

Minutes of Meeting
Climate Action and Community Strategic Policy Committee
Monday, 13 June 2022 at 9.30 a.m. in Council Chamber



Present: Cllr. John King, Chairperson
Cllr. James Kelly
Cllr. Padraig Fleming
Cllr. PJ Kelly
Cllr. James Kelly
Ms. Ann Fingleton, Business/Commercial
Mr. Bobby Delaney, Environment/Conservation
Mr. Michael Gorman, Laois PPN, Social Inclusion

Apologies: Mr. Donal Scully, PPN, Agriculture/Farming,
Ms. Ruth Sullivan, Laois PPN, Community/ Voluntary

In Attendance: Mr. Donal Brennan DOS
Ms. Carmel McNicholl, Senior Executive Officer,
Ms Suzanne O'Connor, A/Senior Staff Officer,
Ms. Suzanne Dempsey, Environmental Awareness Officer &
A/Energy Officer for MEA,
Ms. Rose Doolin, Assistant Staff Officer.

Cllr John King opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Confirmation of Minutes

Upon the proposal of Cllr James Kelly and seconded by Mr Bobby Delaney, the minutes of SPC Meeting held on Monday, 7th March 2022 were confirmed with no matters arising.

Laois Cycle Bus Update

Ms Suzanne Dempsey gave an update on the Laois Cycle Bus and directed members to an on-screen presentation. Ms. Dempsey noted:

- A group of families in Portlaoise have come together to form a cycle bus to and from primary schools. The organising group also met with Galway Cycle Bus. The group have established a timetable with pick up and rest points. The cycle bus is marshalled both at the rear and the front and along the side with speed being determined by the slowest child. There are rest points which allows the cycle bus to pull in and allow traffic to pass to alleviate traffic build up.
- Support materials were funded by National Bike Week and via LCC Sport and Leisure Office.

- The recruitment of marshals is key to the success of the Cycle Bus. All children on the cycle bus are accompanied by a parent/teacher.
- A promotion and recruitment campaign was undertaken, and the cycle bus is now operational every Wednesday. The initial cycle bus outing was accompanied by Gardaí. It has been a positive experience for young people. This is also having a ripple effect with more people cycling on the Triogue Way. It is hoped to have new routes in Portlaoise in September.
- Portarlinton has expressed an interest in the cycle bus and are now recruiting marshals. It is hoped to commence this in the next school year.
- It is hoped to set up similar cycle bus routes elsewhere across the county.

The members thanked Ms Suzanne Dempsey for her presentation and enquired if there would be any help for families to purchase bicycles. Ms. Ann Fingleton, who is actively involved in the Portlaoise Cycle Bus stated it is hoped to have a Bike Library where a bicycle could be borrowed for a period of time. This would also help to upcycle unused bicycles.

A query was raised if the Cycle Bus was only for primary schools. Ms. Suzanne Dempsey outlined several challenges on the introduction to secondary schools, including gender specific issues.

Cllr. Pdraig Fleming observed that there is a lot of good work being done on climate action. To consolidate all the information he requested that a masterplan be developed for climate change actions i.e. simple document with 3-4 pages detailing climate actions being undertaken and delivered by the Council. Mr Donal Brennan, DOS, stated that he would develop a masterplan.

Ms Suzanne Dempsey further outlined that:

- There will be a series of videos available soon on projects which have been undertaken by Laois County Council.
- The LOETB are giving a talk which will be hosted by Mr. Duncan Stewart on skills on how to live sustainably.
- There will be home energy kits available in the libraries soon.
- Climate Literacy Courses were delivered in Portlaoise and Rathdowney with transition year students which has proved very successful and is intended to roll out throughout the county in the new school term.

Draft JPC Strategic Plan

Ms Carmel McNicholl gave an update on the draft JPC Strategic Plan. The focus of the plan is the promotion of crime prevention measures in our communities and ensuing that the relevant authorities work together to deliver actions for the benefit of the people of Laois. Initial discussions have already been held with the main stakeholders prior to finalising the Draft for public consultation purposes.

The draft plan is now open for submissions from the public until 5th July 2022. This can be done in the following ways:

- online submission via consult.laois.ie
- Email or contact the Community Department
- In writing to the Community Department.

Town & Village Renewal Scheme Update

Ms Carmel McNicholl gave an update on the Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2022. This scheme is now open for Expressions of Interest for 2022 until 24th June 2022. It has been widely advertised and notice has also been sent out via the PPN. The 2022 scheme will prioritise the tackling of vacant and derelict sites in towns and villages. Projects for regeneration that support active and vibrant town or village centres are also welcome. There are two categories:

- towns and villages under 5,000 population and
- towns with a population of 5,000 to 10,000,

Bigger towns with a population of over 15,000 may also be eligible in certain circumstances. The minimum grant available is €20,000 with a max of €50,000 for up to 6 applications. 90% grant funding will be available with the remaining 10% provided by the community group. EOIs will be analysed by the Council who will identify the projects to be forwarded to the Department, who then make the final decisions on successful projects.

Any Other Business

Mr. Bobby Delaney said he would like to make specific mention of Sr Imelda, Mountmellick, who was ahead of her time in terms of climate action. She did not agree with bottled water and was very active in initiating a composting scheme in Mountmellick before such thinking became the norm. Mr. Delaney stated he would make a proposal at the next meeting to ban bottled water.

Cllr James Kelly noted the issue concerning disposal of coffee cups which is a huge problem all over the country. Ms Suzanne Dempsey informed the meeting that the Council are going to pilot a scheme in Portlaoise where cafes will charge a €1 deposit per cup. The cup can be returned, and a clean cup given out with the next coffee purchased or a refund can be given.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

Cllr. John King
Chairperson

Mr. Donal Brennan,
Director of Service