

Minutes of Meeting for Climate Action and Community Strategic Policy Committee

Held on Monday, 10th February, 2020 at 9.30 a.m.

in Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise

Present:

Cllr. John King, Chairperson
Cllr. Tom Mulhall
Cllr. James Kelly
Mr. Bobby Delaney, Environment/Conservation
Mr. Michael Gorman, Social Inclusion
Ms. Ruth Sullivan, Community/Voluntary
Ms. Ann Fingleton, Business/Commercial

Apologies:

Cllr. Pdraig Fleming, Cllr. Ollie Clooney.

In Attendance:

Mr. Donal Brennan, Director of Service, Ms. Carmel McNicholl Senior Executive Officer, Ms. Elaine Moore A/Administrative Officer, Ms. Bernie Foran County Librarian, Mr. Tadhg Madden Executive Engineer.

Cllr John King opened the meeting, welcomed everyone.

Prior to the confirming the minutes; a discussion took place on Climate Change and flooding in particular in the towns of Mountrath and Mountmellick after the significant rain fall which had occurred over the weekend. Cllr. James Kelly informed the meeting that the Fire Brigade from Rathdowney had been in Mountrath over the weekend to alleviate the flooding from the White Horse River. Bobby Delaney informed the meeting that the Creche, MDA and houses in Mountmellick were in danger of flooding and that people were no longer able to get business/house insurance. The need for a proper river maintenance programme and cleaning of river beds was highlighted.

Donal Brennan advised that Paul McLoughlin, Senior Engineer, was making progress with regard to flooding in Mountrath and Portarlinton in particular and that Edmond Kenny, Assistant Engineer, was making progress with the OPW. With regard to Mountmellick, permanent flood protection would be installed. Local Authorities were subject to a considerable amount of red tape and a joined up approach to tackle the issue between Counties Laois, Offaly and Kildare was needed. Simon Walton Director of Services was investigating this and from the 1st July to 30th September it is possible to carry out works to vegetation in rivers but an application to An Bord Pleanala would have to be made for large scale preventative works involving the 3 Counties.

Confirmation of Minutes

Upon the proposal of Cllr. James Kelly and seconded by Cllr. Tom Mulhall, the minutes of SPC Meeting held on Monday, 9th December 2019 were confirmed.

Open Libraries Update:

Works are continuing to fit-out Portarlinton Library as an Open Library. Management and Unions nationally agreed on the roll out of the Open Library systems in the WRC agreeing on Health and Safety Risk Assessments, staffing levels and a regular review of the Open Library systems. Locally we are working on additional Health and Safety items including;

- Additional cameras for building;
- Additional lights and installation of internal sensor lights in main building;
- Works to fire exits and alarms to ensure safety during fire alarm activation;
- Works on Main sliding doors to ensure users can enter building efficiently;
- Installation of a panic/communication button and set up of monitoring system;
- A Self service printing and scanning systems for users during staffed hours has been procured;
- Creation of user documents, application forms, training guides and digital signage for users;
- Staff training on the above systems.

When the final sign-off by Laois County Council Health and Safety Officer is reached and related staff consultations completed; a phased implementation of the Open Library system for the public is planned with a timeline of March 2020.

Councillors thanked the County Librarian for the work carried out in order to facilitate the open library in Portarlinton and welcomed same. They also expressed the hope that this facility would be rolled out to all other libraries in the County. Bernie Foran advised that Portarlinton library had been a pilot scheme for the County of Laois and that it was hoped that this service would be available in all libraries in the County on a phased basis. The new library currently being built in Portlaoise would have the necessary infrastructure/design in place for an open library.

Draft Cemetery Bye Laws

A discussion document on the Heads of Draft Bye Laws in relation to cemeteries was circulated. Tadhg Madden A/Senior Executive Engineer gave a power point presentation on the draft cemetery bye laws. A discussion took place in relation to regulation of lawn cemeteries, large headstones, kerbing, health and safety issues etc. Donal Brennan advised the meeting that it is envisaged on Health and Safety ground that in future people would need a licence to carry out any work in cemeteries and that Registrars and caretakers would be informed of this. The members were asked for any further input/comments on the draft bye laws to be communicated to Carmel McNicholl/Elaine Moore, in advance of the next SPC meeting.

Proposed Work Programme 2020

Donal Brennan advised that the 2020 Work Program was being prepared under the following headings:

- Revised Cemetery Bye-Laws for presentation to the Council
- Climate Adaptation Strategy Update
- Arts Plan and Creative Laois Strategy Update
- Library Plan Update
- Sports Development Update
- Community Projects Update

The work Programme can amended during the course of 2020 should the need arise.

Any Other Business

Ms. Carmel McNicholl advised the members that Duncan Stewart had offered to make a presentation to the members on an environmental awareness training programme and associated consultation process recently delivered in the County. It was agreed to schedule same for the next SPC meeting on 6th April 2020.

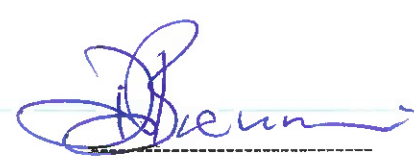
A discussion took place on the difference between climate mitigation and climate adaptation. Donal Brennan outlined that mitigation was how we played our part in reducing the effects of Climate Change and climate adaptation was how we adapt to the effects of climate change.

Two further items which were discussed were the safe use of zebra crossings and the emptying of recycling bins. Both are outside the remit of this SPC and to be referred to the Roads and Environment SPC.

This concluded the business of the meeting.



Cllr. John King
Chairperson



Mr. Donal Brennan,
Director of Services

