

**Minutes of Meeting for Climate Action and Community Strategic Policy Committee**

**Held on Monday, 8 March 2021 at 9.30 a.m.**

**Via Teams**

**Present:**

Cllr. John King, Chairperson  
Cllr. James Kelly  
Cllr. Padraig Fleming,  
Cllr. Ollie Clooney  
Ms. Ann Fingleton, Business/Commercial  
Ms. Ruth Sullivan, Community/Voluntary

**Apologies:**

Mr. Bobby Delaney, Environment/Conservation, Mr. Michael Gorman, Social Inclusion, Mr Donald Scully, Agriculture/Farming, Mr. Donal Brennan, Director of Service

**In Attendance:**

Ms. Carmel McNicholl Senior Executive Officer, Ms. Elaine Moore A/Administrative Officer, Mr. Tadhg Madden Executive Engineer, Mr Ken Morley, Senior Executive Engineer, Ms Ann Marie Maher, Sport & Leisure Officer.

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Cllr John King opened the meeting, welcomed everyone.

**Confirmation of Minutes**

Upon the proposal of Cllr. Padraig Fleming and seconded by James Kelly, the minutes of SPC Meeting held on Monday, 14 September, 2020 were confirmed.

**Matters Arising**

Cllr Padraig Fleming informed the meeting that Portlaoise Town had been announced today as the recipient of €9 million funding for Community Action as Portlaoise is designated as a Climate Action Town.

**Review of Sports Recreation Strategy and Sports & Leisure Update**

Ann Marie Maher gave an update on the Strategy which is currently delivering locally the objectives of the relevant national plans in relation to physical activity, health & wellbeing. She stated that Portlaoise Leisure Centre has been closed since the start of COVID 19 and has in fact gone into Receivership. Portarlinton Leisure Centre has closed on 4 different occasions during COVID 19. Laois County Council are currently discussing the option of single community company for the management of both sites which will provide greater efficiencies and greater user benefits. 20 Community Play Facilities are under the management of Laois County Council requiring a significant maintenance & repair programme. At present only necessary repairs are being carried out but it is hoped that when restrictions are lifted these can proceed. There is currently anti-social behaviour in playgrounds and at the pitch at Portlaoise Leisure Centre and it is taking considerable effort to keep up with all the repairs required. Ballinakill have been successful in receiving funding for upgrades to the pool. Borris in Ossory playground have secured a licence on a site and it is now

going to Part 8. Playgrounds have been opened during COVID 19 except for 6 weeks last year. Ann Marie Maher Sports Officer helped 38 groups apply for funding under the Sports Capital Grant including 2 on behalf of Laois County Council. Ann Marie and Maeve Flynn, Horticulturalist have retrained for judging the Green Flags. 427 Play Boxes were delivered last year to targeted groups around the county in a once off effort to reach vulnerable young people affected by COVID 19 during the summer of 2020. It is hoped that Bike Week will again proceed this year along with Active Parks which is free, to encourage families to participate in outdoor activities. A swim ability programme will have to be rolled out to increase numbers attending the leisure centres when COVID 19 is lifted. It has been challenging during COVID 19 to carry out programmes and it has required creative thinking.

A query with regard to allotments was raised by members of the committee, and discussion ensued.

Issues were also raised in respect of dog licencing, enforcement of Control of Dogs, dog fouling and if there is a limit on the number of dogs that a person can own. With increasing use of outdoor spaces, these issues are presenting as problematic. Carmel McNicholl stated that issues such as Control of Dogs and enforcement, dog fouling etc would come under a different SPC and she would refer the concerns accordingly.

#### **Cemetery Byelaws**

Tadhg Madden gave a brief update on the new Draft Cemetery Byelaws. There are a few changes which he brought to the attention of the meeting. Mode of Burial will now provide for coffins of wood or in a shroud. It is proposed to have a provide for an electronic register. The selling of a right of burial in a Cemetery to a third party is not permitted. However, the Council will facilitate those wishing to return ownership of a right of burial to the Council. A right of burial may be transferred to an immediate family member. It is proposed that no headstone should be over 1.2 m in height and that kerbs cannot be erected in Lawn Cemeteries. The Council are also proposing to provide columbarium walls or other facilities for cremated remains. It will also provide for Non-Denomination and alternative faiths. It is proposed the draft will be refined following today's presentation and brought to Management Team before being returned to the SPC. The members requested a copy of the document presented be circulated.

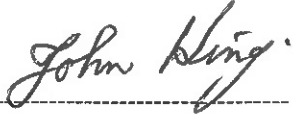
Some members raised other issues in respect to adhering to the height restriction and members of the public driving on graves in the Lawn Cemeteries or damaging kerbs in others. It was also suggested that a notice be erected in the graveyard with respect to rules and who to contact, and also to erect dog fouling signs. Tadhg Madden stated that he would examine these matters and also consider the erection of bollards in cemeteries to address matters.

#### **AOB**

Carmel McNicholl clarified that Portlaoise received €9 million under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) for the Low Carbon Town initiative. Portlaoise is the only eligible town in Laois under this particular funding stream. The funding was welcomed but the requirement for further distribution of supports for climate action initiatives countywide was noted.

Cllr John King requested that an update on Climate Action/Projects around the county be listed for the June SPC meeting.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

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Cllr. John King  
Chairperson

Handwritten signature of Donal Brennan in blue ink, written over a dashed horizontal line.

Mr. Donal Brennan,  
Director of Service