



KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

CLIMATE ACTION

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE 11TH MARCH 2020

@ 10AM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS CHILL DARA

PRESENT

Councillors: Vincent P Martin (Chair), Fiona McLoughlin Healy, Fintan Brett, Bill Clear, Ciara Galvin

Sectoral Interests: Ali Sheridan, PPN - Environmental/ Conservation
Judith Browne, PPN – Community/Voluntary
Allan Shine, Business/Commercial
Tom Malone, Agriculture/Farming

Officials: Joe Boland, Director of Services
Breda Maher, Executive, CARO
Paul Regan, Assistant, CARO
Geraldine Morris, Clerical Officer, Environment

APOLOGIES: Barry Griffith, Facilities Manager

Introductions: The meeting was opened by the Chair who spoke about the increasing importance of the need for climate action and looked forward to a significant input from the Committee, in light of the ongoing climate emergency. In his view, it was a time for leadership, innovation as well as the need to drive a progressive agenda. He also referred to the introductory nature of the first meeting.

Agenda item 1: To note membership

Noted as follows:

Councillor Vincent P Martin – Chair

Councillor Fintan Brett

Councillor Bill Clear

Councillor Ciara Galvin

Councillor Fiona McLoughlin Healy

Councillor Naoise O’Cearúil

Ms Judith Browne, PPN – Community/Voluntary

Ms Ali Sheridan, PPN – Environmental/Conservation

Mr Tom Malone, Agriculture/Farming

Mr Allan Shine, Business/Commercial

Agenda item 2: To note standing orders

A copy of the standing orders was circulated and noted.

Agenda item 3: Declarations of conflict of interest

A brief discussion took place where the requirements were explained particularly to new members and noted.

Agenda item 4: Overview of Role of CARO presentation given by Breda Maher

A presentation was made by Breda Maher, CARO Executive which focused on the following aspects:

- East & Midlands Climate Action Regional Operational Structure and SLA
- East & Midlands Operational Structure
- Sub Regional Working Group
- Priorities for 2020
- Local Government Sector commitments
- All of Government Climate Action Plan
- Local Authority commitment to climate action
- Heads of Climate Action (Amendment) Bill 2019

A question and answer session ensued wherein the following issues and queries arose:

- The long-term status of the CARO office
- Opportunities for input on the part of the SPC
- Ability of the SPC to influence community and 'on the ground' activity take a balanced approach
- Opportunity for input into matters relating to the 'Just Transition'.

Members also made reference to:

- The requirement for a modal shift in relation to transport
- The need to work with business and farming in the interests of sustainability as well as the focus on biodiversity.

Queries were dealt with by Ms Maher and the Director of Services who highlighted the following aspects:

- SPCs were established to shape policy in this area, and indeed, there would be considerable opportunity to influence a range of policies – within both KCC as well as at national level.
- The CAROs are funded for 4 years and this is likely to be extended
- The Council is currently recruiting a Climate Action Officer whose main remit will be to work with local communities, particularly through the MDs. There will also be an opportunity for the SPC to influence the scope and direction of such work from a policy perspective.
- A representative from the Midlands Regional Transition Team is scheduled to attend the next meeting of the SPC.

In addition, at national level, a number of sectoral adaptation plans were also published (to include Biodiversity; Flood Risk Management; Communications Networks; Forestry, Agriculture & Seafood; Built & Archaeological Heritage; Water Quality & Water Services Infrastructure; Health; Electricity & Gas Networks) and there would be a further opportunity for input in the part of local government sector, through SPCs as these plans were being rolled out at local level. This was considered to be an important point.

Agenda item 9: Update on Elected Members/senior staff training

A further presentation was made by Breda Maher, CARO Executive which focused on the following aspects:

- Local Authority Climate Action Training
- Local Authority Climate Action Training Plan
- Strategic Training Partners
- Climate Action Training Elected Members & Senior Staff
- Climate Action Training: Climate Action Team/Steering Group

It was stressed that a key impetus related to the need to build the capacity of the local government sector in order that it be well positioned to deal with the significant challenges which were coming down the line. A brief discussion ensued which focused in the recent pilot training event for elected members and senior staff. An overview as given by Councillor Clear who was of the view that it was both informative and purposeful. It was confirmed that the event would be rolled out nationally (following tender) and that Kildare County Council would have the opportunity to avail of it again. In the interim, the Council would send details to members of the SPC. Training for the Climate Action Teams (a 3-day intensive session) was also being prioritised.

Agenda item 6: To note Minutes of meetings 2020 Climate Action Team

Minutes of the previous two meetings of the Climate Action Team were circulated. The Director of Services advised that the Climate Action Team were prioritising the delivery of the 121 actions as included in the recently adopted Climate Adaptation Strategy. A template had been prepared which was being populated as milestones were being reached. He gave a brief overview of progress to date which was noted. He also advised that the Team had prioritised an 'organisational climate awareness day' as an initial pilot event. This would be followed later in the year with a pilot community event. In response to a query from Councillor McLoughlin Healy, he also confirmed that 2 staff members were representing the PPN.

Agenda items 7: Energy Efficiency/mitigation presentation by Barry Griffith

As Mr Griffith was urgently called away to an emergency meeting, he was not in a position to attend. Accordingly, this item was deferred to the next meeting.

Agenda item 8: update on sustainable energy communities by Barry Griffith

In the absence of Mr Griffith, a brief overview was given by Paul Regan, Assistant CARO office, which focused on the purpose of Sustainable Energy Communities and gave an overview on progress to date. Disappointment was expressed by Councillor McLoughlin Healy that matter could not be dealt with more comprehensively and accordingly, it was agreed it would be prioritised on next agenda.

Agenda item 5: overview of climate adaptation strategy and to note progress to date given by Breda Maher

A brief overview was given by Breda Maher, which focused on the following aspects:

- Local Authority Climate Adaptation Planning
- Ireland Climate Change impacts
- Purpose of Adaptation Strategy
- Methodology
- Process Timeline
- CARO Workshops & Resources
- Process & Development of Actions
- Substantive Action Areas – Goals
- Turning Actions into Action

A discussion took place where some members expressed concern regarding the apparent lack of focus on mitigation aspects. In response, it was conveyed that the statutory requirement on the local government sector related solely to adaptation, and indeed, this was currently the only role formally assigned to the CAROs. It was, however, outlined that the 'business case' for the CAROs was currently being reviewed and it was anticipated that there would be a future focus on the following aspects: mitigation, business opportunities, community capacity building, biodiversity as well as the link between spatial planning and climate action.

Allan Shine expressed strong support in respect of the opportunities for business and, in this context, reference was made to a successful seminar held last October on the part of CARO and Offaly LEO, working jointly. It was proposed to run this conference again later in the year and the SPC would have opportunity for input.

In addition, the Council was in the process of recruiting an 'energy efficiency officer' who would drive the mitigation agenda at local level. In response to a query from Ali Sheridan, Breda Maher outlined national targets in relation to mitigation but also referred to more ambitious commitments included in the recently signed Covenant of Mayors.

Agenda item 10: to note climate action fund/public sector innovation fund Paul Regan

A presentation was given by Paul Regan, CARO Assistant, which referred to formal applications under the following headings:

- Brief Overview
- Climate Action Fund – Expressions of Interest
- Public Sector Innovation Fund 2020
- CCMA & GAA Partnership for Sustainable Communities
- Potential Collaborators on Programme
- Climate Action Charter
- Collaboration Programme has 2 Phases
- Other Projects – Applications for Funding / Expressions of Interest (Climate Action Fund & Public Sector Innovation Fund)

This was noted.

Agenda item 11: To consider work programme action for 2020

A lengthy discussion took place wherein the following keys points emerged:

- To discuss and consider policies relating to the 'Just Transition' (scheduled for next meeting)
- To examine templates/good practice for community initiatives (recent youth camp hosted by National Stud was cited as a model for good practice)
- To develop the 'business opportunities' agenda as clearly these were opportunities for job creation
- To try to enhance policies relating to modal shift in transport, particularly cycling infrastructure
- Input into policies relating to the all-Ireland pollinator plan
- Building on existing community inputs such as green schools, green fora, carbon-neutral towns etc
- A much greater focus on mitigation
- Focusing on policies relating to the limiting of plastics, greater emphasis on circular economy etc
- Influencing policies at national (and global) level
- Increasing community awareness of the salient issues.

There was a suggestion that a facilitator could be engaged to assist with prioritisation. A further discussion ensued wherein there was a general view that the SPC should endeavour to be ambitious. The Director of Services agreed and referred, in particular, to the opportunities in the part of the SPC to, *intra alia*, influence council policies in relation to; budgetary issues, roll out of the adaptation plan and Covenant of Mayors, the County Development Plan and Local Area Plans as well as providing input to policy at national level. Reference was also made to the merits, or otherwise of changing the name of the SPC in light of the ongoing climate emergency.

Agenda item 12: to note schedule of meetings

The following dates were noted:

Wednesday 6th May 2020 at 10am
Wednesday 8th July 2020 at 10am
Wednesday 7th October 2020 at 10am

Councillor Martin concluded the meeting saying that; as influencers there is an opportunity to push the boat out. He thanked everyone for their time in attending.