

**Minutes of SPC 5 Meeting – Community, Culture & Fire Services
held in Meeting Room 1, County Hall on Wednesday 21st June, 2023
at 3.00p.m.**

Present: Cllr. Pat Dunphy (Chair), Cllr. John Brennan, Cllr Tomas Breathnach, Cllr Martin Brett, Cllr John Coonan, Cllr. Peter Cleere, Michael Rice, Murty Brennan, Julie Kavanagh

In attendance: Annemarie Shortall, Regia Fitzpatrick, Mary Butler Ronan Ryan, Bernadette Moloney and Ashling Slattery, Kilkenny County Council.

Apologies: Josephine Coyne, Fergal Canton, John Collins, and Mary Mulholland

1. Minutes of last meeting on Wednesday 12th April, 2023

Minutes were proposed by Cllr John Coonan, seconded by Cllr John Brennan and agreed.

2. Disability Strategy

Ronan presented the draft Kilkenny County Council Disability Inclusion Strategy 2023-2026. A copy of the draft was circulated to those in attendance. Ronan stated that in developing the strategy for Kilkenny County Council, the obligations under the National Disability Act the National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017-2021) were used as a framework for developing locally based actions. This framework has been structured to using the following headings:

- Communication, Information & Services
- Buildings & Infrastructure
- Housing & Community
- Employment & Training
- Transport & Connectivity
- Housing & Community
- Other

Kilkenny County Council consulted with key departments within the organisation and conducted separate online consultations using a detailed online staff survey. This response was positive with 84 staff members participating in the survey and a number of recommendations were made.

The Kilkenny Access group who represent people with disabilities in the County were also consulted with directly and a number of recommendations were and are reflected in this strategy.

The Kilkenny County Council Disability Inclusion Strategy 2023-2026 was proposed by Cllr Martin Brett and seconded by Cllr John Coonan.

Cllr Peter Cleere raised concerns over disabled parking spaces without poles can be used by the general public without repercussions.

Cllr John Coonan noted that it is imperative to link in groups with experience and implement in a gradual phased basis

Cllr John Brennan thanked Ronan for his excellent presentation.

A discussion around playgrounds took place and Cllr Pat Dunphy suggested a survey to be done on all playgrounds to see how many are disability friendly. Anne Marie Shortall outlined that all new playgrounds must have some disability friendly equipment in order to be eligible for grant funding.

Ronan advised that there is no specific budget in place for the strategy and we will be relying on existing budgets within departments.

Cllr Martin Brett suggested an educational piece be rolled out to the general public in relation to disability awareness.

Murty Brennan thanked Ronan and asked about accessible toilets, a discussion around same took place. Anne Marie Shortall advised there is plans in place for universal facilities in the city.

Cllr Pat Dunphy noted budget constraints may be a draw back and suggested it should be included in the budget. Pat thanked Ronan for his presentation.

3. Introduction to the Biodiversity Officer Role and Work Programme

Bernadette Moloney, Biodiversity Officer gave a presentation on the role of the Biodiversity Officer and noted the importance of Biodiversity.

The main drivers to Biodiversity Loss in Ireland are habitat loss, over exploitation, pollution, invasive species and climate change.

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) is currently in draft. The Plan will set the national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023-2027.

Projects on the local biodiversity action fund include Biodiversity Training Programme, County Kilkenny Hedgerow Survey, Invasive Species Management, Kilkenny Biodiversity & Pollinator Corridors Pilot Project,

Biodiversity Awareness, Engagement and Education Programme and Kilkenny Swift Programme and Barn Owl Conservation

Bernadette also noted important upcoming activities in relation to Biodiversity.

Contributions from Cllr Pat Dunphy, Michael Rice, Murty Brennan, Cllr John Coonan.

4. Community

Anne Marie Shortall provided an update in relation to the Community Section and the following was noted:

The Kilkenny Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2028 was formally adopted in May and finalised in June. Copies of same were distributed at the meeting.

Thomastown Library got the go ahead and is now gone for tender with submissions due back by the end of the month. The Community Centre adjacent to the library will also benefit from the refurbishment of the library.

The Mayfair Library is progressing and a more detailed update will be provided at the next meeting.

Contracts for the new Fire Station site have been signed. The site for the new station is at the Kilkenny Business and Retail Park, Waterford Road, Kilkenny. Invitation to tender for the provision of design consultancy services for the Fire Station will be submitted for tender in the coming days. It is estimated that the design stage will conclude by Q2-2024 and tenders will then be sought from building contractors. Construction works are expected to commence in Q4-2024 and be completed by Q4-2026. This is subject to approval at the various stages.

5. AOB

Cllr Pat Dunphy stepped down as Chair of the SPC and welcomed Cllr Martin Brett into the Chair. Pat also extended his well wishes to all in attendance. Cllr John Brennan, Cllr John Coonan, Cllr Peter Cleere thanked Cllr Pat Dunphy and welcomed Cllr Martin Brett to the Chair.

The next SPC meeting will be held on Wednesday 20th September, 2023 at 3.00p.m. in Meeting Room 1, County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny.

This concluded the business of the meeting.