

Kildare County Council
Minutes of Special Meeting
held at 10.00 a.m. on Monday, 27 November 2023
in Council Chamber, Áras Chill Dara

- Members Present:** Councillor T O'Dwyer (Leas Cathaoirleach), Councillors A. Breen, B. Clear, P Curran, S Doyle, T. Durkan, I. Keatley, B. Quinn, J. Neville and B. Weld.
- Attending Remotely:** Councillors A. Breslin, F Brett, B. Caldwell, M. Coleman, A. Connolly, N. Connolly, Í Cussen, B Dooley, K Duffy, A. Farrelly, A. Feeney, C. Galvin, P. Hamilton, C. Kelly, N. Killeen, M. Leigh, V. Liston, P. McEvoy, S. Moore, N. O' Cearúil, P. O' Dwyer, C. Pender, R. Power, E. Sammon, P. Ward and B. Wyse.
- Apologies** Councillor V. Behan, D. Fitzpatrick (Cathaoirleach), N. Heavey and F. McLoughlin Healy
- Also Present** Ms A Aspell (A/Chief Executive), Ms B Sweeney (A/Head of Finance) Ms. M Higgins, Mr. E Ryan, Mr. A Dunney, (Directors of Service), Ms. C Barrett (A/Director of Service), Ms. C O'Grady (Meetings Administrator) Mr. J Hannigan (Meetings Secretary) and other officials

Capital Program Briefing

The Leas Cathaoirleach welcomed the members to the meeting with regard to the Capital Programme and reminded all present that no recording or photography is allowed online or in the chamber during the meeting. She also reminded members that there is no privilege attaching to anything said at the meeting either online or in the chamber.

She asked if there were any Declarations of (a) conflicts of interest or (b) pecuniary or beneficial interests under section 177 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended. There were none.

Ms Aspell Deputy Chief Executive informed the meeting that as agreed previously with the elected members the purpose of the special meeting was to discuss the capital programme for 2024-2026.

She pointed out the difference between the Revenue Budget and the Capital Programme. The Revenue Budget is a reserved function and members can propose and pass motions and then the budget needs to be adopted by the elected members, however, the Capital Programme is an executive function and is brought before the elected members for noting. It is more in line with a Roads/Parks work programme.

She confirmed that the executive had listened to the members previous comments about delivery of the capital programme and have prepared this year's capital programme on this basis. The programme was also produced on the basis of the additional resources that have been assigned to the Public Realm/Parks and Community teams along with the new project management teams over the past couple of years. It is a very significant programme and the executive are confident of delivery of €843m of projects in the years 2024-2026.

At each May Municipal District meeting the members had the opportunity to discuss projects in their area, so the format of the meeting was a presentation by the A/Head of Finance followed by any specific questions on each of the directorates.

Ms Sweeney informed the meeting that in accordance with S135 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended, the 3 year Capital Programme 2024-2026 was noted at the statutory Budget meeting and that this meeting was to discuss the programme further.

The Capital Programme is for noting by the elected members.

She outlined the Capital Programme process.

It started at each MD's May or June Meeting where the Capital Programme is discussed with the relevant Directors and the Members.

In August the amount of possible development contributions is estimated.

In September the capital programme is sent to each Director with the estimate of possible development contributions for completion.

In October each Director in conjunction with their respective teams, prioritise the projects as follows: projects underway, priority projects with secured funding/part funding, other projects.

In November the Capital Programme is finalised and approved by Management Team. It is then included in the budget book for noting at the statutory budget meeting.

This year the layout of the capital programme has changed. Each project still shows what stage it is at and what municipal district it relates to, however, the projects are listed like a traffic light system.

The green list of projects on pages 2 – 12 of the capital programme 2024-2026 totals €843m. These are projects that the Directors are working to deliver in the next 3 years.

The orange list of projects on page 13 of the capital programme 2024-2026 totals €47m. These are projects that if funding is secured could also be delivered in the next 3 years.

The purple list of projects on pages 14 – 15 of the capital programme 2024-2026 totals €44m. These are future projects from 2027 onwards.

Resources such as the development contributions have been assigned to main deliverable projects, rather than as in previous years capital programmes, which had contributions assigned over many minor projects.

Over 63% of the expenditure of €843m for the next 3 years is on the Housing delivery programme. As with the revenue budget this shows the national importance and growth of this department. Housing is generally funded and driven by national plans.

Over 68% of the expenditure of €843m for the next 3 years is funded from grant income.

There are various challenges that impact on the delivery of the capital programme. Members might recall that previously the council broke down the lifecycle of the Naas Town Library project, which is a building that the Council own. Despite already owning the building this project has taken just over 7 years to deliver.

Main challenges are:

Funding - Grants conditions/approval required before projects can commence, ensuring the collection of development contributions, ensuring there is capacity in the revenue budget for revenue contributions.

Planning – Ensuring project meets CDP.LAP Plans, the Part 8 process can be time consuming.

Legal – from buying land/Transfer title and ensuring revenue compliance in all transactions.

Procurement – tendering correctly, it was found that even if a tender is successful the person who won the tender might not accept it and then you are back to square 1 again, dealing with contract uplifts to ensure they are correct and that the additional funding is secured from the Department.

Staff resources – Ensuring that staff are recruited and trained.

Points were raised by Cllr Hamilton and Cllr.Power re the table on Climate Projects and it was confirmed this will be reviewed and changed for next year's Capital Programme.

The Chief Executive and Management Team agreed that the Capital Programme format should change to reflect the projects that can be progressed within the 3 years of the programme. She said that if there were any queries the various Directors were there to answer them.

Housing and Building

Councillor Moore enquired about the location of a site being developed in Naas on the Craddockstown Road

He was advised that it was adjacent to the Public Park and was a 20 unit development

Councillor P O'Dwyer enquired about Social Housing at Liffey Lodge. She was advised that this was at prefeasibility.

Transport and Mobility

Naas Municipal District

Councillor Quinn informed the meeting that the Pathfinder Project had been announced in 2022 but funding awarded would have to be spent by 2025. €8.5

million had been allocated under Pathfinder to the Naas scheme the overall cost of which was €20 million

The Minister had informed him the previous week that the funding had been withdrawn in its entirety and the Minister laid the blame for this on the Council.

He asked if a letter had been received by the council informing them of this and if it had when were the members of the Naas Municipal District going to be informed. He believed that Naas would now stagnate over the next 3 years as it would have to compete for resources. He requested an immediate update.

Ms Barret informed the meeting that topographical surveys were ongoing . It was not possible to get the Part 8 before the members until 2025. The Pathfinder project remains a priority project but the funding for the appointment of a consultant to prepare the Part 8 will have to be found, this is the situation we find ourselves in.

The members raised the following points on the Pathfinder project, they were frustrated there were issues with the shopping centre and now Pathfinder project had been pulled. What did the Minister know that they were not aware of.

Councillor Clear asked the members to contact the Minister to see if the project could be reinstated saying it was very frustrating and he laid the blame for the problems with the Minister.

The members made the following points.

Could the Pathfinder be reopened or considered as part of Climate Action mitigation.

It was a lost opportunity.

The council are not delivering.

The NTA request reports and then there are delays in responding to the reports when provided.

Ms Barrett said that Pathfinder comprised of a number of projects and the council would need to see how these could be progressed.

With regard to Kilcullen Road work is ongoing to deliver the cycle track. There were some delays but nothing more than would be expected of a project of this nature.

Members asked if they could have an update on other projects that might be affected by these decisions.

Ms Barrett informed the members that Murtaghs corner would progress. There were a number of changes to streets to create one way traffic and these can be looked at. Pathfinder itself included a busgate in the centre of Naas town. In order for that to be

successful it required public support and time was needed to engage with all stakeholders.

Councillor Sammon expressed her disappointment that Ballymore was not on the program of works for playgrounds. Land was available and it should be delivered. Some towns would have 2 playgrounds before Ballymore got theirs.

Ms Barrett advised that on the schedule for delivery of playgrounds this would be delivered in 2025.

Celbridge Leixlip MD

Councillor Cussen asked for an update on the second bridge for Celbridge asking if we had confirmation as to where the bridge was to be located.

She was advised that a detailed design was being carried out and an investigation of where the most suitable landing point is. Funding had to be sought for the project but it will go ahead as part of the Celbridge to Hazelhatch URDF, currently there is only funding to get this to part 8

Councillor Neville enquired about the Confey Masterplan.

He was advised that the masterplan was not yet published but was under consideration for 2025.

Clane Maynooth MD

Councillor Farrelly inquired about rural junctions and sought details of where the €1 million allocated would be spent. He also inquired if it was possible to commence a feasibility study for provision of a second bridge for Clane .

Ms Barrett explained that there were two tranches of junctions five in the first and five in the second. Surveys have to be carried out for the second tranche. They are seeking tenders. The million euro allocated is for the surveys. Funding will have to be secured for any works. This could help in securing funding from the Department. She advised that the 2nd bridge for Clane was not in the work program. They were currently working on a second bridge in Newbridge and second bridge in Celbridge. This could be considered for the 2027 capital program.

Councillor Durkan enquired about Maynooth Eastern Ring Road and advised that it is hoped to have a decision shortly.

Ms Barrett informed him that once they received the decision from An Bord Pleanala that the team and money would be in place and they would move to the next stage.

Councillor Hamilton enquired about the delay in the Royal Canal project .

He was advised that it was a contractual dispute that delayed the project and that the council was currently out to tender for a new contractor.

Kildare Newbridge MD

Councillor Pender enquired about the Naas to Newbridge Inter Urban Scheme

The members enquired about,

Funding for repair to bog roads.

Railway bridges particularly Moores bridge

Car parking in Kildare town

Athy MD

Councillor Keatly informed the meeting that the Athy Southern Distributor Road had been delivered on time and within budget.

The members made the following general points.

The Council had requested funding of €19 million but only received €10 million in 2023 .

What % of Roads Budget is grant funded

How much did the council receive for active travel.

Ms Barrett informed the meeting that 60% of Roads projects are grant funded.

They had received €10 million in 2023 for Active Travel and expected to receive €8 million in 2024.

Car Parking came from general funding.

Surface Water and Flood Relief

There was an issue with Surface Water and Flood Relief in the county .

There was a need for plans for flood relief for the smaller rivers in Kildare.

They were advised that the Climate Action Plan outlines the challenges faced by the council and residents.

Community

The members discussed the following projects.

Improvements in the Newbridge Industrial Park

Newbridge Youth facilities

Second playground for Newbridge

They advised that €100,000 had been set aside for Newbridge Playground

There was funding set aside to upgrade Newbridge Industrial Park

The budget for Newbridge Youth Facilities was €795,000 and a site had yet to be identified.

Ms Barrett advised that details were contained on page 10 of the Budget Book

Councillor Breen enquired about the Sallins Amenity lands and outlined the growth in membership of the various sports clubs. Significant investment was needed to develop these lands.

Ms Barrett advised that the Amenity Lands are the priority project for the Open Spaces team for the Naas Municipal District. There is a considerable financial requirement to develop these lands in accordance with the agreed Part 8. In the short term the Open Spaces team plan to deliver a "first phase" which will cost in the region of €1.5 million. This money will be provided from councils own resources in the capital budget across the years 2024-2026.

Councillor Neville advised that based on his calculations there was an unfair distribution of Capital Projects across the county with Celbridge Leixlip having the least investment.

Members raised the following issues.

Celbridge had a playground closed.

What was happening with the swimming Pool for North Kildare

The swimming pool should be built at Leixlip Amenity Center.

What was happening with North Kildare Civic Amenity center and how would it be funded?

Celbridge did not have a community center.

Why was Ardclough Playground in Page 14 Purple Section

Could the capital program be broken down by Municipal District.

There was no Community center in Johnstown.

How was the Civic Amenity Center in North Kildare going to be funded.

Councillor Doyle advised that there needed to be equity across the Municipal Districts. She also enquired if there were sufficient development levies.

The Council needed to come up with a formula per municipal district for delivery including economic development , community and critical delivery.

Did costs take into account inflation.

Ms Higgins noted the comments. She also advised that a number of sites were being considered for the swimming pool and they had had discussions with Swim Ireland on a Plan B.

Kerdiffstown was both a walking and sports facility.

Details of all projects were available in the Budget Book 2024 pages 9 to 15. Those in purple were future projects.

The Civic Amenity site in North Kildare was a joint undertaking between Transport and Environment. The Transportation Department has some funding for this project, but additional funding will be required. Funding may be required from LPT resources.

The council were trying to resolve the closed playground in Celbridge.

Projects had been delivered in Celbridge Leixlip such as acquisition of the Parochial house and the planned development of the Wonderful Barn and the delivery of the library.

A breakdown of the expenditure per Municipal District was contained in The Budget Book 2024 pages CP1 to CP5

The meeting concluded.