

Climate Action Linkage Group Online Meeting 21st July 2020

@ 7.30 p.m.

Cliona Kelliher	Ann Behan
Judith Browne	Fionnuala Corcoran
Ronan O'Reilly	Niamh Young
Deirdre Lane	Emer Conway
Jennifer Whitty	Ali Sheridan
Séan Ó Broin	Stephanie Jones
Liz Cullen	Denis Dennehy
Clyde Doyle	Suzanne Murphy
Mary Murphy	Thelma Stronge
Eddie Smyth	

Chair: Judith Browne/Jennifer Whitty

1. Jude introduced Jennifer who has volunteered to be the new facilitator and will Chair meetings from now on. Jude mentioned that is better clarity now on SPC Policy, i.e. how policy is decided and how we will fit into that as a linkage group.

Jude gave an update on the SPC training which was given by Dr. Philip Byrne from the IPA (Institute of Public Administration).

The training was excellent and clarified how all the different public systems work. The SPCs feed into the Corporate Policy Group, which then feeds into the full Council and CEO of Kildare County Council. The history of the SPCs began with Better Local Government in 1996 which reformed the internal structures – Local Authorities began to have a more business oriented focus with the SPCs modelled on Scandinavian Local Government structures. The function of the SPCs is to give advice to full Council on strategic policy, statutory and non-statutory.

The focus of SPCs should be strategic rather than operational. DCC is the largest with 8 SPCs and Carlow is one of the smaller ones with just 4 SPCs.

1/3 of SPC membership should come from sectoral interests, e.g. farming, business, environmental. Minimum members = 9.

'Putting People First' (2012) brought about an Economic and Enterprise SPC and Town Councils were disbanded.

A review was published in 2004 which highlighted bad practices such as agendas being given too late.

The Chair of the SPC must be a Councillor (new Chair of Kildare Climate SPC has not yet been decided – Vincent Martin has been elected to the Senate but has offered to help in any way he can).

A work plan should be done for each SPC which is linked to the Corporate Plan.

There should be a minimum of 4 meetings every year.

Research should be done on what other Local Authorities are doing, as well as Councils internationally. There should be a code of conduct and an effective Chair.

Kildare SPCs are:

- Environment & Water
- Climate Action
- Transport, Safety & Emergency Services
- Economic Development & Enterprise SPC
- Housing

The work plan for the Climate Action SPC is in the process of being completed and each member of the SPC has a say and gets to sign off on it. We need to focus on areas that will be effective and will make a difference, so 4-6 areas for example.

Ali said that SPCs around the country could pool resources. That is something that we as a group could look at as we have good records.

Jude again welcomed Jennifer and handed over to her.

2. Jennifer spoke about her background. She worked for many years in Intel and left to raise her family. Her increasing awareness of Climate Action led her to want more involvement. A key point is that everyone should know their role within the group and that we should know the role of the group within the wider scheme of things.

3. Ali gave an update on the previous SPC meeting.

Travel & glyphosate usage were two key areas. The reduced spraying pilot trials commenced in March and will continue on to October.

Each Municipal District will give €12,000 to offset raised costs – has this been drawn down?

Answer was that it hasn't been drawn down but committed. There has been really strong support around the county with initial research and a decision will be made based on autumn results.

Paula who heads up the Parks Dept. said that providers should demonstrate alternatives to glyphosate.

We can ask for update at the next SPC.

Sustainable Travel – question was asked about Covid fund (NTA). Projects suggested by Councillors are not to be implemented, however, there are longer term (disability/inclusivity) plans in motion, as well as improvements around the school run.

The Sustainable Energy Communities are Clane, Maynooth, Kilcullen, and Monasterevin. Kildare County Council can become a SEC themselves but aren't at the moment.

There will be a Climate Action Officer and an Energy Efficiency Officer appointed to KCC soon.

Ali and Naoise – delivering an actionable outcome from training. Ali and Naoise suggested that the Council consider introducing a progress report off the back of the new Climate Action Training for Councillors to ensure that the training converts into action.

CARO can pull info together – the LGMA has produced a report showing L.A. actions on Climate Strategy.

Midlands Transition Fund – Midlands has been given special status from EU. Local Transition Plans – Eastern & Midlands Waste Region – Ali asked was there funding available.

Joe Boland – Climate Action Plan update – there is a CARO initiative which will show progress from all counties. There will be a clear dashboard format.

The Kildare Co. Co. Mitigation Plan will be due and this is very important and huge influence is possible by our own group – can we get this on the Work plan?

The National Climate Action plan is where action stems from. Net zero emissions by 2050.

Kildare County Council actions - Covenant of Mayors – reduce carbon emissions by 40% by 2030. KCC Climate Adaptation Strategy.

Who are the owners/stakeholders etc. and how do we fit into that. The KCC Climate Action Team have had 3 meetings so far. Joe Boland is the Director of Services for the Environment Dept.

4. Jude commented that we can really make a difference with the work plan for SPC. Jude and Ali can prompt action or reports on strategies laid out in the Climate Adaptation Plan. Other plans are relevant such as the Corporate Plan, the County Development Plan, Biodiversity Plan and the Housing Plan. Ali suggested that the CARO dashboard might show hotspots of where things are not working properly. Emer pointed out that the infrastructure and processes are confusing. Jennifer commented that we are the only group who have come together voluntarily within the whole process and that knowing the system is key to change. Each person should have a think about what role and part we want to play. Also to think about where we can be most productive in terms of plans.

5. Jude gave a quick update on Carlow after chatting to Mollie Aylesbury. Key points from Mollie include –
 - Developing a relationship with the Environmental Awareness Officer. Mollie has a great relationship with the Carlow EAO.
 - Building relationships with everyone, regardless of whether they are interested in Climate Action or not.
 - All SPC reps should be singing from the same hymn sheet – for example Carlow had no heritage officer and all the SPC reps worked together to bring this to the table.
 - Focus – coming to the table with the same agenda is productive.

Sean spoke about measurement tools for carbon – is there guidance on this? He shared a link to chartered accountants website with info on carbon.

6. Our focus going forward? The areas of interest are fairly clear at this point.
 - Reforestation, re-wetting of peatlands, sustainable travel are amongst the key areas.Community work is done and we can build links – we, as a group, have greater scope than other stakeholders in many ways as we aren't subject to the same constraints.

Mission Statement