

Minutes of Meeting

**SPC 5 Community, Integration, Cultural, Gaeilge, Heritage & Fire Services
held on Thursday 4th September 2025 at 4:00p.m
in Meeting Room 1, County Hall**

Present: Cllr. John Brennan (Chair), Cllr. Pat Dunphy, Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Jenny Catt Slattery, Cllr. Tomás Breathnach, Mary Dolan PPN Rep

In attendance: Fiona Deegan, A/Director of Services, Anne Marie Shortall, Senior Executive Officer, Josephine Coyne, County Librarian, and Diane Seale, Community, Kilkenny County Council.

Apologies: Guy Jones, PPN Rep and Fergal Canton, ICTU Ian Gardner, A/Director of Services and John Collins, Chief Fire Officer.

1. Minutes of last meeting on Thursday 5th June, 2025

Minutes were proposed by Cllr. Michael McCarthy, seconded by Cllr. Tomás Breathnach and agreed.

2. Matters arising

No matters arising

3. Library Development Plan 2025 – 2029

Josephine Coyne, County Librarian gave a presentation on the Library Development Plan 2025 – 2029. The Strategy outlines how the library services will help to create vibrant and sustainable communities. The presentation highlighted key achievements to date, along with notable increases in library usage and engagement. A needs assessment was undertaken through public surveys, staff workshops, and stakeholder consultations. The plan responds to legislative requirements, evolving digital needs, and community expectations, especially in rural areas. Strategic objectives include the areas of user experience, cultural engagement, innovation, literacy, and sustainability. Evaluation will be guided by key performance indicators, user/staff feedback, and national reporting metrics. It was noted 3.6% (€4.4 million) of the Local Authority's total budget with book spend per capita of €2.19 is lower than the national book spend target of €4.00.

There was very positive feedback on the presentation and the work of the Library service from all the members. Cllr. John Brennan thanked Josephine Coyne and the Library service.

Cllr. Mick McCarthy acknowledged the great work of the library service and especially with the addition of the new Mayfair Library where there is always a warm reception with friendly staff. Mary Dolan congratulated the library service on the increase of membership. Cllr. Pat Dunphy commented on success of the membership and the archives available online. Cllr. Tomás Breathnach complimented the Library service and the facilities especially during Covid. He enquired about the advertised archivist job description, connecting with SETU, library quiet hours and an Irish language event or programmes.

Josephine Coyne advised that the archivist role is a new position for Kilkenny County Council and recruitment has yet to take place. In relation to SETU, work is ongoing with Carlow campus. The quiet hours can be difficult to do in some branches but the library has introduced 'silent book clubs' or 'silent spaces'.

4. Community Development Presentation

Anne Marie Shortall, Senior Executive Officer, gave a presentation on recently completed and some ongoing Community Development Projects. The community section is managing over €12 million across 40+ projects, including major schemes such as RRDF, Town & Village Renewal Scheme, SICAP, CLÁR, CCFCS, and Community Recognition Fund.

RRDF supports large-scale rural development, with projects ongoing in Piltown for public real improvements and enhancement and Glenmore for the Southeast Greenway connectivity link. The Town & Village Renewal Scheme funds projects such as remote working hubs, community cafés, and playgrounds. The CLÁR programme funds small-scale infrastructure in rural areas, such as car park upgrades, public lighting and sports facility improvements. The CCFCS grant scheme provides capital grants for community and cultural facilities, supporting gyms, walking tracks, lighting upgrades, and inclusive spaces.

There was very positive feedback from the members for all the community projects completed and currently ongoing. Cllr. Pat Dunphy thanked Anne Marie for the presentation and acknowledged the high level of funding being provided to communities across county Kilkenny and how this has huge benefits to local groups. Anne Marie advised how the Community section staff can assist and advise smaller groups regarding funding streams available and the application process.

Cllr. Tomás Breathnach complimented the Community staff on the engagement with community groups with the grants and on delivering various projects and improved community facilities for rural communities.

Mary Dolan advised welcomed the information on the range of grants offered and enquired about the RRDF funding stream and the application process. Anne Marie advised the eligibility can vary from each callout based on the Department guidelines. The RRDF projects are led by Kilkenny County Council, applications are submitted to the Department following call outs and it is a competitive process.

5. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the SPC 5 will take place on Thursday 20th November 2025 at 3:00pm in meeting room 1.

This concluded the business of the meeting.