



**Minutes of meeting of Full Council held at 3:00 p.m.
Monday 29 July 2024 in the Council Chamber
Áras Chill Dara, Devoy Park, Naas, Co Kildare**

Members Present: Councillors J. Neville,(Cathaoirleach), P. Balfe, V. Behan, A. Breen, A. Breslin, F. Brett, B. Caldwell, S. Doyle, K. Duffy, G. Dunne, T. Durkan, W. Durkan, A. Farrelly, N. Heavey, I. Keatley, N. Killeen, M. Leigh, T. McDonnell, P. McEvoy, P. Melrose, S. Moore, N. Ó Cearúil, B. O'Loughlin, C. O'Rourke, C. Pender, S. Ní Raghallaigh, E. Sammon, D. Trost and P. Ward

Online: Councillors B. Clear, B. Dooley, C. Kelly, A. Feeney, R. Heather, L. Panaite Fahey, P. O'Dwyer, R. Power, B. Wyse

Apologies: Councillor D. Fitzpatrick and T. O'Dwyer.

Also Present: Ms. S. Kavanagh (Chief Executive), Ms. A. Aspell, Ms. M. Higgins, A Dunney and Mr. E. Ryan (Directors of Service) Ms. C. Barrett, (A/Director of Service), Ms. E. Hanlon Head of Finance, Mr T Shanahan (Meetings Administrator), Ms. M. Richardson (Meetings Secretary), Ms. D Egan and other officials.

The Cathaoirleach welcomed everyone to the July monthly meeting of the Council noted that this meeting was being live streamed to the Council's YouTube channel.

01/0724

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.



02/0724

Minutes and Progress Report

The council considered the draft minutes of the annual meeting held on 21 June 2024, the monthly meeting held on 24 June 2024 and the progress report.

Mr. T. Shanahan, Meetings Administrator informed the members of an amendment to the draft minutes of the annual meeting held on 21 June 2024, under Item 5, 1 Strategic Policy Committees - the nomination of members.

Sub Item 1 (viii) Appointment of 6 members to the Transportation, Safety and Emergency Services SPC. That Councillor S. Ní Raghallaigh be appointed not Councillor L. Panaite Fahey.

Sub item 1 (xii) Appointment of 6 members to the Local Community and Culture SPC. That Councillor L. Panaite Fahey be appointed not Councillor S. Ní Raghallaigh.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor S. Doyle, seconded by Councillor P. McEvoy and agreed by the members present that the amendment under Item 5, 1 Strategic Policy Committees – the nomination of members to the draft minutes of the annual meeting held on 21 June 2024 be approved.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor A. Breslin, seconded by Councillor S. Moore and agreed by the members present that the draft minutes of the annual meeting held on 21 June 2024 be adopted with amendment and the draft minutes of the monthly meeting held on 24 June 2024 be adopted. The progress report was noted.

03/0724

Chief Executive's Monthly Management Report

The members noted the Chief Executives monthly management report.

The report was noted.



04/0724

High Court Case Fiona McLoughlin v KCC

The members considered the request for the express authorisation of the Elected Members for the Chief Executive to act for and on behalf of Kildare County Council under Section 153(2) of the Local Government Act, 2001 in the case of Fiona McLoughlin Healy v Kildare County Council and others (High Court Case Reference (H.P.2024.0002389)).

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor S. Doyle, seconded by Councillor P. McEvoy and agreed by the members present that the Chief Executive be given express authorisation by the Elected Members to act for and on behalf of Kildare County Council under Section 153(2) of the Local Government Act, 2001 in the case of Fiona McLoughlin Healy v Kildare County Council and others (High Court Case Reference (H.P.2024.0002389)).

05/0724

Vacancies on Committees

The members considered the filling of vacancies on committees following the resignation of Councillor L. Panaite Fahey from the Protocol and Procedures Committee and County Kildare Twinning Committee and also the filling of a vacancy on the County Kildare Twinning Committee following the resignation of Councillor C. Kelly.

Councillor F. Brett was proposed by Councillor E. Sammon, seconded by Councillor S. Doyle to fill the vacancy on the County Kildare Twinning Committee which arose from the resignation of Councillor C. Kelly from that committee.

Councillor D. Trost was proposed by Councillor S. Doyle, seconded by Councillor E. Sammon to fill the vacancy on the Protocol and Procedures Committee which arose from the resignation of Councillor L. Panaite Fahey from that committee.

These appointments were agreed by all members present.



Councillor D. Fitzpatrick was proposed by Councillor S. Doyle, seconded by Councillor E. Sammon to fill the vacancy on the County Kildare Twinning Committee which arose from the resignation of Councillor L. Panaite Fahey from that committee.

The Meetings Administrator advised that the nomination to replace Councillor L. Panaite Fahey on the County Kildare Twinning Committee would be required to come from among the Celbridge-Leixlip Municipal District elected members. It was agreed by the members that the proposal of a nominee to replace Councillor L. Panaite Fahey on the County Kildare Twinning Committee would be referred to the next meeting of the Celbridge-Leixlip Municipal District to be held on the 20 September 2024.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor E. Sammon, seconded by Councillor S. Doyle that Councillor F. Brett be nominated to fill the vacancy on the County Kildare Twinning Committee and on the proposal of Councillor S. Doyle, seconded by Councillor E. Sammon that Councillor D. Trost be nominated to fill the vacancy on the Protocol and Procedures Committee. It was also agreed by the members that the proposal of a nominee to replace Councillor L. Panaite Fahey on the County Kildare Twinning Committee would be referred to the next meeting of the Celbridge-Leixlip Municipal District to be held on the 20 September 2024.

06/0724

Kildare Inter Agency Integration Committee

The members considered the nomination, election and appointment of three members to the Kildare Inter Agency Integration Committee.

The following were proposed and seconded for appointment to the Kildare Inter Agency Integration Committee.

Councillor T. O'Dwyer was proposed by Councillor K. Duffy, seconded by Councillor C. Pender, Councillor S. Moore was proposed by Councillor S. Doyle, seconded by Councillor B. Caldwell and Councillor A. Breslin was proposed by Councillor A. Breen, seconded by Councillor P. McEvoy



Resolved on the proposal of Councillor K. Duffy, seconded by Councillor C. Pender, that Councillor T. O'Dwyer be nominated to the Kildare Inter Agency Integration Committee, on the proposal of Councillor S. Doyle, seconded by Councillor B. Caldwell that Councillor S. Moore be nominated to the Kildare Inter Agency Integration Committee and on the proposal of Councillor A. Breen, seconded by Councillor P. McEvoy that Councillor A. Breslin be nominated to the Kildare Inter Agency Integration Committee.

07/0724

Appointment of External Members to the Audit Committee

The members considered the report circulated in advance of the meeting in relation to the appointment of external members to the Audit Committee.

Mr. E. Ryan, Director of Services informed the members that under Section 59 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, a local authority was required to have established its Audit Committee within three months of polling day for the election of incoming members of the local authority. He advised the committee had operated effectively for the last term of the council, given the significant experience the elected and external members had brought.

He advised for the formation of the 2019-2024 committee the council had liaised with the Chamber of Commerce. The current Audit Committee would be effective up to the 7 September 2024 and he had been in contact with each of the external members currently serving and they had all agreed to remain on the Audit Committee. He advised a review would take place in Q1 2025 when the committee had settled in.

Councillor S. Doyle conveyed the gratitude of the elected members to the external members of the Audit Committee for all their work.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor S. Doyle, seconded by Councillor E. Sammon and agreed by the members that Dr. Moling Ryan, Mr. Ken Conway, Ms. Aisling O'Gorman and Ms. Deirdre Coghlan Murray be appointed as external members to the Audit Committee.



08/0724

Bi-annual update from Development Control Section

The members considered the report previously circulated in relation to the bi-annual update from Development Control Section on the taking in charge of estates.

There were no questions.

The report was noted.

09/0724

Quarterly Update on Climate Action

The members received a quarterly update on Climate Action.

Ms. M. Higgins, Director of Services, informed the members of the following:

- Climate Action update had been circulated and would be taken as read, she highlighted some matters.
- All 31 local authorities have adopted their climate action plans. Minister Ryan launched the plans on the 11 April at a climate action event in County Clare.
- The Local Authority Climate Action Training Plan 2024- 2027 has been endorsed by the CCMA in May 2024. The training plan will oversee the delivery of training to the end of 2027, for staff and members.
- The EM CARO is working with local authorities in each of the four subregions to develop regional energy units to avail of funding for projects that support the decarbonisation of local authority buildings
- Community Climate Action Fund – 23 applications approved by the Department - €860,000 funding available.
- Climate Innovation Fund 2024 - funding scheme will be open for applications in the coming weeks.
- ‘Show and Tell’ house: Interest in the project is increasing and the tender for the house retrofit is close to being published.

The report was noted.



10/0724

Speed Limit Review 2024

The members received an update regarding the Speed Limit Review 2024.

Ms. C Barrett, A/Director of Services, Transport, Mobility and Open Spaces referred the members to a presentation in relation to the Speed Limit Review 2024 which had been given to each Municipal District and informed the members of the following:

- Review relating to Rural and Local Roads.
- Reduction of default speed limit from 80km/h to 60km/h.
- Process assessing local roads had been carried out.
- There were no recommendations or proposals for 80km/h speed limit to remain.
- Public Consultation to take place to assess further.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor S. Moore, seconded by Councillor P. McEvoy and agreed by the members that a Public Consultation would be commenced.

11/0724

Section 183 Disposal of Land

The members considered the disposal of lands pursuant to Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended. Statutory notice of 05 July 2024 had been circulated previously.

- i. Disposal of 0.0539 Ha. at Carbury, Co. Kildare.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor S. Doyle , seconded by Councillor I. Keatley and agreed by all members that the disposal of 0.0539 Ha. at Carbury, Co. Kildare be approved.

12/0724

Draft 2024–2029 Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) Scheme

The members considered the draft 2024-2029 SPC Scheme and initiation of public consultation. Report had been circulated in advance of the meeting.



Mr. E. Ryan, Director of Services informed the members of the following:

- Corporate Policy Group (CPG), on the 22 July 2024, had recommend to proceed with the making of a new Strategic Policy Committee Scheme, and public consultation for this purpose.
- Potential adoption of the scheme planned for Q4, 2024.
- The Scheme was drafted in accordance with a New Guidance Document from the Department.
- The same proportional representation, as the 2019 was proposed, being a minimum 1/3 of members to be Sectorial Representatives.
- Following adoption, the Strategic Policy Committee Scheme would be circulated to the Public Participation Network (PPN) and National Pillars for comment.

The report was noted.

13/0724

Corporate Plan 2024–2029

The members considered the initiation of public consultation for making of a Corporate Plan 2024–2029.

Mr. E. Ryan, Director of Services, Corporate, People and Cultural Services informed the members of the following:

- Six months from date of the Annual Meeting. i.e. by end of year, is the deadline in which to make the Corporate Plan 2024-2029.
- Intention would be to bring to Full Council on the 16 December 2024.
- He outlined this timeframe was similar to the SPC.
- He noted Guidance was published on June 7, and the process could not commence earlier. Earlier publication of Guidance by the DHLGH had been expected.
- New features to be included in the Corporate Plan included the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the incorporation of reporting systems.
- The process needed to be brought to Public Consultation as soon as possible and suggested 9 September 2024 as the end date. This date may not seem ideal but the statutory timeline was very constrained.



- Information to the public would be available through all local papers, radio, Kildare County Council Website, PPN, Social Media.
- Bi-lingual press releases would be issued to all Kildare County Council elected members, media contacts and Oireachtas representatives for the County.

The report was noted.

14/0724

Gnó an Cathaoirleach/Cathaoirleach's Business

The Cathaoirleach advised he had been informed of the following bereavements.

- Mary Hughes (née Connolly), Mother of Noel Hughes, General Services Supervisor.
- Joseph Heavey, Father of Doreen Heavey (Audits) and Grandfather of Sarah Conlon (Procurement).
- Dorothy (Dot) Mullan, Former Colleague, Athy.
- Peter Kirwan, Father of Lisa Kirwan, Transport, Mobility and Open Spaces.
- Cornelius (Con) Touhy, Former Colleague.

The Cathaoirleach requested the members to observe a moments silence.

Other Business

The Cathaoirleach outlined it had been a busy month referring to some events he had attended:

- North Kildare Art Club.
- Leixlip Farmers Market, which had great involvement from Community Groups and also great support from Kildare County Council.
- Students had arrived for a stay as part of the Twinning with Lexington, USA. The Cathaoirleach said he and Councillor Suzanne Doyle had met with the students when they arrived, adding the students had received great hospitality from everyone. He also thanked Councill Fintan Brett.
- Gerald Manley Hopkins Festival had taken place and he emphasised the world impact Gerald Manley Hopkins, who was a Jesuit, had and his connection to



Ireland. He added this was a significant event, held in annually in Newbridge and visitors from such countries as Sweden, Japan and France had attended.

Vote of Congratulations

The Cathaoirleach informed the members in accordance with the Protocol for Ceremonial Functions and Civic Honours a request had been received for a vote of congratulations which he then read into the Minutes.

That Kildare County Council write to the Director of Nursing Naas General Hospital and the Chief Nursing Officer Ms. Eileen Whelan HSE Dublin and Midlands Hospital Group offering congratulations on the Hospitals recent designation as a full academic Nurse Teaching Hospital in partnership with Trinity College Dublin.

The Cathaoirleach emphasised how this achievement would benefit numerous people.

Capital Programme

The Cathaoirleach informed the members having discussed the matter with the Chief Executive and following on from the resolution passed at the June Full Council meeting, he proposed an internal briefing for all members regarding the Capital Programme, at 3pm on Monday September 16. This meeting could be facilitated as a hybrid meeting, in the Chamber and on TEAMS.

To facilitate this meeting it was also proposed to move the start time of the Corporate Policy Group meeting on September 16, from 2pm to 1.30pm.

He added as this was the first year of a five-year term, it would be very beneficial to explain capital budgets to the members and information relating to items such as LPT, Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and Development Contributions.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor B. Caldwell, seconded by Councillor S. Doyle and agreed by all members that an internal briefing take place on Monday 16



September 2024 at 3.00pm regarding the Capital Programme and the CPG meeting be rearranged to commence at 1.30pm to facilitate same.

15/0724

Comhfhreagras/Correspondence

There were no items of correspondence.

16/0724

Conferences and Training

The meetings administrator advised the members of the following retrospective agreements in relation to attendance at Conferences and Training.

Councillor P. Melrose	Institute of Public Administration	3 July 2024
Councillor P. Melrose	AILG	11 July 2024

In addition, Mr. T. Shanahan, Meetings Administrator informed the members of a request from Councillor B. Wyse, that having previously completed Year 1, Bachelor of Arts, Local Studies at Maynooth University he now requested the agreement of the members to progress to Year 2, following his re-election.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor P. McEvoy, seconded by Councillor I. Keatley and agreed by the members that Councillor P. Melrose and Councillor B. Wyse attend and enrol in the requested studies.

17/0724

Uisce Éireann Helpline on Weekends

The following motion in the name of Councillor B. Caldwell was considered by the members.

That the council writes to Uisce Éireann requesting that they establish a dedicated helpline on weekends for elected members, in order that emergency water supply (Water Tanker) can be organised for affected customers, where major outages occur.



The motion was proposed by Councillor B. Caldwell and seconded by Councillor S. Doyle.

A report from Ms. M. Higgins, Director of Service, Climate, Community, Environment and Water stated subject to the agreement of the members, Councillor Caldwell's motion will be referred to Uisce Éireann via the dedicated email address for notices of motion and a response will be expected before the next meeting. The members will be updated accordingly.

The members raised the following:

- Two major outages had occurred in past couple of months. A stand-by tanker to be supplied by Uisce Éireann and available in emergencies was vital.
- The issue was with the out of hours response from Irish Water. The Call Centre service wasn't adequate. When contacted they did not follow up for 3 weeks on many occasions.
- Increased growth in the entire county, in particular the North East was putting pressure on the system.
- Staff on the ground were excellent.
- Uisce Éireann would not send in a tanker until water had been out for 48 hours while previously this would have been after 6 hours. This issue needed to be addressed.
- Was there a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Uisce Éireann.
- Was there any mechanism to support people with rural water supplies in the case of contamination.
- The existing procedure with Uisce Éireann was not fit for purpose.
- Could Kildare County Council or the Fire Service play a role.
- Were crews from Uisce Éireann in local towns such as Newbridge.

Ms. M. Higgins, Director of Service, Climate, Community, Environment and Water emphasised the important role of the members in this regard and informed them



subject to their agreement a letter would be written to Uisce Éireann. She also advised a Newsletter in relation to the Capital Programme would be available in the Autumn. She advised that high priority is given to calls from Councillors to Uisce Éireann. Clinics were to be held 30 September, and these were invaluable for Councillors on the ground as they know what was occurring. Motions in relation to water and waste water function were to be sent directly to Uisce Éireann.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor B. Caldwell seconded by Councillor S. Doyle and agreed by members that a letter be written to Uisce Éireann.

18/0724

Phase 2 of Dublin Commuter Zone and Dublin City Zone

The following motion in the names of Councillors Chris Pender and Pat Balfe was considered by the members.

That this council writes to Irish Rail and the National Transport Authority (NTA), requesting a meeting concerning the implementation of Phase 2 of the new Dublin Commuter Zone and the new Dublin City Zone.

The motion was proposed by Councillor C. Pender and seconded by Councillor P. Balfe.

A report from Ms. C. Barrett, A/ Director of Service, Transport, Mobility and Open Spaces stated this is a matter for the members to agree.

The members raised the following:

- Important for Irish Rail and National Transport Authority to come into the council for more informed discussions in order to work towards solutions. This would also provide an opportunity to ask questions and get clarification.
- Pressure was needed to get an interim solution.
- It was requested that the council enquire from the National Transport Authority whether Sallins and Kilcock were more expensive, and what their rationale was.



Resolved on the proposal of Councillor C. Pender and seconded by Councillor P. Balfe and agreed by members that a letter be sent to Irish Rail and the National Transport Authority.

19/0724

Safeguarding Policies for Service Providers

The following motion in the name of Councillor Nuala Killeen was considered by the members.

That the council sets out safeguarding policies and measures including those related to accredited safeguarding training, with regard to services provided specifically to women, children and/or vulnerable persons, by or on behalf of Kildare County Council (through Service Level Agreements), and that any gaps are addressed urgently.

The motion was proposed by Councillor N. Killeen and seconded by Councillor C. Pender.

A report from Mr. E. Ryan, Director of Service, Corporate, People and Cultural Services stated the Council's Child Safeguarding Statement and Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children was updated in September 2023 and it is available on Kildare County Council website. The Council has ensured that the Designated Child Protection Liaison Officers and Deputy Officers have received sufficient child protection and welfare information and training to enable them to undertake their roles. Kildare County Council is committed to upholding all child protection and safeguarding procedures in line with National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and the Children First Act 2015. The Children First Act makes provision for raised awareness of child welfare issues, mandatory reporting by key professionals, improved child safeguarding arrangements in organisations providing services to children and it provides for cooperation and information-sharing between agencies when Tusla is undertaking child protection. Kildare County Council Child Protection Officers and Social Work Department work collaboratively with safeguarding services including Tusla, HSE, Gardai and domestic violence services,



operating on a referral basis. Services provided by and on behalf of Kildare County Council must comply with all relevant statutory legislation with an emphasis placed on creating a safe and supportive environment for service users. It is worth noting that service providers, such as homeless services, domestic violence services etc. are subject to same legislation and statutory obligations under the Act. There is a schedule of mandated persons which is very specific and includes 'Person employed in any of the following capacities: (a) manager of domestic violence shelter; (b) manager of homeless provision or emergency accommodation facility;'. This list can be found in Appendix V of Kildare County Council policy.

The members raised the following:

- All organisations worked with Kildare County Council in relation to Child Protection and vulnerable adults.
- Pleased with updated statements and the information distributed.
- Stated that it was important for young people to know where to go to seek help.
- It was suggested signposting and language needed to be looked at in terms of directing if concerned or if in need of help.
- A threshold on reporting should be agreed.

Mr. E. Ryan, Director of Service, Corporate, People and Cultural Services informed members their points would be taken on board. Signposting and language would be looked at in relation to what could be put in place.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor N. Killeen seconded by Councillor C. Pender and agreed by members that the report be noted.

20/0724

Retrofitting Programme

The following motion in the name of Councillor A. Feeney was considered by the members.



That the council provides a report to members on the rollout of its retrofitting programme with numbers of completed, current and planned schemes, locations, house type and the works involved as well as the funding status of the programme.

The motion was proposed by Councillor A. Feeney and seconded by Councillor A. Breslin.

A report from Ms A Aspell, Director of Service, Housing and Regeneration stated the Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme (EERP) is administered by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. An EERP was originally launched in 2013 with the aim of funding the retrofit of Local Authority owned homes requiring insulation and energy upgrade works. Housing for All; a New Housing Plan for Ireland, includes an objective to retrofit 500,000 homes to a B2 Building Energy Rating (BER) or Cost Optimal equivalent by 2030, of which approximately 36,500 are expected to be Local Authority owned homes. To aid the achievement of the goals outlined in the Programme for Government, a revised EERP was introduced in 2021. Works eligible under the revised Programme include attic/cavity wall insulation or external wall insulation where required, windows and doors replacement, heat pump installation and ancillary and associated works.

The 2024 Programme has increased the maximum grant available per property ranging from €42,350 for mid-terrace and apartment-type properties (1 to 4 storeys) to €48,850 for end-of-terrace, bungalow, detached, and semi-detached properties. Kildare County Council applicable stock primarily consists of 2 and 3-bedroom detached and semi-detached houses. The average cost of property upgrades cannot exceed the total average funding available per property of €34,000, which has been increased from €27,000 at the outset of the programme.

Outline of programme to date:



Kildare County Council

EERP Programme	No of Units	Funding	Updated Status
2021	55	€1.35m	55 units completed at: Loughnamona, Leixlip; Cill Corbain, Naas; Ballyroe, Athy
2022	69	€2.04m	
2023	86*		69 units completed at: Ballyroe, Athy; Lacken View, Naas; Ottomy, Clane
2024	69	€2.16m	62 units completed (including retrofit of vacant units): 7 units at Blacklion Group Scheme; Lakeside Park, Newbridge; vacant units in Maynooth/Kilcock/Celbridge.
		€2.176m	55 Units identified in Naas/Calverstown/Ballymore Eustace and Lakelands, Newbridge for 2023/2024 EERP. Survey work carried out in advance of commencement of retrofit works.

***62 units completed**

The combined total number of units completed in the period 2021 to 2023 is 186. Tenders are progressing for the balance of the 2023 units (24) and the first phase of 2024 units.

Challenges have been identified by the housing sector in managing the EERP on the basis of an annual funding stream. A preference for a multi-annual energy efficiency programme has been indicated, however, DHLGH advise that such an approach is not currently feasible as funding continues to be allocated by DPER on an annual basis. In addition to the EERP, 120 homes were upgraded to a BER of B2 or higher standard in the period 2021/2022 under the Midlands Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme (a separate Programme applicable to eight midland counties). Under this programme work was carried out at the following locations:



- Beechgrove, Rathangan
- Ashbrook, Derrinturn
- Bishopsland, Kildare Town
- St Evin's Park, Monasterevin
- Clonmullion, Athy

In tandem with roll out of the EERP, and in an effort to encourage participation in the programme, work has been ongoing to collect data from consumption meters, which measure the electricity used solely from the air to water system, in a property.

Consumption meters are now installed in all properties retrofitted under the programme. The data collected informs us about the daily cost of the air to water system in a dwelling and we can relay this to the tenant in properties where electricity costs are running high and help them to identify sources of other high running cost items in their household.

Subject to the agreement of the members of the Housing and Regeneration Strategic Policy Committee, it is suggested that monitoring the renewal, refurbishment and maintenance of housing stock, including the implementation of the energy efficiency programme and asset management, will form part of the SPCs work programme.

Updates on the EERP will continue to be provided in the Chief Executive's report.

The members raised the following:

- Great progress in the county especially in relation to affordable Council Houses.
- Happy to see this as an item on the SPC.
- The number of houses involved were increasing and the costs were rising.
- Could reviews or audits be undertaken relating to works completed under earlier schemes. This would provide information in relation to requirements for the installation of new windows and doors.

Ms. A. Aspell, Director of Services, Housing and Regeneration informed the members their comments would be taken on board, and she would discuss with the team. She advised this would also be an item on the Strategic Policy Committee Agenda for the



term of the council. She would also make enquiries in relation to the review of earlier phases.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor A. Feeney seconded by Councillor A. Breslin and agreed by members that the report be noted.

21/0724

Planning Approval for Removal of Trees and Hedgerows

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

That the conditional removal of trees, hedgerows and shrubbery for planning approvals should be re-balanced with a replacement requirement of ten times the number of removals with semi-mature plantings, preferably in a set aside spinney or grove and that tree removals by Kildare County Council be treated in a like manner.

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

A report from Ms. C. Barrett, A/ Director of Service, Transport, Mobility and Open Spaces stated replacement and new planting are implemented where feasible in new developments across the county. Compensation for tree loss will depend on the use, design and size of the site and what trees or shrub species are required and what sizes, quantities and design layouts are practical. Given these factors a blank requirement as suggested in the motion would not be practical.

The members raised the following:

- Thanked Ms. C. Barrett for the report but expected a report from the Planning Department.
- Planning Applications contained agreements in relation to the removal and replacement of trees but questioned the number of trees being replaced. This was seen as a very vague area within planning.



- Balance was unfair and indifferent to Climate Action, when fifty-year-old trees were being replaced by 5 year old trees. The balance would need to be addressed by planting even up to ten times more trees.
- Mature trees have a climate value and should be replaced with trees of the same value.
- Kildare County Council removed a lot of trees in urban areas. The public were reporting this.
- Last year Kildare conducted a Hedgerow Survey and it was apparent that they provided a vital habitat but the removal of trees and hedgerows were devastating biodiversity:
- It was noted there is insufficient legislation around protection for trees and currently there was a Bill in the Dáil.
- 300m of hedgerow had been removed at two sample locations.
- Suggested Audit of exiting hedgerow be carried out with a view to protecting these and for such issues to be part of any planning conditions, with better protections and penalties for removal of hedgerows.

Ms. C. Barrett, A/ Director of Service, Transport, Mobility and Open Spaces informed the members of the following:

- Planning applications were not just examined by Planners. The Open Spaces Department and Tree Specialists had a role, and they recommend conditions relating to the Landscape Plans.
- Landscape Plans were examined and may be found to be not the most appropriate. Recommendations would be made and put back to the Planner.
- A lot of replanting of native species would be conditioned to ensure replacement.
- The varieties of trees proposed can be a problem as some are non-native.

Mr. A. Dunney, Director of Services, Planning Department informed the members there were specific areas within the County Development Plan which referred to the protection of hedgerows and trees and which also referenced bio-diversity. He



informed members in relation to the recruitment of an Ecologist. He said he would examine the objectives of the County Development Plan which would give more of an idea as to what stage this issue was at. He suggested that with the councillors agreement that the Planning SPC would take this on as part of their work programme.

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

22/0724

Distribution of Playgrounds Across the County

The following motion in the name of Councillor R. Heather was considered by the members.

That the council addresses the uneven distribution of playgrounds across the county by taking an approach that ensures each municipal district has a basic level of amenities.

The motion was proposed by Councillor R. Heather and seconded by Councillor M. Leigh.

A report from Ms C Barrett, A/ Director of Service, Transport, Mobility and Open Spaces stated the Kildare Play Strategy sets out proposals for additional playground around the county. This is the basis for providing a distribution of playgrounds around the county. Additionally, it is a requirement for new large scale residential developments to include play provision within them. These will further increase the distribution of playgrounds.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor R. Heather seconded by Councillor M. Leigh and agreed by members that this item be deferred and resubmitted by the member.



23/0724

Irish Language at Council Meetings

The following motion in the name of Councillor S. Ní Raghallaigh was considered by the members.

That the council improves its use of the Irish language at meetings, with a view to conducting the December meeting solely as Gaeilge.

The motion was proposed by Councillor S. Ní Raghallaigh and seconded by Councillor A. Breen.

A report from Mr. E. Ryan, Director of Service, Corporate, People and Cultural Services stated Kildare County Council is committed to using and promoting our native language.

An increase in the use of the Irish language at meetings befits the status of the Irish language as The First Official Language of the State.

Regarding conducting the December 2024 meeting solely as Gaeilge.

Our current legal language duties are outlined in The Official Languages Acts 2003 and 2021. Every public body named under the 2003 Act had a legal duty to prepare a language scheme. Our 2018-2021 Scéim Ghaeilge/ Irish Language Scheme (and commitments outlined therein), remains in place and legally binding. This Language Scheme does not commit the Council to conducting meetings solely through the medium of the Irish language.

However, it is of note that The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media is expected to publish the National Plan for Irish Language Public Services this Autumn.

The aim of this plan will be to provide public bodies with a road map through which they can look to increase the number and quality of public services they provide through Irish, together with increasing their numbers of staff competent in the Irish



language in line with the Official Languages Act's (2021) target to have a minimum of 20% of public service recruits proficient in the Irish language by 2030.

When this National Plan is announced the members will be informed via the CE Report and other suitable measures.

Given that the future National Plan will set out a roadmap it acknowledges that *incremental* improvement will be needed and therefore this proposal would be premature until Irish language capacity improves.

It should also be noted however, that extremely complex and technical matters are often debated at these meetings, and as a decision-making forum for the organisation, very high proficiency would in fact be required *by all parties*, in the interests of accuracy.

It is also noted that other councils, with significantly higher language capacities, such as many within Gaeltacht areas, do not conduct meetings in Irish.

The motion also asks that the council improves its use of the Irish language at meetings.

Kildare County Council is committed to using and promoting our native language.

The Council's recently appointed Gaeilge Officer is actively and strategically increasing opportunities for the exposure, acquisition and use of Gaeilge in a visible and effective way:

The Irish language club – Club Cúpla Focal - is seeing weekly growth in membership. The club is for everyone (from total beginners to fluent speakers) and provides a supportive, positive environment which fosters confidence and increases linguistic proficiency. All employees and Councillors are welcome to attend.

The language capacities of our staff will be further enhanced as in the autumn, the HR Training Unit will be facilitating Irish Language courses, and will prioritise front-line staff in the areas of customer service and motor tax, given the high volumes of customer interactions in these areas.



Over the past year, there has been a significant and tangible increase in the use and visibility of Gaeilge on our social media platforms, press releases and advertising campaigns.

These opportunities for employees and Councilors to hear, speak, read and write Gaeilge will increase competency in Gaeilge, progressively, across the whole Council.

The members raised the following:

- Welcomed a positive report giving a sense of fostering of the Irish language.
- Irish is the first official language of the State.
- The presence of Irish in media and press releases had increased in the last year and credit was due to Muireann Ní Bheaglaoich, Irish Officer.
- Dublin City Council led the way on this earlier this year.
- Concerns from some members in relation to full Statutory Meetings through Irish and being able to debate motions and make decisions/vote confidently.
- Embrace bilingual but be mindful of the risk of excluding people, especially given the increased diversity of the country.
- Great expense has been taken in going online, which is a positive inclusion measure but exclusively using Irish could exclude.
- Potential for subtitling to offer a solution to facilitate a meeting bilingually or other translation solutions, subject to cost.
- Irish and other languages were difficult for people with learning disability such as Dyslexia.
- Possibility of classes for staff and members
- Suggested the matter was appropriate for Protocol to examine to establish more information.

Ms. S. Kavanagh, Chief Executive informed the members that some of the Executive would have significant challenges with effectively performing their roles through Irish at a Council meeting, given the complexity of matters discussed. She shared concerns, which she noted had been raised by some members also, that if this were to be introduced and if proper engagement on motions was not then possible, this would impact on the meetings. She added decisions at meetings needed to be properly



conducted and recorded. The suggestion of subtitles was a potential solution, depending on cost, but more information was needed. She agreed this issue would need to be examined by the Protocol Committee.

Mr. E. Ryan, Director of Services, Corporate, People and Cultural Services informed the members of the following:

He supported the sentiment and noted that the motion also suggested increased use of Irish at meetings, as well as a meeting fully in Irish. He noted that publication of a national plan for Irish language development for the sector was imminent from the Department of Tourism, Arts Culture and Gaeltacht and this may have resource implications also. The planned incremental improvement of language skills of staff combined with the statutory target that public bodies are to have a minimum of 20% of public service recruits proficient in the Irish language by 2030, would gradually support the proposals in the motion, but that a full meeting fully in Irish may be premature. He noted HR's planned rollout of Irish language online classes to some frontline teams, and understood that members may be able to also access this training.

Councillor McEvoy proposed that if this is to be referred to Protocol Committee that Cllr Ní Raghallaigh and Muireann Ní Bheaglaioich, Irish Officer be invited to attend. This was agreed to by Cllr Doyle and the members.

Councillor S. Ní Raghallaigh said the council were doing a lot and they needed to instil confidence in staff to use Irish.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor S. Ní Raghallaigh seconded by Councillor A. Breen and agreed by members that this be referred to the Protocol Committee.

24/0724

List of Burst Water Pipes and Outages from Uisce Éireann

The following motion in the name of Councillor J. Neville was considered by the members.



That this council request from Uisce Éireann a list of water pipe bursts and number of impacted residents from water outages by location in Kildare since 01 Jan 2023.

The motion was proposed by Councillor J. Neville and seconded by Councillor P. McEvoy.

A report from Ms M Higgins, Director of Service, Climate, Community, Environment and Water stated subject to the agreement of the members, Councillor Neville's motion will be referred to Uisce Éireann via the dedicated email address for notices of motion and a response will be expected before the next meeting. The members will be updated accordingly.

The members raised the following:

- All members had similar issues in their own areas and have flagged them with Uisce Éireann but investment and permanent upgrade was needed on the network.
- Councillors were at the forefront and had some but not all the answers.
- Gathering information from 01 January 2023 would help influence the relevant people regarding the severity of the issue.
- It appeared there were issues in Celbridge-Leixlip with pinch points, issues were occurring in a continuous loop.

Ms. M. Higgins, Director of Service, Climate, Community, Environment and Water said members should bring up these issues at the upcoming meeting with Uisce Éireann. She informed the members that the motion had been referred to Uisce Éireann and an enquiry could be made in relation to progression of their programme for upgrades.

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



25/0724

Review of 'Kildare Alerts' Messaging System

The following motion in the name of Councillor P. Melrose was considered by the members.

That the council undertakes a review of the 'Kildare Alerts' messaging system to ensure that it is fully compliant with its objective of informing the public in relation to alerts on water, roads, floods and hazards, and severe weather warnings. Further, that a public awareness and advertising campaign be undertaken to promote the service.

The motion was proposed by Councillor P. Melrose and seconded by Councillor N. Killeen.

A report from Mr. E. Ryan, Director of Service, Corporate, People and Cultural Services stated the use of the Kildare Alerts service is a cross-departmental function with responsibility for the publication of alerts resting with each relevant service area.

In the last 6 months almost 100 alerts have been published.

However, following engagement with our IT Department in June it has been decided to gradually phase out the use of the "Kildare Alerts" system.

The system does not integrate with all our social media channels, which creates a duplication of work for staff in the relevant areas.

In addition, alerts are published on our website, which means customers in many cases (especially those who do not subscribe to X (formerly Twitter)) must actively monitor the feed to seek information.

A more integrated and personalised communication tool is available, which will both integrate with our social channels, as well as delivering alerts to users by text/email, meaning it's a more inclusive approach across different demographics.



It is therefore proposed that the “Alerts” service will be replaced by an expanded use of a text and email alert-based service, in the form of the MapAlerter service, which is already successfully used by this council for alerts around weekly planning lists and severe weather events.

The rollout of this service to the functions set out in the motion can be managed by the Corporate Services Department, with operation thereafter by each relevant service area.

Given these plans, it would be uneconomical to promote the current service that is being phased out, and premature to promote a service that does not yet cover all the services that would necessitate text alerts.

Timelines for rollout and promotion of the replacement service will be during Q4, 2024, when more staff resources are available in the relevant Department.

Councillor P. Melrose informed the members he was signed up to the MapAlerter service which was very useful. He also enquired in relation to social media channels.

Mr. E. Ryan, Director of Service, Corporate, People and Cultural Services informed the members he did not know the interaction between the social media channels relating to this, but he would enquire from the Head of IT and follow up with the members.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor P. Melrose seconded by Councillor N. Killeen and agreed by members that the report be noted.

26/0724

Special Education Places in the County

The following motion in the name of Councillor N. Ó Cearúil was considered by the members.

That this Council writes to the Department of Education to obtain data on the number of special education places in the County and their assessment that provision is suitable for the anticipated population growth.



The motion was proposed by Councillor N. Ó Cearúil and seconded by Councillor I. Keatley.

A report from Ms. M. Higgins, Director of Service, Climate, Community, Environment and Water stated subject to the members agreement Kildare County Council will write to the Department of Education on this motion.

The members raised the following:

- There was a growing demand for Special Needs Assistants in all Primary Schools.
- Early intervention was important and children were now diagnosed earlier than years ago.
- Maynooth in particular were finding it increasingly difficult to get places and there was an intense need for additional positions.
- Important to put these issues to the Department of Education in relation to increasing the number of places and decisions on which schools.
- Parents could not access services for their children.
- Children did not have a chair and a desk in some Special ASD Units.

Ms. M. Higgins, Director of Services, Climate, Community, Environment and Water said she understood the questions were being put to the councillors of Kildare by citizens. The population had doubled in the past 30 years and Kildare had the fourth highest percentage youth population. The data showed the unique situation of County Kildare. She undertook to represent their concerns in writing to the Department.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor N. Ó Cearúil seconded by Councillor I. Keatley and agreed by members that a letter would issue to the Department of Education

27/0724

Re-allocation of Housing Stock

The following motion in the name of Councillor A. Farrelly was considered by the members.



That the council outlines the process of re-allocating its housing stock once it has been vacated to include average turnaround times in 2023/24, the average refurbishment cost per unit and to confirm if costs are covered in full from council funds.

The motion was proposed by Councillor A. Farrelly and seconded by Councillor C. Pender.

A report from Ms. A. Aspell, Director of Service, Housing and Regeneration stated the following is the process for the re-allocation of a property:

Keys are returned to housing maintenance.

- Locks are changed and a meter reading is taken.
- The unit is assigned to a Clerk of Works who surveys the property and completes a schedule of work; depending on the scale of works and estimated cost a decision is made on the type of procurement framework to use.
- The Quick Turnaround framework is used for properties where the upgrade costs are up to €35,000; it is expected that properties are turned around in 6-7 weeks.
- The Mini-tender framework is used where costs will exceed €35,000; an average timeframe cannot be provided in these instances as it depends on the work required to bring properties back up to standard.
- Once works to a property are completed, the Allocations team commence the allocation process, having regard to the Council's Allocation Scheme for the Provision of Social Housing Support.

The National Oversight and Audit Commission publishes the annual Local Authority Performance Indicator Report, which includes indicators on turnaround times and pre-letting costs. The last published report is for 2022, and provides the following data:

- The average reletting time is 51 weeks
- The average reletting cost is €42,545
- The average vacancy rate is 2.44%
- The average maintenance spend per unit is €1,099



Publication of the 2023 Performance Indicator report is awaited.

Each month the elected members are provided with the Vacant House Report, which reports an average vacancy rate of 2.5%. This month's report confirms that 158 units, out of a total stock of 6, 468 units, are vacant; this is considered a low vacancy rate compared to 21.5% vacancy rate in the private rental market in the county (Census 2022).

There are several factors contributing to the reletting cost and turnaround time:

- Construction costs and material cost inflation.
- Age of stock and condition in which stock is returned.
- Availability of contractors.
- Recruitment and retention of technical staff.
- Refusals of offers of allocations. In 2023, 20% of offers of council owned/leased properties were refused by housing applicants, the corresponding figure in 2024 is 17%.

Pre-letting repairs are funded as follows:

- From the annual budget: In 2024 the total maintenance budget is €17,749,954.
- The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage provides the council with voids funding. This year we received an allocation of €1,067,000 which amounts to 97 properties at €11,000 per property.
- Where applicable we use retrofitting funding on vacant units, on average this amounts to €25,000 per unit. The maximum amount available is €33,000 per unit.
- A limited number of units are funded from Internal Capital Reserves.

Having regard to objectives of Housing for All: A New Housing Plan for Ireland, work is ongoing nationally to transition, over the coming years, to a Planned Maintenance and Management model for local authority housing stock, including a proposal to ringfence 100% of rental income for the purpose of housing management and maintenance.

Subject to the agreement of the members of the Housing and Regeneration Strategic



Policy Committee, it is suggested that monitoring the renewal, refurbishment and maintenance of housing stock, including the implementation of the energy efficiency programme and asset management, will form part of the SPCs work programme.

The members raised the following:

- Thanked the Housing and Regeneration Department for the report and encouraged everyone to look at it as it gave an overview and context in relation to vacant stock.
- Commended the Housing Department in relation to the numbers of homes being reallocated.
- It was noted that the vacancy rate was low.
- Report sited Kildare's the performance at over 51 weeks and Laois and Carlow over 24 weeks, why was this?
- Kildare's average reletting cost was approximately €42,000 which was considerably higher than Laois and Carlow at €17,000.
- €1,099 average repair and there were 6,068 units, could resources be boosted.
- Enquired about the possibility of assessing a category where little work was needed to turn around a property that a separate queue be created.
- Enquired if retrofitting could be carried out while tenants remained in the properties.
- Enquired in relation to a break down of reasons for refusal and the understanding was in some cases this related to the property being unsuitable for additional needs or in some cases this related to the location.
- Responsibility of tenants to communicate any changes in their needs.

Ms. A. Aspell, Director of Services, Housing and Regeneration informed the members of the following:

- Huge amount of work occurring and thanked Councillor Farrelly for the motion.
- Work Programme for SPC would include some of the issues raised.
- NOAC performance indicators were referred to. The approach in Kildare was that the absence of a tenant was a unique opportunity to fully future proof a unit



and this explained increased costs and time. This made the housing stock of better quality in the longer term.

- Increases in stock were occurring year on year, which affects budgets and a discussion on this was needed with members.
- Turnaround times in housing maintenance often relate to resources of plumbers and electricians and adherence to rental standards, shortcuts could not be taken from a Health and Safety and standards perspective.
- Some maintenance was carried out while tenants were on site.
- It was noted that refusal rates were increasing, and the reasons had been made available through SPCs but fundamentally the expectation of 3 bed semi-detached homes for all had to change, and education was required around Social Housing now being in the form of Apartments.
- If property not suitable to needs, three possible locations would be given and family makeup and needs would be assessed. There were cases where people did not update their application in relation to their needs.
- It was clarified to members that the NOAC indicator was based on total stock in all county Kildare at over 6,000.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor A. Farrelly seconded by Councillor C. Pender and agreed by members that the report be noted

The meeting concluded.