

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting of Full Council held at 3:00 p.m.

Monday 18 December 2023 in the Council Chamber

Áras Chill Dara, Devoy Park, Naas, Co Kildare

Members Present: Councillor D. Fitzpatrick (Cathaoirleach), Councillors V. Behan, A. Breen, A. Breslin, F. Brett, B. Caldwell, B. Clear, M. Coleman, A. Connolly, N. Connolly, P. Curran, Í. Cussen, B. Dooley, K. Duffy, T. Durkan, A. Farrelly, A. Feeney, C. Galvin, P. Hamilton, N. Heavey, I. Keatley, C. Kelly, B. Quinn, N. Killeen, M. Leigh, V. Liston, P. McEvoy, S. Moore, J. Neville, N. Ó Cearúil, T. O'Dwyer, R. Power, E. Sammon, P. Ward, B. Weld and B. Wyse.

Online: Councillors F. Mcloughlin Healy and C. Pender

Apologies: Councillors S. Doyle and P. O'Dwyer

Also Present: Ms. A. Aspell (Deputy Chief Executive), Ms. M. Higgins (Director of Services), Mr. A. Dunney (Director of Services), Mr. E. Ryan (Directors of Service) Ms. C. Barrett, (A/Director of Service), Ms. P. O'Rourke (Climate Action Co-ordinator), Mr. M. Corrigan (Senior Executive Librarian), Ms. C. O'Grady (Meetings Administrator), Mr. J. Hannigan (Meetings Secretary) and other officials.

The Cathaoirleach welcomed everyone to the December meeting of the Council.

01/1223

Declaration of Interests

The Cathaoirleach sought from the members any declarations of conflicts of interest or pecuniary or beneficial interests under Section 177 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended. There were no declarations.

02/1223

Minutes and Progress Report

The council considered the draft minutes of the annual budget meeting held on 20 November 2023, the monthly meeting held on 27 November 2023 and the progress report.

It was agreed by the members that amendments to the minutes of the monthly meeting held on the 27 November 2023 in the name of Councillor Cussen and circulated in advance of the meeting be accepted.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Ó Cearúil seconded by Councillor McEvoy and agreed by the members present that the draft minutes of the annual budget meeting held on 20 November 2023 and the monthly meeting held on 27 November 2023 with amendments, be adopted.

The progress report was noted.

03/1223

Chief Executive's Monthly Management Report

The members noted the Chief Executives monthly management report.

04/1223

Kildare County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

It was agreed to take this item later in the meeting when Councillor Hamilton arrived. The presentation was introduced by Paula O'Rorke Climate Action Officer who thanked the members and public for their input to the plan. If adopted this would be the first plan adopted in Ireland

05/1223

Section 141 Reports from Other Bodies

The members considered reports from members appointed to other bodies pursuant to Section 141 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended. The following reports were received at the December meeting.

- Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board
- Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)
- South Western Regional Drugs & Alcohol Taskforce

The Cathaoirleach asked that the members direct any questions they had on the reports to the members appointed to the relevant body.

The reports were noted.

06/1223

Athy Heritage Company Limited

The members considered the appointment of a member to the new board of the Athy Heritage Company Limited.

Councillor Breslin nominated Councillor Dooley to position on new board of the Athy Heritage Company Limited and this was seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed.

Councillor Dooley thanked the members for the nomination and the previous Chief Executive, Mr. Peter Carey for his support for the Shackleton Museum. He informed the members that this has come so far in just 48 months and that the new Museum should be in place in approximately 18 months.

Councillor Fitzpatrick made reference to the following projects in Athy that were delivered or being delivered Shackleton Museum, Athy Library and the Ring Road

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Breslin seconded by Councillor Kelly and with the agreement of all members present, that Councillor Dooley be appointed to the new board of the Athy Heritage Company Limited.

07/1223

Gnó an Cathaoirleach/Cathaoirleachs Business

The Cathaoirleach thanked Ms. M Higgins, Ms. P O'Rourke and Ms. K. Lane for all their work over the past years in relation to the Brigid 1500 Festival and referred to the

many events for the diary in 2024. He suggested that a listing of all the dates be made available to the members at the next meeting of the council in the new year.

He reminded members that events taking place for Brigid 1500 commenced on 27 January right through to the 4 February and he gave details of them stating that he looked forward to representing the County at the various events. He also thanked the Leas Cathaoirleach for her work.

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Cllr Sammon back to the chamber following the birth of her daughter. Councillor Sammon thanked the members for their support and assistance after the birth her daughter saying that she really appreciated their support.

08/1223

Comhfhreagras/Correspondence

The Meetings Administrator confirmed six items of correspondence had been circulated to the members along with the progress report. These included five motion referrals from other county councils and correspondence from Senator Victor Boyhan in relation to the Policing Security and Community Safety Bill 2023.

The correspondence was noted.

09/1223

Conferences and Training

The Meetings Administrator referred to the conference and training report which had been circulated to the members seeking approval for attendance at the AILG 2024 Annual Training Conference in the Arklow Bay Hotel Co. Wicklow on the 14 and 15 February 2024 by Councillor E Sammon.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor V. Liston seconded by Councillor N. Connolly and agreed by all that this be approved.

10/1223

Councillor Ciara Galvin

The Cathaoirleach wished Councillor Galvin well as he was aware that this was her last meeting. The members wished Councillor Galvin well and thanked her for her work over the previous 4 years and said that they hoped to see her back in the chamber in the future.

Councillor Galvin thanked the members for their good wishes and spoke of the successes to date. She thanked the members for their support.

11/1223

Decade of Commemorations Committee Report

Councillor McEvoy introduced Mario Corrigan who gave a presentation to the members on the work carried out by the Decade of Commemoration Committee. He noted the mission statement, "to establish the most appropriate way in which to mark the centenaries within the county. The delivery of the programme should be inclusive, appropriate, and sensitive to take into account all aspects of life in County Kildare in the period 1913-1923"

He outlined the mandate of the committee, the partnerships formed and the budget provided. He spoke of the activities undertaken

Under Artefacts and Legacies he spoke about the CDs, DVDs and books produced and how these were distributed to schools and libraries. A number of exhibitions were organised and supported by the committee.

He gave details of books and booklets supported or published by the committee, gardens and memorials supported by the committee, and gave details of film clips that were produced and shown on Irish TV under the title Kildare Matters.

During Covid a number of Digital events were organised and he detailed the key events that were commemorated by year commencing 1919 to 1924.

He thanked Kildare County Council, Riverbank Theatre, An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces for their assistance and support.

He thanked the following for their work and input,

Kevin Murphy, James Durney, Karel Kiely, Bridget Loughlin, Lucina Russell, Mario Corrigan, Gillian Allen, Marian Higgins, Eoghan Ryan, Cllr Verelouise Behan, Cllr Anne

Breen, Cllr Noel Connolly, Cllr Ciara Galvin, Cllr Nuala Killeen, Cllr Peggy O'Dwyer, Cllr Brendan Weld, Cllr Pádraig McEvoy, past members of the committee Cllr Bernard Caldwell, Martin Miley, Deputy Réada Cronin and Senator Fiona O'Loughlin.

Mr Corrigan informed the meeting that they had tried to include all in the legacy.

Councillor McEvoy reminded the members that this project had started 10 years ago in this chamber and members had supported it with allocation of funds to support its activities.

It was confirmed that a copy of the presentation would be circulated to members.

The report was noted.

12/1223

Kildare County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

The Cathaoirleach returned to item number 4 on the agenda. The presentation was introduced by Paula O'Rorke Climate Action Officer who thanked the members and public for their input to the plan noting that if adopted this would be the first plan adopted in Ireland.

A presentation was given by Mr Paul Chadwick on amendments and additions to parts of the plan following consultation with the members.

He explained that additional words added to sections were in green lettering, B22 to B27 Some words had been removed and these had a strikethrough in them.

He explained that additional sections had been added and that these were in green lettering (B11 to B15). He asked the members to consider the following-

SP No.	Action
G4	Promote greater community and business engagement on climate action, circular economy, energy, water conservation, sustainable mobility and biodiversity <u>through events such as Earth Hour</u> and the Community Climate Action Officer, Climate Team and support tools to enable the required behaviour change. The LEO will promote Green Micro, Lean programmes, focused Energy Efficiency Briefing Series and capital programmes demonstrating circular economy principles with a focus on SMEs.

G6	Create and support formal linkages between key community, business, <u>defence</u> and education bodies to facilitate collaborative climate action within the County.
<u>B11</u>	<u>Require that all new large scale development (more than 10 houses or equivalent) within the County provides a life cycle analysis of carbon impact in line with the standard PAS 2080 Carbon Management In Infrastructure and ISO 19650 - Building Information Modelling (BIM) as part of the planning application.</u>
<u>B12</u>	<u>Support the development of sustainable, energy efficient cohousing or other semi-communal housing projects at appropriate locations within the county where access to active travel and/or public transport is readily available.</u>
<u>B13</u>	<u>Undertake a feasibility study of the potential for district heating or energy from key sources within the County including data centres, wastewater treatment plants and large industry, ensuring such a report as appropriate regard to planning and environmental protection considerations.</u>
<u>B15</u>	<u>Ensure all new residential or high human occupancy developments are located in areas whereby direct access to active travel routes and/or public transport modes are available and/or provide reserved space for shared cars.</u>
B22	Deliver the Pathfinder Projects identified for County Kildare under the National Sustainable Mobility Policy (such as the Naas Mobility Network Integration) and Energy Performance and Building Directive initiatives, having due regard to environmental sensitivities such as local human receptors, European sites and biodiversity; and the need to appropriately protect and conserve protected structures, during any retrofitting works.
B23	Support the planning and implementation of a programme of improved town <u>and school</u> bus services and commence delivery of an enhanced bus stop and bus shelter programme for regional and rural services.
B27	Revise working practices within the Council to ensure that <u>support</u> 40% of resource hours can achieve remote working as per the National Remote Work Strategy.
<u>N4</u>	<u>Require all new development within the County to undertake an inventory of baseline biodiversity and set a target for 10% biodiversity gain as part of any planning application for development.</u>
N8	The Council will seek to progress Flood Alleviation schemes in the County in conjunction with the Office of Public Works (OPW); having due regard to the need to promote <u>natural and</u> nature based solutions and Sustainable Drainage Systems, and environmental sensitivities at these locations, including water quality, biodiversity, European sites, riparian corridors and aquatic ecology, visual amenity and recreation and amenity value.
N10	Develop a plan of action to protect, conserve and enhance the wetlands identified in the County Kildare Wetland Survey 2012-2014 (<u>including Pollardstown Fen</u>). This plan shall be developed by a competent ecology <u>team and</u> shall have due regard to the need to appropriately protect, conserve and enhance important habitats and species and European sites, and support the maintenance and improvement of water quality in line with the aims of the Water Framework Directive.

N15	Devise a county native tree management plan which seeks to retain existing native provenance trees, support the planting of native provenance trees, and identify sites for native and mixed woodland planting. Set targets to maintain existing and plant new native provenance trees in urban and rural areas, to enhance carbon storage, biodiversity and landscape, air quality, and urban heat island mitigation. Increase range of edible native provenance locally sourced fruits, flowers and vegetables in Council Parks, rooftops and open spaces.
N19	Support farmers in the shift toward a low-carbon and climate resilient agriculture sector in County Kildare including the diversification of farming practices to increased tillage, horticulture or alternative land uses.
N27	Explore the feasibility of the development of allotments and community gardens in the County to support sustainable food production.
N28	Support the tourism industry in the sustainable delivery of the objectives of Ireland’s Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 – 2027 through enabling reductions in the carbon footprint of the tourism sector, supporting creation of transformational green infrastructural assets and growing sustainable, green and eco tourism in the area.
R10	Require all new development within the County to comply with the requirements of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems as a minimum and to promote the development of nature based solutions such as blue/green roofs, ponds, wetlands, shallow vegetated channels (swales) and include provision for rainwater harvesting.
R12	Resolve local flooding issues utilising OPW and Department of Transport funding (Drainage programme, Climate Adaptation and Resilience Works, OPW Minor Works Scheme) incorporating Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, having due regard to the need to promote Sustainable Drainage Systems, and environmental sensitivities at these locations, including water quality, biodiversity, European sites, riparian corridors and aquatic ecology, visual amenity and recreation and amenity value. All new drainage works to be in line with best practice principles informed by SUDs Interim Guidance Document and Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD).
R15	Carry out a ‘Tree Cover Survey and Policy’ on lands managed by the Council, in accordance with an agreed methodology. The study will identify sites for native and mixed woodland planting and set targets for planting and maintaining native provenance trees in urban and rural areas, to enhance carbon storage, biodiversity and landscape, air quality, and urban heat island mitigation. Where possible tree pits should integrate into the surface water drainage to provide water quality benefits.

S1	Prepare and implement an overall Renewable Energy Strategy for the County that is informed by the National Planning Framework targets to support sustainable development of onshore wind and solar within the County, whilst advocating and exerting influence to ensure such projects promote climate action co-benefits and do not contravene relevant environmental protection criteria or cause significant negative environmental effects.
S5	Develop an Electricity Demand Management Plan for all Council owned buildings and sites to measure existing electricity use and efficiency and to target appropriate measures and reductions.
S8	Require data centres to include strong energy efficiency measures (including demand management, energy efficiency, utilisation of waste heat or auto generation) to reduce operational carbon footprints through the use of sustainable sources of energy generation in the first instance and then the use of renewable sources of energy to power operations, where it is confirmed through appropriate environmental assessment that associated renewable energy development will not have any significant environmental effect.
S12	Engage with Uisce Eireann to determine the feasibility of using waste water sludges in Anaerobic Digestion plants for recovery of biomethane within the County.
S17	Support the introduction of bioeconomy infrastructure and initiatives that align with the policies of this Plan and the National Bioeconomy Action Plan 2023-2025.
SP No.	Maynooth DZ
DZN6	Support carbon sequestration through strategic planting of native provenance species for all new developments, underutilised lands or farms to promote biodiversity gain and ecological connectivity within Maynooth.
DZR6	Undertake a feasibility study to develop a low-energy community centre within the town as an information hub including feasibility of a local Energy Agency .

Councillor Moore expressed reservations about section B15

“Ensure all new residential or high human occupancy developments are located in areas whereby direct access to active travel routes and/or public transport modes are available and/or provide reserved space for shared cars”. He believed that this could be used as a reason to refuse planning permissions, particularly in rural areas.

A number of councillors shared Councillor Moore’s concerns.

Councillor Heavey asked for clarification, the members had passed the County Development Plan earlier in the year and he had concerns about how the LACAP might impact on plans for retirement villages and sought clarification if the Climate Action Plan equates to changes in policy or was it a guideline.

Ms Higgins explained that this condition was for developments of high density and occupancy.

The members made the following points.

We are in the middle of a climate crisis.

B15 can be amended.

Changes had taken place to alleviate the impacts of climate change.

We have to reduce our dependency on motor cars and make it easier to use public transport.

Public transport is not available in all areas or there is insufficient public transport in some areas. This needs to improve.

We need to change our ways.

The LACAP supports the objectives of the CDP.

A lot of work had gone into consulting with stakeholders, communicating and preparing this plan.

Members asked that the council adopt the plan.

Ms Higgins informed the meeting that the County Development Plan would have precedent over the LACAP.

Councillor Power proposed an amendment to B15. He proposed removing the word “residential or,” from the section. This was seconded by Councillor Keatley
The Meetings Administrator read the proposed amendment to the members,
“Ensure all new high human occupancy developments are located in areas whereby direct access to active travel routes and/or public transport modes are available and/or provide reserved space for shared cars.”

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Power seconded by Councillor Keatley and agreed by all members present to amend B15 as outlined above.

Councillor Clear seconded by Councillor Hamilton proposed the adoption of the Kildare County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 with the amendment at B15.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Clear seconded by Councillor Hamilton with one member abstaining and agreement from all other members present that, pursuant to the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 as it amends the principle Act of 2015, Kildare County Council resolves to adopt the Kildare County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 with amendment at B15, having considered the draft plan, the contents of the Chief Executives report on submissions received during the period of consultation and the SEA and AA Reports and determinations, carried out in accordance with the requirements and regulatory provisions of the SEA Directive (DIR 2001/42/EC) and Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC).

13/1223

Bereavements

The Cathaoirleach extended his sympathy to the families of the late

Marian Kenny (née Butler Wyse) Mother of Councillor Brendan Wyse
Carol Kavanagh, Mother of Chief Executive Sonya Kavanagh

Members offered their condolences to both Chief Executive Ms. S Kavanagh and to Councillor Wyse who was present at the meeting.

Ms Aspell offered condolences on behalf of Management Team and all council staff to Chief Executive Ms Kavanagh and Councillor Wyse

The Cathaoirleach noted his own memories of both deceased and it was agreed to adjourn the meeting for a short period as a mark of respect. A minutes silence was also observed.

14/1223

Special Speed Limit Bye-Laws

The meeting recommenced and the following motion in the name of Councillors Noel Connolly and Carmel Kelly was considered by the members.

Go leanfadh Comhairle Contae Chill Dara sampla Chomhairle Cathrach na Gaillimhe maidir le fodhlíthe a chur i bhfeidhm atá cosúil lena Teorainn SPEISIALTA LUAIS Fodhlíthe UIMH. 1 2020, ag soláthar d'uasteorainn luais 30kph in eastáit tithíochta laistigh de Chontae Chill Dara.

That Kildare County Council follow the example of Galway City Council in implementing bylaws similar to their Special Speed Limit Bye-Laws No.1 2020, providing for a maximum speed limit of 30kph in housing estates within County Kildare.

The motion was proposed by Councillor N. Connolly and seconded by Councillor C. Kelly.

A report from MS C Barrett, A/Director of Services, Transport, Mobility and Open Spaces stated that the process for reviewing speed limits that is followed by Galway City Council and all other local authorities in Ireland is common. In July 2022, the Countywide Speed Limit Draft Bye Laws (Revision B) for County Kildare was rejected by the Full Council. Subsequent to this decision, the Council agreed to postpone commencing a new process in the absence of new primary legislation which is due to be published in Q1 2024 and any revisions to the mandatory guidelines for establishing and reviewing speed limits.

Councillor N Connolly explained that this joint motion had come about following a training event organised by ALLG that he and Councillor Kelly had attended. He informed the members that the slides from this event were available on the ALLG website and he recommended that they read them. He said this was about making roads safer, slowing down traffic and giving road users time to read warning signs. He asked the members to support the motion.

Councillor Kelly supported the motion and asked the members to support the motion saying that the council had waited too long to introduce Jakes Law. She asked that they agree to start the process to implement bye laws.

Members made the following points,

They supported the motion.

Delay in implementing speed limit reductions will only lead to more accidents.

They were waiting 7 years to have Jakes Law implemented.

It was not a matter of implementing the limit it was the enforcement of speed limits.

Members were frustrated at the delays.

Ms Barrett informed the members that primary legislation was due to be published in Qr 1 2024. If the process were commenced maps would have to be prepared, public consultation commenced and the members would then have to adopt the bye laws and all of this work undertaken would be over written by primary legislation. She recommended that the members await the publishing of the primary legislation.

Ms Aspell advised that the members needed to be careful, the key thing was cohesion, they could end up confusing the public.

There was further debate on the subject with officials asking that the members await the publishing of the primary legislation. Councillor N Connolly was advised that he could resubmit his motion if he deferred the decision as no decision on the motion would have been taken.

Councillor N Connolly informed the meeting that he did not want to defer the joint motion and requested that it be put to a vote.

Councillor Kelly was happy to defer the motion pending the publishing of the primary legislation.

Councillor Power proposed “that the Council proceed to the next business (SO 18)

This was seconded by Councillor Keatley.

The members proceeded to the next business.

15/1223

Community Integration Sub-Committee

The following motion in the name of Councillor Seamie Moore was considered by the members.

In view of the concerns that have arisen in Ireland and in all of our communities around immigration and the need to show solidarity and inclusiveness with new families in our neighbourhoods, with new co-workers in our work force and with new youthful members in our schools and clubs, that a Community Integration Sub-Committee be established in each Municipal District of Kildare County Council to facilitate the development of a more harmonious Irish society.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Moore and seconded by Councillor McEvoy.

A report from Ms. A. Aspell, Director of Services, Housing and Regeneration and Ms. M. Higgins, Director of Services, Climate, Community, Environment and Water stated that an Acting Director of Services will soon be appointed to oversee Kildare County Council’s Local Authority Integration Team, the Community Response Forum, the implementation of the council’s allocation under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme II (IRPP) and other integration measures. Kildare County Council along with its partner County Kildare Leader Partnership (CKLP) and Kildare Interagency Integration Committee oversee the implementation of County Kildare’s Integration Strategy.

The need for the formation of any additional committees will be considered by the new Director of Service once appointed.

Details of the various integration teams, committees and initiatives currently in place are included below:

Local Authority Integration Team:

In the Programme for Government, a commitment was made to end the system of Direct Provision and replace it with a new International Protection accommodation model centered on a not-for-profit approach. This will be delivered through the expansion of the model of interagency working groups and resettlement and intercultural workers currently in place for the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). In expanding this model, the Department of Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth in collaboration with the Local Authorities have established a permanent network of Local Authority Integration Teams (LAITs) operating at local level and providing supports to:

- Applicants for International Protection (IP Applicants)
- Those with Refugee, Subsidiary Protection, or Permission to Remain status
- Programme Refugees
- Beneficiaries of Temporary Accommodation (BOTPs).

The primary role of the LAIT is to provide ongoing integration supports to IP applicants, Programme Refugees and BOTP to enable them to live independently in the community. This will involve linking these cohorts with local service providers appropriate to their needs. The LAITs will also act as the direct point of contact, providing information, guidance and advice, answering queries as they arise and ensuring that individuals are in receipt of applicable benefits and entitlements.

The recruitment process has been completed for Kildare County Council and the team will be in place early in 2024.

Community Response Forum:

Local Authorities were mandated in March 2020 to lead the co-ordination of Covid-19 community support through a community response forum. In March 2022, the Forum was re-established due to the emergency situation in the Ukraine and has now expanded to include all International Protection Applicants and refugees. The role of the Community Response Forum is to provide Forum members with an opportunity to share information and discuss the issues. Membership of the Forum includes key agencies and stakeholders working with refugees.

Irish Refugee Protection Programme II (IRPP):

Below is an extract from the CE Report provided to the Members in November which provided details of the IRPP II. The council is giving consideration to development of a subcommittee of the Integration Forum to deal with matters relating to IRPP II.

The Government agreed to resettle 2,900 programme refugees in Ireland in the period 2020-2023 through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme II (IRPP). Kildare County Council is required to accommodate 66 refugees, which represents 15-20 households. Kildare was not included in IRPP I. The Members will be updated as the programme progresses; the following is a summary of the programme.

- Refugees will be relocated from Reception and Orientation Centres.
- They will be classified as refugees by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.
- Background checks are carried out by An Garda Síochána prior to arrival in Ireland.
- Individuals/Families will be housed in council or AHB provided properties.
- Grant funding is available to provide supports to refugees.
- Funding is provided for a support worker and intercultural worker for a period of 18 months.

Kildare Interagency Integration Committee:

This committee brings together the service providers and community representation from Kildare Integration Network. This group meets on a quarterly basis and reviews and oversees the implementation of the Integration Strategy.

Councillor Moore thanked the council for the comprehensive report and welcomed the pending appointment of an Acting Director of Integration Services. He queried if the role was a) a Local Authority Integration Team (acting under the new Director of Integration) with b) An Inter-Agency Community Response Forum. He also queried the role of another grouping called an Inter Agency Integration Committee, which he presumed was the Countywide Integration Committee and the same service providers overseeing the Integration Strategy.

He said that there is a vacuum of 'poor communications and community development' to prepare for our new residents

He informed the meeting that since his motion was sent to the council, we have been witnessing lawlessness, criminality and an unusual rise in threatening behaviour and resentment to newcomers to our country, instead of an Irish 'cead mhile failte'.

Councillor Moore informed the meeting that there always seems to be a spontaneous group to be 'upset' by incoming refugees. There was only a drip-feed of pre-event communications. Often the communication came from the property owner or information was leaked that the Immigration Authority has 'acquired' a site or premises. The 'spontaneous group' were 'out in front' with the 'early bad news' because there is no official pre-event community news and preparation. This made the work of integrating new arrivals, twice as hard.

He said that any new 'Integration Forum' within Kildare will have to short-cut the focus on Committee Forming and Policy Making and get out among our local communities and community representatives and prepare, not only the ground, but the atmosphere and the community spirit, to prevent the 'spoiling and poisoning of our society' by those who wanted to create disharmony.

He believed that there was insufficient effort' at every local level to integrate and involve the longer established international members of our communities. Following the recent events that had taken place in Dublin, Galway, Cork, Rosslare, Kill and other 'fire spots' in Ireland, they were afraid that this could happen in their towns.. We need to harmonise, equalise and integrate them into our lives, not as separate identities but as 'our own community'.

He had repeatedly asked at this forum that every local community group and club should have 'objectives and aims' to include and welcome members of our minority groupings and that the council should only pay grants to the Community Groups that demonstrate conformity with this requirement.

All the local Celebrations, Displays and Festivals, like the Bealtaine Festival in Naas, should have 'integration promotion' at the top of any 'pride of place' agenda.

As Kildare residents and in the Kildare Integration Forum we needed the 'weight of support from the established' community to come behind our efforts at 'welcoming integration' in the county. He said he believed the new Integration Director will have a formidable task of work to successfully integrate our communities and not just focus on achieving successful 'paperwork' around refugees and 'integration policies'.

He asked that the members support his motion.

Councillor Breslin informed the meeting that there were over 40 members of the integration committee, there have been two strategies, the second being a live strategy to be delivered in the lifetime of this council. At local level they were reacting to issues. They worked with Tusla, An Garda Síochána, Department of Social Protection, Local Communities and the HSE. Communities needed to be involved. She asked the members to look at areas where communities got involved. She welcomed the motion and asked members to look at the work being done and said that Kildare should be a place for everyone.

Members made the following points,

Some supported the motion.

Some members disagreed and said the new director when appointed needed to be given an opportunity to set out their plan before the motion was considered.

They gave examples of where communities had welcomed refugees.

They said that professional expertise was required to help integration.

Members should invite one of these professional organisations to make a presentation to them.

There was a huge amount of work being carried out to welcome and integrate new arrivals in the county.

Communications needed to be improved. Social Media mis information needed to be tackled.

Ms. A. Aspell, Director of Services, Housing and Regeneration and Ms. M. Higgins, Director of Services, Climate, Community, Environment and Water stated that an Acting Director of Services will soon be appointed to oversee Kildare County Council's Local Authority Integration Team, the Community Response Forum, the implementation of the council's allocation under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme II (IRPP) and other integration measures. Kildare County Council along with its partner County Kildare Leader Partnership (CKLP) and Kildare Interagency Integration Committee oversee the implementation of County Kildare's Integration Strategy. The need for the formation of any additional committees should be left for consideration by the new Director of Service once appointed.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Moore seconded by Councillor McEvoy and agreed by the members that the report be noted.

16/1223

Just Transition Funding

The following motion in the name of Councillor Rob Power was considered by the members.

That the council consider the inclusion of Kildare-Newbridge Municipal District in shared projects that may be proposed by the Clane-Maynooth or Athy Municipal Districts under recent calls for Just Transition Funding.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Power and seconded by Councillor Fitzpatrick.

A report from Mr A Dunney, Director of Services, Planning, Enterprise, Economic Development and Emergency Services and Ms M Higgins, Director of Services, Climate, Community, Environment and Water stated that there are a number of Just Transition Funding Programmes that are being administered by a number of state agencies including Failte Ireland and Pobal.

Fáilte Ireland is delivering the Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme for Ireland's Midlands 2023-2026 for both public and private sector projects as part of the EU Just Transition Fund. The Investment Grant-Aid Scheme for Private and Community SMEs opened on 30 August 2023 for Expressions of Interest with a closing date of 30 June 2024 (except for Digital Transformation which has a closing date 31 January 2024), while the scheme for publicly promoted projects is also currently open on a rolling basis.

The council has also received sanction for the recruitment of a new role of Just Transition Tourism Activator in Kildare County Council and the position will be filled early in 2024. This role will activate the Just Transition tourism programmes and grant schemes and to support and build the capacity of communities and enterprises within the area to develop innovative projects. Should councillors be aware of a suitable project outside of the JT territory that can show benefit to the JT territorial area, it would be advisable to contact Failte Ireland or the Just Transition Tourism Activator when in place. It should be noted that the EU Just Transition Fund rules provide that initiatives outside the territory may be funded, in line with individual scheme rules, provided that a benefit within the territory can be clearly demonstrated. EMRA have advised that this is a high threshold to meet.

Pobal has responsibility for administering the Local and Regional Economic Strategies Support Scheme. The overall objective of this scheme is to support the implementation of bottom-up local and regional strategies. Details are expected to be announced shortly of a Community and Enterprise scheme, which will fund community groups and SME projects which are included in or closely aligned with Local Economic and Community Plans and Regional Economic Strategies.

The above schemes offer a unique opportunity to reconnect the Territory's communities to their local natural assets while delivering new jobs and economic opportunity.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Power seconded by Councillor Fitzpatrick and agreed by members that the report be accepted.

17/1223

Health Economic Assessment Tool

The following motion in the name of Councillor Peter Hamilton was considered by the members.

That the council report on the feasibility of the use of the World Health Organisation developed Health Economic Assessment Tool (H.E.A.T.) to calculate the impact of active travel schemes in reducing carbon emissions for Kildare.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Hamilton and seconded by Councillor Fitzpatrick.

A report from Ms. C. Barrett, A/Director of Services, Transport, Mobility and Open Spaces stated that HEAT aims to promote the integration of the economic value to society of reduced premature mortality from cycling and walking into the economic appraisal of transport and urban planning interventions. Users can calculate the mortality benefits only or choose to consider the effects of air pollution and road crashes or to estimate the effects of replacing motorised trips by walking and cycling on carbon emissions.

The quality of the appraisal highly depends on the validity and reliability of the cycling and walking data.

While the tool is well researched and robust, we don't currently have the level of data that would be required to warrant the use of the tool. The Motion does however raise the importance of data collection and how we measure the impact of the work that we are progressing in the active travel sphere.

Following from this motion we can look at the installation of monitors on some of the recent active travel schemes to assess usage. We can also examine the use of air quality monitoring as a means of quantifying the benefits of sustainable travel interventions.

Most of our targeted delivery of active travel infrastructure is via funding supplied by the NTA and they require applications to be in accordance with their Project Approval Guidelines.

<https://www.nationaltransport.ie/publications/project-approval-guidelines/>

These requirements do not include the use of H.E.A.T., however, the NTA may use this, or similar tools when developing Strategic Cycle Networks for the Greater Dublin Area.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Hamilton, seconded by Councillor Fitzpatrick and agreed by members that the report be accepted.

18/1223

Measures To Protect Wildlife

The following motion in the name of Councillor Noel Heavey was considered by the members.

That the council outline its policy and measures actually in place to protect wildlife in our rapidly developing county to include facilities and measures presently in place to treat injured/ threatened wildlife.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Heavey and seconded by Councillor Fitzpatrick.

A report from Mr A Dunney, Director of Services, Planning, Enterprise, Economic Development and Emergency Services stated that Kildare County Council adheres to the legislation as laid down in the Planning Act and the Wildlife Act relating to habitat

and wildlife assessment, protection and conservation. However, the treatment and handling of wildlife falls outside the remit of the council.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Heavey seconded by Councillor Fitzpatrick and agreed by members that the report be accepted. Councillor Heavey added that he will communicate with the Director of Services.

19/1223

Dimming Street Lights

The following motion in the name of Councillor Clear was deferred at the request of Councillor Clear and with the agreement of the members.

That the council introduce dimming street lights that are biodiversity friendly particularly for nocturnal animals and bats throughout their public lighting areas which will also introduce energy efficiency in our street light network.

The meeting concluded.