

Minutes of Meeting for Climate Action and Community Strategic Policy Committee
Held on Monday, 7th March 2022 at 9.30 a.m. in the Council Chamber

Present:

Cllr. John King, Chairperson
Cllr. Pdraig Fleming
Cllr Ollie Clooney
Ms. Ann Fingleton, Business/Commercial
Mr. Bobby Delaney, Environment/Conservation
Mr. Michael Gorman, Laois PPN, Social Inclusion
Cllr. James Kelly

Apologies:

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

In Attendance:

Mr. Donal Brennan, Director of Services, Ms. Carmel McNicholl, Senior Executive 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 Cllr PJ Kelly, the minutes of SPC Meeting held on Monday, 6th December 2021 were confirmed.

Presentation by An Taisce on the Sustainable School Travel Study

Ms Suzanne Dempsey, Assistant Scientist, introduced Dr Karen Moore and Ms Lorraine Flanagan from An Taisce, who had been invited to detail the findings of the Sustainable School Travel Study undertaken in Portlaoise as part of Low Carbon Town work programme.

Dr Karen Moore commenced with a short video on several families around Portlaoise who employed different modes of travel on the school journey, ie walking, by car, bicycle, and scooters. Surveys had been undertaken with the families of school going children, the teachers and the children themselves. Findings included:

- The car is the most popular mode of transport for school journeys in Portlaoise
- 79% of teachers leave home early to avoid traffic on the way to school
- reason cited for not walking, cycling or scooting to school is because there is 'too much traffic'. [One of the benefits from walking or cycling to school is to *reduce* traffic congestion at the school.]
- Another reason cited is that it perceived to be 'too far'. Maps provided and travel time measured over the various modes of travel disproved this assumption. It showed that those travelling by car can take as long, if not longer, than those walking or cycling or scooting to work from similar distances
- students surveyed would *like* to cycle

- To facilitate behavioural change signage can be erected showing the length of time it would take to drive, walk or cycle from a particular location point, to the schools.
- The survey also showed that at Secondary level, girls do not tend to cycle to school whereas the boys do. School uniform (skirts) and gender stereotyping are factors at play.

Ms Lorraine Flanagan further outlined

- The benefits for children to walk or cycle to school. Teachers report students are more alert when they walk or cycle.
- There are multiple social and health benefits accruing
- There is a responsibility on parents to enable and facilitate their child to walk or cycle.
- To facilitate behavioural change, adults can get training, and there is funding available for this.
- Consideration should also be given to 'fix it' skills and setting up Bike Repair Stations at key locations. These stations are currently available in Kildare and Cavan and are proving to be a great success.
- As climate change is a big consideration, now is the time to make the shift. Portlaoise have made some very positive improvements eg cycle stands, Triogue Blueway etc but there is a need to future proof. It is an opportunity for the county to prioritise young and old people over those who drive. There is also legislation currently being considered in respect of regulating the use of electric bikes and scooters.
- An example of a Dutch roundabout was shown which gives priority to pedestrians and cyclists and similar arrangements can be made in Ireland.

A video on the Pilot School Cycle Bus Project was also shown, demonstrating the interest and enjoyment of the participating children.

The members of the committee thanked Dr Karen Moore and Ms Lorraine Flanagan for their comprehensive presentations. A discussion ensued on the benefits identified. Some concerns were raised regarding the safety issues of increased cyclists and e-scooters on the roads, and the need for better education of all road users of their respective responsibilities. In summary, the Members expressed the view that the cultural and behavioural shift in school travel is positive and necessary from a sustainability perspective. Mr Donal Brennan, Director of Services added the challenge now was how the Council can proceed to address the infrastructural and other issues, that are necessary to affect the required change.

Climate Action & Community SPC Work Programme 2022

The proposed SPC Work Programme for 2022 was circulated. Ms Carmel McNicholl outlined the content of same, and the need to remain flexible to address any other issues that may arise over the year. Also, as the new Local Economic & Community Plan is being drafted, this will in turn inform the content and priorities of the other strategies within the work programme. The SPC will be informed and consulted as necessary, throughout the year.

Update on Cemetery Bye-Laws

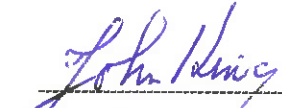
The meeting was advised that the draft cemetery Bye-laws were on public display until 1st March 2022. 3 submissions were received. It was agreed that the changes as indicated in the first 2

submissions would be made and that Cllr PJ Kelly would be consulted on the 3rd submission with respect to the amendment to be made in the bye-laws to address the concern raised, and that it would then go before the main Council meeting.

This was proposed by Cllr Ollie Clooney and seconded by Cllr Padraig Fleming.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

Next SPC meeting is scheduled for Monday 13th June at 9.30am.



Cllr. John King
Chairperson



Mr. Donal Brennan,
Director of Service

