

Minutes of Meeting
SPC 5: Community, Integration, Cultural, Gaeilge, Heritage & Fire Services
Tuesday 10th December, 2024 at 11:00a.m.
Meeting Room 1, County Hall

Present: Cllr. John Brennan (Chair), Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Jenny Catt Slattery, Cllr. Tomás Breathnach, Guy Jones, PPN Social Inclusion, Mary Dolan PPN Community/Voluntary and Fergal Canton, ICTU.

In attendance: Ian Gardner, A/Director of Services, Fiona Deegan, A/Director of Services, Anne Marie Shortall, Senior Executive Officer, John Collins, Chief Fire Officer, Bernadette Moloney, Biodiversity Officer, Diane Seale and Cora Nolan, Community, Kilkenny County Council.

Apologies: Cllr. Pat Dunphy and Josephine Coyne, County Librarian.

1. Minutes of last meeting on Thursday 16th May, 2024

Minutes were proposed by Cllr. Michael McCarthy, seconded by John Collins and agreed.

2. Matters arising

None.

3. SPC Overview

Anne Marie Shortall gave a presentation on the overview of SPC 5 which covers the areas of Community Development, Placemaking, Arts & Culture, Libraries, Heritage, Fire & Emergency Services, Integration and Social Inclusion. The role, operation and terms of reference of the SPC were explained. The number of meetings per year is a minimum of 4. Members have a responsibility to inform the Council if they cannot attend a meeting and should not be absent for 2 consecutive meetings.

Mary Dolan enquired if there is a list of policies. A list of policy's will be provided for the members of the SPC and is available on Kilkenny County Council's website.

4. Fire Charges Policy Document

John Collins handed out information on Kilkenny Fire Services statistics for the past year. A high number of false alarms and increase of road traffic incidents and oil spills were highlighted.

John Collins explained the Fire Charges Policy Document which describes the rates and the various decision processes with regard to write-off and waivers. Kilkenny County Council levies fire charges in accordance with Section 35(3) of the Fire Services Act, 1981 and Section 2 of the Local Government (Financial Provisions) (No. 2) Act, 1983. Non-invoiced incidents such as incidents involving ESB poles, self-harm, where a fatality occurred or road-based incidents attended on behalf of the roads section were outlined. Inter-county authority services are charged as per Chief Executive Order No. Section 10 of plus 30% of the charges, the only exception is Carlow which is plus 33.3% charge to match Carlow charges.

Fiona Deegan advised the Fire Charges Policy Document is not in position to be adopted currently and suggested a workshop to take place with Council members.

Fergus Canton commended that there are waivers for students and people in receipt of the Old Age Pension and social welfare payments. Cllr. John Brennan and Cllr. Michael McCarthy commended the work of the Fire Services and in particular the service provided during the recent storm.

5. Biodiversity Action Plan

Bernadette Moloney, Kilkenny County Council Biodiversity Officer gave a presentation on the Biodiversity Action Plan and explained her role and the objectives of the plan. The Biodiversity Action Plan public consultations took place from March to June 2024 with 16 submissions. The below six themes were generated from the submissions:

- Provide Biodiversity Leadership at Local Level
- Strengthen Local Biodiversity Policy and Integrate Biodiversity Procedures into Council Operations
- Manage Public Open Spaces for Biodiversity
- Conduct Habitat Mapping and Monitoring to Support Evidence based Data-Driven Management Decisions
- Record and Monitor Protected Species
- Foster Engagement and Promotion of Best Practice Biodiversity Action

Bernadette outlined that the consultation phase of Draft Biodiversity Action was open for submissions until 18th December, 2024.

Bernadette outlined how that the Biodiversity Working Group was set up with representatives from various bodies and groups and County Council staff. Two County Council Elected Members were also invited to sit on the Biodiversity Working Group.

The roadmap for 2025 includes adoption/endorsement of the Biodiversity Action Plan, Habitat Mapping and Biodiversity Policy Development.

Cllr. John Brennan advised it was a comprehensive presentation and acknowledged that there is a need to educate people on the subject of biodiversity. Fergus Canton suggested contacting secondary schools and students involved with the Young Scientist of the Year programme. Mary Dolan suggested connecting youth groups such as Foroige.

Bernadette advised a lot of work was done with primary school age children and that there are plans to connect with secondary school children. The Biodiversity Officer will work in partnership with the Environmental Awareness Officer to make the connections. The Biodiversity office plan to develop kits and identify people such as retired teachers for training to assist with delivering workshops.

Guy Jones is involved with a Water Treatment Company and enquired about relevant Biodiversity documents and resources. Bernadette advised.

6. Age Friendly Strategy

Anne Marie gave a presentation on the Draft Age Friendly Strategy. Consultant Nollaig McGuinness along with staff from the Community Department facilitated extensive consultations across the county. The main issues and challenges emerging from the consultation phase were: - isolation and loneliness, accessing services, digitalisation, public transport, access to information, housing and accessible environments. The strategic priorities identified for Kilkenny include: - accessible services, diversity and inclusion and a balanced spread of Age Friendly activities and resources across Kilkenny city and county.

The next steps are to agree actions with all stakeholders and partners and consult with the Chief Executive who is- Chair of the Age Friendly Alliance. The new strategy will be presented to the Age Friendly Alliance and the full

council for adoption. The new Age Friendly Strategy and the Action Plan of New Strategy is due to be launched in early in 2025.

Fiona Deegan suggested to connect with Integration Team in relation to Diversity and Inclusion. John Collins advised the Fire Services would be interested in giving a talk about Fire Safety. Anne Marie welcomed the suggestions.

7. Local Enhancement Programme

Anne Marie Shortall shared information on the Local Enhancement Programme which is overseen by the LCDC. The Department announced in November 2024 that Kilkenny has been allocated a total fund of €170,519. The grant is due to be advertised early in January 2025 with the deadline for applications mid-February 2025. Anne Marie encouraged everyone to advise any community groups that may have interest in the grant funding. Details of the programme will be on the Kilkenny County Council website and information will be sent by email.

8. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the SPC 5 will take place on Tuesday 28th January at 3:00pm, it will take both in person at County Hall and online via Microsoft Teams.

9. AOB

Reports / Policy's on Integration: Guy Jones queried about Kilkenny County Council reports and policy's on Integration. Fiona Deegan advised there is a new Integration Team in Kilkenny County Council who follow a national policy. The Migrant policy can be circulated to everyone.

This concluded the business of the meeting.