

Minutes of Meeting for Climate Action and Community Strategic Policy Committee

Held on Monday, 13 September 2021 at 9.30 a.m. in Council Chamber

Present:

Cllr. John King, Chairperson
Cllr. James Kelly
Cllr. Pdraig Fleming
Cllr. PJ Kelly
Cllr Ollie Clooney
Ms. Ann Fingleton, Business/Commercial
Mr. Bobby Delaney, Environment/Conservation
Mr. Michael Gorman, Social Inclusion
Mr Donald Scully, Agriculture/Farming

Apologies:

Ms. Ruth Sullivan, Community/Voluntary

In Attendance:

Ms. Carmel McNicholl, Senior Executive Officer, Ms Pamela Tynan, Administrative Officer, Mr Ken Morley, Senior Executive Engineer, Mr Donal Brennan, Director of Services, Ms Ann Marie Maher, Sports & Leisure Officer, Ms. Rose Doolin, Assistant Staff Officer.

Cllr John King opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Confirmation of Minutes

Upon the proposal of Mr Bobby Delaney and seconded by Mr Michael Gorman, the minutes of SPC Meeting held on Monday, 14th June 2021 were confirmed.

Matters Arising

In relation to the Draft Cemetery Bye-Laws, this issue of dog fouling in cemeteries was raised as still a problem. Cllr James Kelly also raised the matter of old headstones in Clonenagh Cemetery which are in danger of falling, and the issue of responsibility when there is no family left.

Mr Donal Brennan DOS suggested in order to maintain a strategic focus to the business of the SPC, that such operational matters be raised at the relevant Municipal District meeting, and this was agreed.

Sports Facilities Update

Ms Ann Marie Maher, Sports & Leisure Officer delivered a presentation update on the Portlaoise Sports Facility Development. She stated that the population of Portlaoise has increased 26% in the last 20 years and this has put significant pressure on existing facilities and providers.

A meeting was held in April 2021 with representatives from over 20 sporting organisations. The meeting was facilitated by Humphrey Murphy ILC. Issues were raised, solutions discussed, and a report has been prepared. She went through the Sport Facility Development Model and the Sport

Facility Development Responsibilities. Portlaoise currently has 3 non-Council Facility Development opportunities;

- Portlaoise Rugby Club, where positive discussions on potential multi-sport development were held.
- Colaiste Dhun Masc Campus (Dunamaise College) plan to have a co-location facility with Laois Hockey when their new campus is constructed on the Timahoe Road.
- Portlaoise College Campus plan further outdoor sports facilities development with clubs including Athletics, LGFA, GAA, Soccer. They will also be constructing changing room facilities.

There are also 3 potential areas where Laois County Council can contribute to facilities;

- Tyrrells Land. The Planning Department are drawing up a master plan for this land which will include multi use pitches for use by the local schools and other groups.
- The land bank adjacent to Portlaoise GAA Club could provide an additional multi sports pitch development.
- Portlaoise Leisure Centre could supply a small to medium sized hall at the location which could provide for the needs of groups ensuring equality of access.

A Heat Map of Portlaoise Sporting Facilities we completed in July 2021. She advised that continued support and advice needs to be provided to sporting clubs and education partners seeking to improve and develop facilities.

The members thanked Ms Ann Marie Maher for her presentation and raised some questions with respect to the rest of the County. The question of sporting facilities in St Fintan's, Portlaoise was raised. Ms Ann Marie Maher advised that this land is no longer available as the HSE intend to use the land for future development of health facilities. However, they are developing a handball alley on the campus for clients. The matter of non-LOETB schools and the issue of access to their sports facilities was raised. Currently, not all schools are able to offer their facilities.

Accessibility and the issue of sustainable travel to Sports facilities was raised. Ms. Maher agreed that this also needs to be taken into consideration.

The Sports Facilities update was duly noted by the committee.

Draft Cemetery Bye-Laws Update

Mr Ken Morley, Senior Executive Engineer clarified the issues raised at the last SPC regarding how the new bye-laws will impact on contractors including independent cemetery contractors who wish to undertake works in cemeteries:

- All contractors who wish to undertake work in cemeteries which are maintained/controlled by Laois County Council must first apply to be included on the register of independent cemetery contractors.
- The requirement for columbarium walls in other cemeteries will be kept under review and will be dependent on demand and associated cost considerations.
- The matter of neighbours being allowed to dig graves as is common practice in rural areas would have significant health & safety and insurance issues associated with this activity and therefore such works cannot be authorised by Laois County Council.

- With respect to the erection of monuments over the allowed height, section 22.3 of the draft bye laws prohibits structures which exceed 1.2m “unless specifically authorised by rules for the cemetery issued under bye law 41.1”. Section 22.6 provides for the removal of any monument which contravenes the Bye Laws.
- Kerbing in lawn areas: Kerbing will not be permitted in lawn areas following the introduction of the new Bye Laws. Section 2 refers: “Lawn Cemetery” means a Cemetery or part of a Cemetery wherein kerbs or other similar items shall not be permitted to be placed and where all parts of the Cemetery comprising burial plots shall be maintained as grassed areas”.
- Old headstones that fall into disrepair/trip hazard; Section 28.2 of the draft bye laws provides for the removal of headstones which have fallen into disrepair.
- Treatment of various denominations in cemeteries other than Portlaoise; The requirement to make provision for “various denominations in cemeteries other than Portlaoise” will be kept under review.
- Insurance: Contractors wishing to undertake any work in the cemetery shall make an application to Laois County Council for inclusion on a register of Independent Cemetery Contractors. The application process will include a requirement for contractors to provide evidence of their insurances.

The members thanked Mr Ken Morley for the update.

Additional issues were raised.

- Cllr James Kelly referenced the necessity to purchase additional land particularly in areas where cemeteries are reaching capacity.
- Cllr. King asked if consideration could be given to installing seating at the boundary walls of cemeteries.
- Cllr PJ Kelly suggested that the name of the contractor be put on all headstones so that they could be contacted directly if there was a problem. This was agreed by the members and the Draft bye-laws will be amended accordingly.

Mr. Donal Brennan advised that once adopted, the new bye-laws will be enforced.

Following the proposal by Cllr Ollie Clooney and seconded by Cllr PJ Kelly it was agreed that the Draft Cemetery Bye-laws should go to forward for consideration at a full council meeting.

That concluded the business of the meeting.


Cllr. John King
Chairperson


Mr. Donal Brennan,
Director of Service

