

Minutes of Strategic Policy Committee 4
Environmental Protection, Climate Action & Energy
6th March 2025
Meeting Room 2/Hybrid

In the Chair: Cllr. Eugene McGuinness.

In Attendance: Cllr. Seán Ó hArgáin, Cllr. Ger Frisby, Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Cllr. Joe Lyons, Ms. Mary Rice; Mr. James Murphy;

Also Present: Tim Butler, Director of Service; Michael Arthurs, Senior Executive Officer; Dearbhala Ledwidge, Climate Action Co-ordinator; Johan Muller, Energy Officer; Marian Nolan, Assistant Staff Officer;

Apologies: Mr. Noel O'Donoghue

Cllr Eugene McGuinness opened the meeting and welcomed the Committee members.

Item 1 Declaration of interests

None reported.

Item 2 Confirmation of Minutes

Proposed: Cllr. Seán Ó hArgáin

Seconded: Cllr. Eugene McGuinness

Item 3 Matters Arising

At the previous meeting Cllr Mary Hilda Cavanagh asked that the agenda is more limited at future meetings. Cllr Eugene McGuinness stated that he agreed as it allows more time to discuss the items.

Item 4 Progress Report by Director of Services

Tim Butler presented highlights of the Director's Report which had been sent to Committee members in advance of the meeting

A number of comments/queries were taken from the Committee.

1. The minutes to the previous meeting stated: "James Murphy stated that there is a need for a dedicated bring centre to meet the needs of farmers disposing of agricultural waste." James clarified that he spoke particularly about farm plastics. He re-iterated the importance of having facilities available to farmers for the correct disposal of farm plastics. Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh also spoke about the importance of having these facilities and highlighted that a planning application for a farm plastics facility in her area, with no objections, had been refused due to access issues. Cllr. Joe Lyons noted that the co-ops collect once a year and asked if there could be more frequent collections.

Action: Michael Arthurs to discuss recent planning applications regarding farm plastics collections and options, to include difficulties being experienced by facility in Gowran.

2. Cllr Eugene McGuinness raised the issues at St. Catherine's in the Wetlands saying that every effort must be made to stop the dumping, especially given the time and effort being spent on education and enforcement.

Action: Michael Arthurs/Housing to determine refuse collection arrangements in St. Catherine's, Wetlands and ongoing issues.

3. Cllr. Seán Ó hArgáin asked if it was possible to sell paint onwards from the Civic Amenity Site. There is an enterprise in Co. Cork which does similar. Michael Arthurs said there are also enterprises in Waterford and South Kilkenny doing this. He also noted that there may be a hazardous waste day later in the year. Mary Rice noted that there are dangers of using and recycling oil-based paints and suggested a public information campaign.
4. Littering/fly-tipping: Cllr Mary Hilda Cavanagh said that the Green schools programme is having no impact on dumping, litter picks could be done weekly. Primary school children are enthusiastic but after that the enthusiasm falls off.
Cllr. Joe Lyons stated that fly-tipping should be heavily fined and the names of those found guilty of an offence should be published.
Cllr. Eugene McGuinness noted that vehicle registrations are often included on drive-thru receipts and asked if these could be used to assist investigations.
Michael Arthurs stated the importance of dumped items and bags being inspected by authorized officers only as there must be a chain of custody for evidence.
Action: Michael Arthurs to discuss with EAO apparent waning of enthusiasm of students as they move from Primary to Secondary education re a positive waste management culture.
5. Cllr Joe Lyons raised the issues and confusion farmers are facing around the movement of soil. He said farmers are not informed and should be notified officially of the relevant legislation. James Murphy said that he understood from the last meeting that top soil could be moved and that it was very important that clarification around movement of topsoil or clay is given to farmers. Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick agreed with James, queried if movement between folios under the same ownership was permitted. Farmers are doing their best but need engagement from the local authority and representative bodies. Michael Arthurs advised that soil becomes a waste when it goes on a public road.
Action: Michael Arthurs to provide clarification on the movement of soil, particularly top soil, and stone within a farm holding or between multiple folios under the same ownership. Also, the possibility of a campaign targeted at farmers to address lack of awareness and confusion over legislation.
6. There was a discussion, with contributions from Cllr. Seán Ó hArgáin, Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh and Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, about confusion regarding processing of food waste, the correct segregation of waste, issues with waste collection companies refusing to service particular areas and the Borough bags
Action: Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick to provide details to Michael Arthurs of households that are unable to secure a waste collection service.
Action: Michael Arthurs to discuss possibility of a targeted campaign to assist households to correctly segregate their waste (3-bin system) with Mags Whelan (Environmental Awareness Officer).
Action: Michael Arthurs to confirm how food waste is being managed and ultimately processed (composting etc.) and provide details of the service provider.
Action: Tim Butler to confirm if there is still a wheelie bin exemption in place for the city laneways.

Item 5 1st Annual Review of Climate Action Plan Implementation

Dearbhala Ledwidge introduced her colleague Johan Muller who has recently joined the Climate Action team as the Energy Officer. Dearbhala presented a report updating Committee members on the Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 which was adopted one year ago. The report is currently a draft document and Dearbhala welcomed feedback and observations from the Committee. The report will be presented to the full Council at the Plenary meeting on 24th March. The aim of the report is to be transparent. 28 service areas are involved in delivering on the Councils Climate Plan with 82% of actions started in 2024. Dearbhala presented details and stats on the actions taken to date. Cllr Eugene McGuinness stated that the members will go through the report and come back with any questions. Mary Rice asked where the major reductions are coming from. Johan Muller addressed this query noting that the HVO pilot, the replacement of the bio-mass boiler in the Watershed in 2023 and de-carbonisation of the national grid have been the main contributors.

A discussion followed regarding progress with the public lighting project (PLEEP) with contributions from Cllr. Eugene McGuinness, Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick and Cllr. Seán Ó hArgáin. Queries were addresses by Tim Butler.

Cllr. Seán Ó hArgáin asked if the Council could publicise reduction figures, as it's important that the public know we are making progress. Cllr. Eugene McGuinness agreed, saying that a simple message should be put out. Dearbhala Ledwidge advised that a monthly Climate Action Newsletter is now being published on the Council website and by email to staff. The Climate Action team are also working with a communications expert to see how they can improve communications with the public.

Item 6 Updates

1. RMCEI

Michael Arthurs presented an overview of the Local Authority Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections covering the context, national performance, Kilkenny's results from 2023 and looking back at the recently submitted 2024 report as well as changes being introduced to the National Enforcement Priorities in 2025.

Cllr. Eugene McGuinness opened the floor to questions and re-iterated the importance of publishing details of successful enforcement cases.

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick also wished to acknowledge the contribution of contractors in 2024.

2. Textiles

Michael Arthurs gave an overview of the Local Authority Textile Collection Service advising that global market conditions are impacting on policies. Michael also discussed the evolving policies including the national advisory group, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications National Policy Statement (due in March/April) and the Waste Framework Directive.

A discussion followed about the impact of fast fashion, the need to raise awareness amongst younger people, particularly at post-primary level and potentially through the Green Schools programme. Members also discussed the issue of dumping at the bring centres and people removing clothes from the bins. Michael Arthurs advised that there is a maintenance programme in place for the bring centres.

Item 7 Any other business

Cllr Eugene McGuinness requested that Denis Malone attend the next SPC meeting (Thursday 5th June 2025) to discuss planning issues in Kilkenny around the installation of solar panels by businesses.

Michael Arthurs notified committee members of upcoming SPC training being arranged by Margo Hayes (Senior Executive Officer – Corporate).

The Chairman Cllr Eugene McGuinness thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.