and the Work Programme for each year will be presented to Kildare County Council's Corporate Policy Group for approval.

In accordance with the Scheme, he assured the committee members that they are allowed a 4-week period to make observations on the Work Programme before it is agreed.

Cllr Duffy concluded that the Work Programme is about getting a balance of work with a good dialogue within our time restraints with a view for the committee to meet between SPC meetings. He advised that SPC is not a meeting to report on policies.

Cllr Peter Melrose requested clarification on extra meetings to the specified dates agreed on the meeting calendar for 2025. Cllr Duffy advised that the committee could organise additional meetings depending on committee requirements on a case-by-case basis.

Mr Gerry Prendergast gave a detailed view on the flow of traffic on the M7 that with his view that the M7 will come to a standstill by 2030. He suggested a statutory park and ride to Dublin is required.

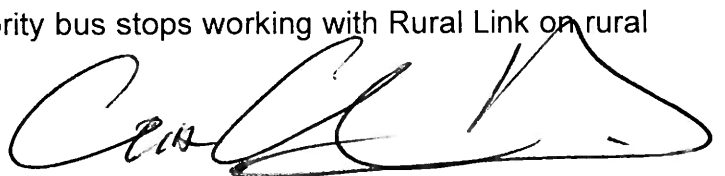
Cllr Melrose requested that Mr Gerry Prendergast bring a presentation to the May meeting. Cllr Duffy agreed and noted. He highlighted that a position paper on this issue could be submitted from Kildare County Council. He agreed that it would be a challenge on local and regional roads to get people out of cars. This submission would have to go CPG and Full Council to enter the review process of the National Development Plan. The A/Director of Services advised that a meeting could be scheduled with the National Transport Authority on the issue of Park and Ride policy.

The members raised the following concerns:

1. Clarification on LED lights.
2. Bus Stops

The A/Director of Services, Celina Barrett confirmed the following points:

1. At present the stock of LED lights is at 50% with 100% surveyed. Design is underway. The purpose of the SPC is to develop policies, to strive toward what can be delivered for the benefit of the county.
2. The Budget for bus stops is €500,000. The National Transport Authority determine the locations and priority bus stops working with Rural Link on rural



services with the Council assess the locations to see if it is safe or can be made safe and put the infrastructure in place.

Item 4 – Agreement on the Meetings calendar 2025

The following dates for 2025 were presented to the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) and agreed by full Council in November 2024

- 06 February
- 08 May
- 11 September
- 11 December 2025

With the agreement from the committee members, Cllr Kevin Duffy proposed the later starting time of 3.30pm. At present these meetings are being held in person. The members agreed the time change for the meetings for 2025 and noted.

Item 5 – Any Other Business

Sustainable Transport Forum:

The A/Director of Services, Celina Barrett informed the members that operational items on the work programme were directed to this Forum. Such as issues on active travel measures, school transport, management of greenways etc.

Ms.Barrett reiterated that it was not a statutory requirement to have this Forum established. Cllr Duffy requested clarification from Cllr Paul Ward, Chair of the previous Forum on his views and consideration to continue and revert back to the committee within the next four weeks.

The members agreed and noted.

The meeting concluded.