

Minutes of Strategic Policy Committee 4
Environmental Protection, Climate Action & Energy
Held on 18th July 2023 at 11.00 am
Remotely by MS Teams

In the Chair: Cllr. Joe Lyons

In Attendance: Cllr Deirdre Cullen, Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Cllr. Maria Dollard, Mr James Murphy, Cllr David Fitzgerald

Also Present: Mr. Denis Malone, A/Director of Service; Mr. Michael Arthurs, Senior Executive Officer; Ms Dearbhala Ledwidge, Climate Action Officer, Ms Breda Maher, Community Climate Action Officer, Mr. Francis Brophy, Acting Executive Engineer, Ms. Claire Prendergast, Mr Darragh Mahon

Item 1 Declaration of interests
None reported.

Item 2 Confirmation of Minutes
Proposed by Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, seconded by Cllr. Deirdre Cullen and agreed: *"the minutes of SPC4 meeting held on the 6th April 2023, are hereby adopted,"*

Item 3 Matters Arising
Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh welcomed Cllr. Joe Lyons to the chair.

Item 4 Climate Action Plan

Dearbhala Ledwidge gave a comprehensive presentation which detailed the progress that has been made to date and the programme for future work by the Climate Action Team. She outlined the role that Kilkenny County Council will play in reaching national targets. The Climate Action team will consist of four staff members when all positions have been filled. There will also be an Energy Officer appointed. Dearbhala informed the committee that she is working closely with the other Climate Action Teams in the South East.

Dearbhala outlined that river flooding is the biggest threat to county Kilkenny and already works are underway to alleviate problems with drain capacity which was evident recently as a result of the torrential rain in the city. Public lighting, building & facilities and transport are the biggest users of energy for Kilkenny County Council.

The Climate Action Plan is currently in progress and the draft plan will be reviewed by the elected members at the monthly Council meeting on 18th September and subject to their approval it will be available for public consultation.

Dearbhala informed the committee about the Decarbonisation Zone which is a demonstration and test bed of what is possible for decarbonising on a local and community level. The aim of this zone is to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases and energy being used in a spatial area. There are 5 key stages to implement the development of the DZ.

Cllr Joe Lyons thanked Dearbhala for her presentation and contributions were received from Cllr Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Cllr Maria Dollard and James Murphy.

It was noted that a good communication strategy is vital in order to reach all members of society especially farmers.

Cllr Deirdre Cullen requested the Climate Action Team to liaise with the Housing SPC to ascertain how many local authority houses in Kilkenny are not retrofitted due to the houses being too old and therefore too costly. She also wanted to know how many local authority houses are being retrofitted per annum.

She also raised the point of the water quality in the swimming area in Thomastown as this area had been closed recently due to poor water quality.

Denis Malone replied that the poor water quality was due to the recent heavy rainfall and Kilkenny County Council are meeting with Thomastown Community River Trust who manage the swimming area later this week to discuss the situation.

Breda Maher, Community Climate Action Officer gave a presentation on the Community Climate Action Programme which included examples of projects in other counties. She explained that 100% funding was available under strand one to communities which would assist in reaching national targets.

Cllr Joe Lyons thanked Breda for her presentation and contributions were received from Cllr Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Cllr Maria Dollard, James Murphy, Cllr David Fitzgerald and Cllr Deirdre Cullen.

Item 5 Draft National Waste Management Plan

Michael Arthurs referred to a presentation that had been previously been presented to a plenary council meeting. Climate Action and circular economy are integral to the draft plan. Contributions and queries were received from Cllr Maria Dollard and Cllr Deirdre Cullen and Denis Malone addressed all queries raised.

Item 6 St Kieran's Cemetery – Bye Laws

Denis Malone advised the committee that there are currently no bye-laws governing St Kieran's cemetery. An internal review is currently underway and a draft of these bye-laws will be prepared and will be discussed at the next meeting.

Item 7 Progress Report by Director of Services.

It was noted that the Director of Services progress report was circulated to all members prior to the meeting. Denis Malone gave a summary of the report.

Contributions were received from Cllr. Maria Dollard, Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh and Cllr Deirdre Cullen.

Item 8 Any other business

None.

Cllr. Joe Lyons concluded the meeting and thanked all members for their attendance.

It was noted the next meeting (hybrid) is scheduled to take place on 7th September 2023.