

Minutes of SPC 5 Meeting – Community, Culture & Fire Services held in Meeting Room 2, County Hall on Thursday 19th October, 2023 at 10.30a.m.

Present: Cllr. Martin Brett (Chair), Pat Dunphy, Cllr. John Brennan, Cllr Tomas Breathnach and Murty Brennan,

In attendance: Mary Mulholland, Annemarie Shortall, Josephine Coyne and Ashling Slattery, Kilkenny County Council.

Apologies: Julie Kavanagh, John Coonan, Fergal Canton and John Collins

1. Minutes of last meeting on Wednesday 21st June, 2023

Minutes were proposed by Cllr John Brennan, seconded by Cllr Pat Dunphy and agreed.

2. Library Strategy

Josephine presented the Kilkenny County Council Library Services Strategy. Josephine noted this is a five-year National Strategy and focuses on three main themes; People, Spaces and Connections and three strategic enablers; Data Supported and User-focused Service Design, Marketing and Library Team.

Josephine provided an overview of all the Library's in County Kilkenny and advised that the Mayfair will be due to open in quarter 1, 2024. It was noted that funding is going to be required to keep the library maintained.

Josephine highlighted that a budget will be required for book stock and that investment will be required ongoing. Josephine also advised of the upcoming programmes, activities and challenges for the library service.

Josephine thanked the Elected Members and Kilkenny County Council for their support and commitment.

Mary Mulholland advised there is great plans in place to build bigger and better libraries. Thomastown library plans to be two times bigger than it currently is and budget will be required to provide stock for the library. Callan is also due to be enhanced however, if there is no commitment to the stock budget the Callan refurbishment will not go ahead.

Josephine gave an example of Laois County Council and reiterated that stock needs to be replenished and all libraries need to be looked after. Library staff are frustrated and need to increase budget greatly to proceed with future plans and suggested incremental funding.

Josephine advised an incremental increase of €50,000 per year for four years.

John Brennan noted the stock fund needs to be looked at and thanked Josephine for her presentation.

Martin Brett thanked the Library staff for their help in digitalizing the housing list.

3. Community update

Anne Marie Shortall provided an update in relation to the Community & Culture Section and the following was noted:

Kilkenny County Council nominated St. Canice's Community Action Group, Freshford.ie and Callan Community Energy for the prestigious IPB Pride of Place Awards 2023. Each group were visited by the judges on September 14th and 15th, 2023 to assess these community initiatives. The winners of the IPB Pride of Place Awards will be revealed during a gala awards ceremony scheduled to take place in Armagh in November 2023.

Phase I of a survey to record mass paths in County Kilkenny has commenced. This will be the first survey of its kind in Ireland and the aim of phase I of the project is to develop a methodology for recording mass paths and pilot the methodology in two parishes in county Kilkenny. The Survey is being carried out by Pat Reid, Programme Manager of the Heritage Council's Heritagemaps.ie.

The Autumn Clean-up Awareness Campaign took place in September on KCLR, CRKC and BEAT FM. The theme of the campaign is *Autumn Clean-up* and it encouraged members of the public to leave a corner of their garden for nature.

National Heritage Week took place from the 12th – 20th August. The week saw a colourful range of events and projects celebrating all aspects of our heritage. Close to 60 events took place to great success across Kilkenny City and County as communities, families, holiday makers and people of all ages and backgrounds were encouraged to get out and explore their heritage.

The Arts Culture Night 2023 took place on Friday 22nd September. The evening was very successful overall with over 1,900 people taking part.

The Community & Cultural Facilities Capital Grant Scheme was approved and an annual budget of €250,000 was provided. The Council received a total of 18 applications of which 9 were successful.

The Community Support Fund for 2023 has been fully paid out to successful Community Groups.

MacDonagh Junction Train Station was shortlisted for the Excellence in Local Government Awards and also the National Age Friendly Achievement Awards which are both taking place in November.

Kilkenny County Council Age Friendly programme supported by Healthy Ireland and the Health and Safety Teams recently delivered an information and Awareness session on Dementia to over 70 Kilkenny County Council staff and retired staff on Thursday, the 3rd of which was very successful. Another information and awareness session will be held before the end of the year for the public and HSE staff.

The Disability Strategy was passed at the last meeting.

The Expression of Interest forms for the Town and Village Renewal Scheme will be assessed soon and sent for approval.

Martin Brett asked if Regina could give an overview of the mass paths.

Pat Dunphy thanked Anne Marie for the updated and queried about the Field names project.

Mary Mulholland requested a Heritage Update be provided at the next SPC 5 meeting.

4. AOB

Murty Brennan asked the Library Services if they had any old stock available as the Inter-Cultural Library is due to be completed at the end of the year

The next SPC meeting will be held on Thursday 14th December, 2023 at 11.00a.m. in Meeting Room 1, County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny.

This concluded the business of the meeting.