

MINUTES OF CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY ACTION SPC HELD ON THE 31ST OCTOBER, 2019 IN THE SEMINOLE ROOM, COUNTY BUILDINGS, WICKLOW.

PRESENT:

Elected Members:

Councillor Jennifer Whitmore, Chair.
Councillor Dermot O'Brien
Councillor Lourda Scott.
Councillor Peir Leonard.
Councillor Rory O'Connor.

Members from External Sectors:

Keith Scanlon, Environment/Conservation Pillar East Wicklow.
Sharon Jackson, Environment/Conservation Pillar West Wicklow
Gary McKensie, Business Pillar
Shona Lennox, Comhairle na nÓg
Tom Short, Farming Pillar.

Officials Present:

Sean Quirke, Director of Services.
Theresa O'Brien, Senior Executive Officer.
Breege Kilkenny, Senior Engineer.
Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer.
Mary Cahill, Senior Executive Engineer.
Rahim O'Neill, Environmental Awareness Officer.
Jim Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer.

Also Present

Councillor Stephen Matthews

Item 1 Introductions of the members of the SPC

Cllr. Whitmore confirmed that Wicklow County Council was the first Local Authority in Ireland to declare a climate and biodiversity emergency. At the Annual general meeting of Wicklow County Council the setting up of a climate and biodiversity action SPC was proposed by Cllr. Stephen Matthews, Wicklow County Council is the first Local Authority to have a designated SPC for Climate Action.

Cllr. Whitmore outlined that in order for the new SPC to be effective and to meet its goals a huge commitment of both time and energy would be required by both the members of the committee and staff of Wicklow County Council.

Cllr. J. Whitmore welcomed Cllr. Steven Matthews to the meeting and it was agreed that he would be invited to take part in the meeting.

Cllr Whitmore went around the table and asked the members to introduce themselves and outline their specific area of interest

Sean Quirke, Director Services indicated that all Departments within the Council are responsible for incorporating climate change into their policies procedures and services.

Item 2 To Present the Strategic Policy Committee Scheme (Theresa O'Brien Senior Executive Officer)

Theresa O'Brien, Senior Executive Officer gave a Presentation on the SPC Scheme and the Corporate Plan.

Cllr. J. Whitmore advised that this SPC is a collaborative SPC which the Councillors and community can have input into. She said that her plan was that at each meeting which were going to be held around the county community groups from that area could come in either before or after the meeting and discuss items of interest with the members of the SPC.

It was noted by the committee that there was an amount of work going on presently around the County.

Keith Scanlon indicated that the Corporate Plan does not reflect the work of the SPC.

Cllr. J. Whitmore indicated that all members can make a submission to Theresa O'Brien on the corporate plan and this if appropriate can be incorporated into the Corporate Plan.

Item 3. To Receive a Presentation on Biodiversity and in particular the all Ireland Pollinator Plan (Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer).

Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer made a Presentation to the Meeting on Biodiversity and the All Ireland Pollination Plan.

Cllr. J. Whitmore stated that quite a lot of work has already been done and that the members of the SPC were today being asked to agree to signing up to the all-Ireland Pollination Plan to enable the plan to go forward to the next full meeting of Wicklow County Council.

Cllr. S. Matthews stated that a lot of the responsibility lies for the actions outlined fall within the remit of the Municipal Districts and suggested that the District Engineers be asked to identify areas that would be suitable to allow to grow wild and be managed for Biodiversity.

Cllr. J. Whitmore queried if the contracts were signed for the grass cutting for the coming year.

Deirdre Burns indicated that the Tidy Towns are working in conjunction with the District Engineers. The District Engineers were asked to identify areas of grass that would only be cut five times per year and another area that would be cut once per year.

Sean Quirke, Director of Services indicated that certain actions should be identified to be progressed rather than looking at the whole Pollination Plan. He indicated that resources could be an issue. He stated that a review of the Biodiversity Action Plan should also take place.

Councillor Jennifer Whitmore request that the use of pesticides by the Council should be discussed at the next meeting.

Tom Short stated that acceptance of the Plan must be received from all communities. He indicated that the youth should be encouraged to understand the Plan and queried if the Council had a role to play in relation to education through the schools. He stated that education is the key to the success of the Plan. He stated that farmers are about producing food but this has to be achieved in a sustainable way, he also stated that the focus now is also about energy production.

Councillor Jennifer Whitmore agreed that the Council need to work with the farmers and also get all schools involved.

Keith Scanlon queried the status of Wicklow Biodiversity Plan.

Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer indicated that the Plan can be looked at nationally. She outlined natura sites and stated it can be looked at only on protected areas.

Keith Scanlon stated that we need to get better at data gathering and work as a partnership and apply Biodiversity Plan to the whole county.

Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer indicated that we need to get our own house in order as a Local Authority and then roll it out.

Councillor Pier Leonard stated that a lot of good work was done and planning is the key change. She stated that the Council needs to make hard decisions in order to bring about change. She indicated that the Council must protect what is already there.

Councillor Jennifer Whitmore indicated again that the Corporate Plan was in the process of being renewed and it was vital that this SPC feed into the Plan. She also made reference to the Brittas Bay Biodiversity Project which was being monitored by an Ecologist and surveys were taking place to identify invasive species.

It was agreed by the committee that Wicklow County Council should sign up to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and this is now to be recommended to the full Council at their next meeting

It was agreed that the Water Framework Directive and the County Development Plan would be discussed at the next meeting.

Item 4 : To receive a presentation on Wicklow County Councils Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (James Callery, Environmental Awareness Officer).

It was agreed that the Climate Action Charter would be discussed at the next SPC Meeting.

Following a query regarding funding from Cllr Lourda Scott, Jim Callery, stated that he was in discussion with SCCAE in relation to Resources, Funding and Training.

Sean Quirke, Director of Services indicated that some items will not require funding and could be actioned straight away. He indicated that the main action is for a Climate Action officer to be appointed.

Cllr Steven Matthews indicated that a lot of submissions were received in relation to CAS and queried if the Council had a Climate Mitigation Strategy. He indicated that the implementation is now the issue.

Councillor Jennifer Whitmore stated that Biodiversity was not included in the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy but this needs to go hand in hand. Sean Quirke, Director of Services stated that there was general objective.

Sean Quirke, DOS stated that as an SPC we know what needs to be done and the SPC need to articulate to the other Councillors what we are doing and what needs to be achieved and this would be very important at budget meeting.

Item 5 To receive a presentation on sustainable energy communities followed by the launch of same (Rahim O'Neill, Environmental Awareness Officer).

Rahim O'Neill outlined the following were implementing processes in order to become sustainable energy communities:-

- (a) Glenmalur
- (b) Glendalough/Laragh
- (c) Newtownmountkennedy
- (d) Greystones/Delgany
- (e) Wicklow

Tom Shortt indicated that the community involvement is essential and wind farms proposals (private) had no community involvement.

Councillor Jennifer Whitmore indicated that there were major wind farm proposals for off the Wicklow coast.

Item 6 To set out schedule of meetings for 2020.

A list of proposed dates and venues for meetings was circulated with the agenda and this was agreed by the members

Item 7 To decide on a work programme for the SPC for submission to the Corporate Policy Group.

- Biodiversity – Actions in Strategy.
- Covenant of Mayors – Implementations and recommend to full Council.
- Identify funding from EU sources
- Short Term Strategy
- Items from CAS that are short term
- SPC cannot commit to expenditure but can propose to budget meeting in November.

Sean Quirke and Councillor Jennifer Whitmore agreed to look at the work programme with a view to having it on as an item on agenda for the next SPC Meeting.

Item 8 Any Other Business

It was noted that the Youth Summit would take place in the Parkview Hotel on the 15th November, 2019.

Councillor Steven Matthews stated that the SPC makes recommendations to the Full Council and that an Expert should be brought into give a presentation to the full Council once a quarter.

Councillor Jennifer Whitmore stated that the Council should be at the forefront and by agreeing to Councillor Matthew's proposal this would help. She indicated that she had spoken to Theresa O'Brien, Senior Executive Officer in relation to the Council's web site and also the County wise magazine.

Sean Quirke, Director of Services requested that they identify who might speak and submit the proposal.

It was agreed to circulate the three Presentations to all members.

THAT CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING