

Minutes of Meeting for Climate Action and Community Strategic Policy Committee

Held on Monday, 17th July, 2020 at 9.30 a.m.

in Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise

Present:

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

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, Ms. Suzanne Dempsey Environmental Awareness Officer.

Cllr John King opened the meeting, welcomed everyone.

Cllr King introduced and welcomed Damian Nee from EcoEd4all. This company had previously requested an opportunity to present on their work to the SPC. Damien advised that Duncan Stewart sends his apologies and stated that he could attend at a future SPC meeting, as required. Mr Nee then gave a powerpoint presentation on Environmental Training and issues of concern and answered a number of questions from the members.

Confirmation of Minutes

Upon the proposal of Cllr. Bobby Delaney and seconded by Cllr. Tom Mulhall, the minutes of SPC Meeting held on Monday, 10th February 2020 were confirmed.

Matters arising: the Councillors queried as to when the works on cleaning of the rivers would be carried out to alleviate flooding. Donal Brennan Director of Services advised that works would be carried out as was outlined in the minutes of the February meeting, and that unless there was a threat to life, emergency works could not be carried out.

Digital Strategy

Pat Grassick, Head of ICT, gave a presentation on the Laois Digital Strategy 2020-2024, outlining that this strategy was undertaken as part of the National Broadband Strategy. He also stated that if the survey undertaken had been carried out today, it might highlight more even issues in light of the current pandemic.

The Councillors welcomed the publication of the strategy and highlighted the value of broadband in order to facilitate people to work from home in light of the current crisis. They also welcomed the benefits of broadband for social interaction. All of this resulted in a better work/life balance. All complimented the staff involved in the preparation of the Strategy.

Libraries

Bernie Foran County Librarian gave an update as follows:

Covid 19 and Reopening of Libraries

Laois County Library Service closed all public libraries in Laois in March on public health advice relating to the Covid-19 outbreak. In line with the Government Road map Libraries had recommenced services since the 9th of June and are now operating as follows

- Portlaoise and Portarlinton Libraries have reopened on a 'Browsing By Appointment' Model of Services as recommended nationally following National Departmental and Health and Safety Guidelines –Mountmellick will follow on this model on week commencing the 27th of July.
- Mountmellick, Mounrath, Abbeyleix, Rathdowney are offering a Call and Collect service, Durrow and Stradbally will offer Call and Collect services from next week. All Libraries have additional cleaning and sanitizing procedures and staff have PPE gear and Perspex screens.

Library Plan

Final draft ready for printing and design .

Online Services

Library Services have adapted and continue to operate with our online Library services supported by staff on a remote basis. The library now is promoting and supporting the public to access all of our online material. This includes -Ebooks which has seen an increase of 200% in users during COVID 19, online newspapers , online magazines and language learning . The overall usage has seen a massive increase with now over 1500 new remote users during this period and a massive increase of over 500% for this period.

Book Delivery to Cocooners ;

Working with Laois Partnership and Volunteer Laois during Covid 19, the library services partnered with Volunteer Laois to provide a book delivery service to cocooners and isolated persons. Cocooning boxes were delivered to over 60 persons over the 3month period . This service provides a direct link with those persons who are isolated and may not be able to come to the library themselves. Thanks to Laois Partnership and Volunteer Laois.

Library Section has moved all of our events and activities to an online programme- we are now producing live videos and content featuring storytime and crafts for younger users, literature and local history talks. The Library continues to promote wellbeing, culture and positive mental health throughout all of our facebook posting sharing links to HSE, Healthy Ireland and other local pages(Videos over 2500 total views on facebook) and also Healthy Ireland.

Historian in Residence

Laois County library sections are continuing with the Historian in residence scheme for 2020. Funded by Decade of Centenaries/Commemorations funding the residency will continue to focus on the role of Laois women during this time . The women who have been identified for further research with a planned publication are Lucy Franks, Ann Jellico and Helen Roe.

Sensory Library

Libraries are still continuing with the introduction of sensory friendly library services. This includes as sensory room and sensory garden space in Mountmellick library, sensory toys collections in Portarlinton, and Mountmellick libraries which can be borrowed . New interactive/magic tables have been purchased for Abbeyleix, Mountmellick and Portarlinton Libraries which can be used by children/adults with additional sensory needs . Grant aid by DRCD

Summer stars Reading Programme

This has commenced with both online content and ebooks especially for children's. Here in Laois we are also offering "book bags "that Children can collect from their local library –can be preordered and collected random selection or specific selected by child

Portlaoise New Library

Work on the new library site has recommenced since COVID 19 restrictions. Demolitions and Asbestos removal have been completed. Prior to the main construction commencing there is a requirement for additional site investigations and excavations due to issues with the subsoil of the site .Works on the foundation are due to commence once these additional subsoil issues have been addressed.

Open Library in Portarlinton

Currently stalled until later in 2020 due to COVID 19 and national health advice.

Members welcomed the report and asked a number of questions.

Community Update

Elaine Moore A/Administrative Officer gave an update on the work being carried on in Community covering the work of the PPN, Community Forum, Community Response Helpline and the various grant schemes that were being administered through the section. Members welcomed the report and asked a number of questions.

Climate Action Strategy Update

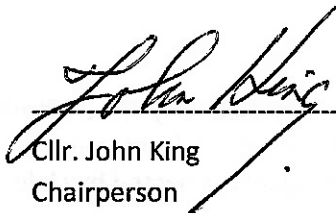
Tadhg Madden Executive Engineer gave an update on Climate Action which included information on tendering for electric vehicle charge points and measuring the carbon footprint in Portlaoise, he also advised that the procurement office in Laois County Council has included the compliance of green procurement in all tendering activities. A

Climate Action Team has been established as part of the Climate Action Plan. Expressions of Interest had been submitted to the Department for funding under the Climate Action Fund for a number of applications including Abbeyleix Bog Restoration, County Hall Building Retrofit, Public Lighting Upgrade and Roads Projects. Tadhg introduced Suzanne Dempsey as the new Environmental Awareness Officer to the members of the SPC. Members welcomed Suzanne to Laois County Council and asked a number of questions on the report.

Any Other Business

Ms Ann Fingleton raised a matter for correction in the attendance record noted in the Minutes of the February meeting. It was indicated that the error would be rectified. She also suggested that the SPC could possibly examine the learning gained from the Community Response to date, and how that could be used to ensure preparedness for any future similar emergency response.

This concluded the business of the meeting.



Cllr. John King
Chairperson



Mr. Donal Brennan,
Director of Services