

**CEANTAR BARDASACH CHATHAIR CHILL
CHAINNIGH
MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF KILKENNY CITY**

**MIONTUAIRISCÍ AR IMEACHTAÍ AN CHRUINNITHE MHÍOSÚIL A
TIONÓLADH AR AN 14 Ú FEABHRA 2025 AG 2.30PM**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF MONTHLY MEETING
HELD ON 14TH FEBRUARY, 2025 AT 2.30 P.M.**

Mayor, Councillor Andrew McGuinness Presiding

Present/ I Láthair:-

Councillors/Comhairleoirí: Cllr John Coonan, Cllr Eugene McGuinness, Cllr Seán O'hArgáin, Cllr Joe Malone, Cllr Maria Dollard, & Cllr David Fitzgerald

Also Present:

Mr. Tim Butler, Director of Services, Ms. Margo Hayse, Senior Executive Officer, Mr. Stan Cullen, A/Senior Engineer, Ms. Regina Fitzpatrick, Heritage Officer and Ms. Joanna Pierce, A/Staff Officer.

MAYOR'S SUMMONS OF MEETING:

Notice dated 7th February 2025 convening a Monthly Meeting for this date was read.

1. A dhaingniú Miontuairiscí Cruinnithe - *Confirmation of Minutes of Meeting:*

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting held on 10th January 2025, having been previously circulated, were tabled for confirmation. Cllr Maria Dollard requested that an amendment be made to the Minutes to correct an issue raised at the January Meeting.

The issue raised was:

"Congestion and parking issues during the Yulefest Firework show on Greens Hill Road due to lack of signage and parking on the street."

It was:

Proposed By: Cllr. John Coonan

Seconded By: Cllr. Seán O'hArgáin

And Agreed:

“That the Minutes as presented to the meeting be amended and hereby adopted”.

2. Cúrsaí thabhairt ar aghaidh ordú ón Méara - Matters brought forward by direction of the Mayor:

Mayor Andrew McGuinness welcomed the newly appointed Senior Executive Officer, Margo Hayes, and wished her well in her new role.

The Mayor informed all Members about his meeting successful with the St. Patrick Festival organizers and fundraisers for the upcoming festival. He also advised that he will be inviting an Irish Dance Championship dancer Zahra Khodabacksh to the next Municipal District meeting to acknowledge her achievements, and a former Mayor of Kilkenny, Minnesota, Kevin Taffe, who will provide a short briefing on the results of the city twinning.

The Mayor and Elected Members congratulated the newly-elected senator, Patricia Stephenson.

3. County Heritage Strategy for Kilkenny

Ms. Regina Fitzpatrick presented details and timelines for the development of the new County Kilkenny Heritage Strategy for 2026-30. She informed the Elected Members that the document has been published on www.consult.kilkenny.ie to initiate the development process of the new strategy. Ms. Fitzpatrick asked the Members to circulate the document within their networks to reach a wider audience and increase the number of submissions from interested groups.

Ms. Fitzpatrick spoke about the role of the Heritage Officer and the County Heritage Work Programme, emphasizing the importance of securing Kilkenny’s heritage for local communities and future generations. She also highlighted the economic impact and benefits it brings to the County in terms of tourism and employment within this sector.

Ms. Fitzpatrick noted that the County Kilkenny Heritage Strategy for 2026-30 is a non-statutory plan and does not have enforcement power.

The Members welcomed the updates and thanked Ms. Fitzpatrick for the presentation.

Elected Members raised the following queries:

- Lack of a County Museum in Kilkenny, which would be beneficial for the County to present unique assets that originated from Kilkenny.
- It was discussed that Rothe House is going through the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland, but more clarification is required to understand the impact on the County.
- The Naming Committee should exercise its power regarding the naming of housing estates. It was noted that there are spelling errors in the Irish language naming of the estates.
- Admission to Rothe House and the Medieval Mile Museum should be free of charge.
- Return of the 1960 Commemoration for the public.

The Mayor congratulated Ms. Fitzpatrick on the successful execution of the Kilkenny Witch Trials festival.

Ms. Regina Fitzpatrick and Mr. Tim Butler responded to all queries raised.

4. Kilkenny Municipal District – Works Update

Mr. Stan Cullen presented an update on works completed at a number of locations across the city:

- Active Travel improvement works continue on Castlecomer Road.
- Footpath repairs and drainage maintenance on College Square, Abbey Street, and Parnell Street.
- Bollard repair and replacement across the city.
- Ongoing maintenance works, including street sweeping, power washing, gully cleaning, and signage repairs.
- Coote's Lane bridge completed; landscaping is still being carried out, with the official opening to take place in early April.
- Watergate Urban Park works progressing.
- St. Mary's Lane Enhancement Scheme – surveys underway.
- Carnegie Library – Part 8 period is now closed and it is intended to be presented in March for Members' consideration.

Mr. Cullen provided an update on the impact of Storm Éowyn on the County and the works completed by the Kilkenny Council staff.

The Members welcomed the updates and thanked Mr. Cullen for the presentation.

Elected Members raised the following queries:

- Invite schools from the local parish to the official opening of Coote's Lane bridge.
- The Kells Road E-bike stand is gone since the works were completed; can it be put back?
- Plan for additional lighting on the Parade and Mayors Walk for public safety.
- Watergate Theatre parking for performers and set-up crews.
- Parking around the Mayfair Library.
- Clearer marking of the disability parking spaces around the Library.
- Signs should be added in areas where Kilkenny County Council completes works to indicate funds used from LPT.
- High Street repairs – holes in the street causing wheelchair access issues.
- Access issue at the entrance to Richview Estate caused by the signage location.
- Castlecomer Road – drainage issues causing ongoing water collection.
- Tidy Towns – litter collection still causing issues and preventing Kilkenny from winning the award.
- Improvement of public lighting in Town Hall to be reviewed.
- St. Mary's Lane Enhancement Scheme – loose stones in the area.
- Bus park at the back of Abbey Quarter not being used by tourism buses; are there parking restrictions?
- Parking by-laws in Kilkenny – green areas destroyed due to lack of parking; fines could prevent damage to those areas.
- O'Loughlin's Bridge – funds allocated for lighting; updates are required on planned works.
- Hostel at Parliament Street – planning update for the next meeting.
- Lady Dessert bridge – poor visual impact on the cityscape; are there plans to enhance the design?

Mr. Stan Cullen and Mr. Tim Butler responded to all queries raised.

- Lighting on the Parade to be retained until St. Patrick's Festival. Improvements for the area lighting are being reviewed.
- Parking at the Watergate – arrangements are in place for the operators of the theatre.
- Additional disability parking will be in place by summer, but no on-street parking will be provided in the library and theatre area.
- Tourism bus parking arrangements to be reviewed by the Kilkenny Area Office.
- Parking by-laws to be reviewed at the next meeting.
- The light intensity of the Town Hall lighting can be adjusted, but no

changes to the positioning of the lights can be made.

- Tidy Towns – the area office will make all efforts to support achieving the award.
- Lady Desert Bridge – a review of the design of the bridge would require significant funds.

5. Fógraí Rúin - Notices of Motion.

1 (25): Proposed by Cllr. John Coonan

Seconded by Cllr Joe Malone

“That traffic calming measures be put in place as a matter of priority.

- Sycamore Drive / Woodbine Avenue

- Fr Hayden Road near to Castle Road.”

Cllr. John Coonan spoke on this motion.

Mr. Cullen responded that an allocation of €50,000 has been allocated to the Loughboy Area Footpaths under the 2025 Active Travel funding to introduce improvements for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users. This focus of these improvements will include the Sycamore Drive and Woodbine Avenue area. An element of traffic calming will be considered for inclusion in the design, which is currently at topographical survey stage. Speed surveys will be undertaken to inform the design proposals.

Fr. Hayden Road is bounded by high walls on the approach to the Castle Road, which act to obscure visibility for pedestrians crossing the junction on castle Road.

I propose to improve warning signage to alert motorists of the prospect of pedestrians crossing Fr. Hayden Road at the junction. The appropriate sign is W140A. This will be located in accordance with the Traffic Signs Manual in advance of the bend on the approach to the junction.

2 (25): Proposed by Cllr. John Coonan

Seconded by Cllr. Joe Malone

“To prioritize safety, can the council take measures to ensure that uninhabited or unused commercial and residential buildings are properly maintained, especially considering recent storms.”

Cllr. John Coonan spoke on this motion.

Mr. Cullen responded that the owner of any property is required by law to ensure that their property does not contain any dangerous structures. The County Council has powers under Section 3 of the Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act, 1964 to deal with structures or places which are a danger or likely to be a danger to the public.

Similarly, under Section 70 of the Roads Act 1993, the Council has powers to notify the owner where a structure or the use of a structure is a hazard or potential hazard to persons using a public road or where it obstructs or interferes with the safe use of a public road or with the maintenance of a public road.

The Council employs a number of different mechanisms to deal with vacant properties, and to encourage the appropriate activation of sites.

A Register of Derelict Sites is maintained by Kilkenny County Council under the Derelict Sites Act 1990. The legislation can apply to any land that “detracts, or is likely to detract, to a material degree from the amenity, character or appearance of land in the neighbourhood of the land in question.”

The Council also maintains the Vacant Sites Register under the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act, 2015. This can be applied to zoned, serviced sites, greater than 0.05 hectares (0.12 of an acre) in size and to either residentially zoned land, or other zoned land (e.g. commercial) if the site is causing an adverse effect.

A new tax to activate land for residential purposes, the Residential Zoned Land Tax, was introduced by the Department of Finance and the Revenue Commissioners in conjunction with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage as Section 80 of the Finance Act 2021. The tax measure is aimed at incentivising residential development rather than generating revenue for the State. This tax will in time replace the Vacant Site Levy. In order to implement this new tax measure, local authorities are required to undertake mapping to identify the lands in scope for the tax in their respective functional areas. Such mapping is currently on public display, with submissions due before 1st April 2025.

Vacant Homes Refurbishment Grant Scheme - Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund - The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant is available to refurbish a vacant house or building into a permanent home or a rental property. A grant of up to €50,000 is available, and if the property is derelict, i.e. the property is structurally unsound and dangerous, a top-up grant amount of up to €20,000 is available.

Kilkenny County Council has successfully implemented the Commercial Premises Paint Scheme in recent years, whereby a fund has been allocated to assist with the cost of painting the front façade of commercial/business buildings and/or hand painted shop signage within Kilkenny County and City, subject to terms and conditions.

3 (25): Proposed by Cllr. Seán Ó hArgáin
Seconded by Cllr. Maria Dollard

“Kilkenny Municipal District notes with concern the continuing decline in the standard and quality of signage on business premises in the city, with some particularly concerning examples in the very recent past. This runs contrary to the long-standing policies of the council, both the county council and the former Borough Council over many years.

Examples of poor practice include coriboard and plastic fascia signage, plastic and adhesive decal signage, neon lighting and upright coriboard signs on street bollards. This policy is clearly stated in the current County Development Plan, which states:

13.24 Shopfronts

Shopfronts are one of the most important elements in determining the character, quality and of retail streets in urban areas. In order to conserve this distinctive character, the Planning AI will:

- Encourage the maintenance of original shopfronts.*
- Encourage the reinstatement of traditional shopfronts where poor replacements have installed*
- Promote modern design and high-quality materials where new shopfronts on new or r buildings are being proposed. Where existing shopfronts are of no special meri replacement with a contemporary design is acceptable and if sensitively handled can enhance the appearance of the street.*
- Encourage the use of high-quality natural materials in shopfront design.*

Notwithstanding some good examples in recent times, we support a return to the strict implementation of these policies including;

- 1. A clear set of guidelines for premises owners and our planning staff.*
- 2. Adequate resources in our planning section and municipal office to ensure enforcement of these policies, as existed heretofore*
- 3. An annual award system to highlight best practice.”*

Cllr. Seán Ó hArgáin spoke on this motion and asked for clarification around the enforcement laws to support it.

Mr. Tim Butler responded that the Council is aware of this long-standing issue. He advised that resources have been allocated, a new staff member has been appointed to the Signage Enforcement Section, and a proactive approach will be taken to address this issue. Mr. Butler also explained the enforcement process and the timelines associated with it. The Shopfront and Advertising Signage Policy is in place and will be enforced with the appointment of the new Technician to preserve Kilkenny City’s reputation.

6. Aon Ghnó Eile - Any Other Business

Cllr. Joe Malone expressed sympathies to the family to Mr. George Ralph the owner of D&R Antiques on Rose Inn Street.

Cllr. Malone spoke about the closing of a well-known butcher shop in the city, owned by Mr. Ritchie Kearns, after almost 40 years in local business. He urged everyone to join the local community in marking the closure.

That concluded the business of the Meeting.

Signed:

MAYOR

Date:
