**COMHAIRLE CONTAE ÁTHA CLIATH THEAS
SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL**

 

**Report of the September Social, Community, Equality and Integration SPC Meeting**

**held on Wednesday 10 September, 2025 @ 3.00 pm**

**Hybrid Meeting – It Conference Room and Via Microsoft Teams**

**In attendance:**

Cllr Emma Murphy (Chair); Cllr Alan Edge; Cllr Alan Hayes; Cllr Niamh Whelan; Cllr Baby Pereppadan; Noel Gavin PPN; Daire Henessy, PPN; Lorna Maxwell, Director of Community; Edel Clancy, SEO Community Department; Grainne Meehan, Equality Officer; Siobhan Gallier, Sports inclusion Officer; Fionnuala Keane, AO Community Department; Thomas McDermott, Local Sports Coordinator; Catherine White, SSO, Community Dept; Alison Somerville, SO, Community Dept, Kelly Fitzgerald ASO, Community Dept

**Guest speaker**: Christy O’Shea, Technological University Dublin

**Other attendee**: Ellen Connolly, PPN Co-ordinator (observer)

**Apologies:** Cllr Kay Keane

\*The Chair, Cllr Emma Murphy opened the meeting at 3pm\*

**Agenda Item No 1:** Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 May 2025, were circulated in advance of the meeting. They were proposed by Cllr E Murphy and seconded by Cllr A Edge and agreed.

**Agenda Item No 2: Matters arising**

There are no matters arising.

**Agenda Item No 3: SDCC/TUD Education and Student Life Bursary presentation**

Christy O’Shea from TU Dublin delivered a presentation on the Student Life Bursary Initiative. He explained that the bursary is designed to support students in leadership roles by providing funding and mentoring for projects that enhance student engagement and strengthen links with the wider community.

The initiative benefits multiple groups. For students, it offers financial support alongside leadership workshops and opportunities to develop organisational, coaching, and project management skills. For TU Dublin, the scheme fosters stronger engagement, inclusivity, and creates a legacy of student-led initiatives. For the wider community, it provides outreach through projects focused on sport, sustainability, inclusivity, and education.

The impact in 2024/25 has been significant, with 27 students delivering 28 projects. Examples include Women’s Boxing, 3v3 Basketball, Social Soccer, Learn to Swim, charity runs, sustainability campaigns, and coding workshops for schools. These projects have resulted in improved well-being, greater equality and diversity in sport, enhanced leadership capacity, and stronger connections between the university and the community.

Christy also highlighted several local projects in the Tallaght area that have been positively supported through students in receipt of the bursary, further demonstrating the reach and value of the initiative.

*Fionnuala Keane, AO Community Dept spoke about the Education Life Bursary.*

The Education Bursary, established in 2006 between South Dublin County Council and IT Tallaght (now TU Dublin since 2019), supports students from disadvantaged areas/ Deis schools to remain in higher education by reducing financial barriers. Some key highlights of the scheme include:

Provides €2,500 per student, with 8 awards for first-year entrants and 8 continuation awards for second year (subject to successful progression).

Eligibility is limited to students registered on Level 6–8 programmes at TU Dublin and drawn from partner schools in South Dublin County area.

The scheme aims to promote educational progression, retention, and achievement in local disadvantaged communities.

A budget increase is being sought in the revenue budget for 2026 to extend awards to all partner DEIS schools, introduce a potential “Deserving Student Award,” and ensure the programme remains responsive through ongoing review with TU Dublin.

There were questions and contributions from Cllrs Murphy, Edge, Whelan, Hayes, D Henessey, PPN and E Clancy. This included queries on the funding amounts and criteria for the student life bursary, where it was explained that there is up to €1,000 is available per project, with an application process requiring demonstration of benefits to TU Dublin, TRF volunteer networks, and the wider community. In the last year, there were 60 applications which resulted in 4 projects being delivered. Regarding impact and scope,

Mr O’Shea conveyed that projects are seen as valuable for community building, alumni engagement, and encouraging students to contribute locally. He also stated that historically, the funding leaned heavily towards sports. Efforts are now being made to balance across sports, societies (50+), and volunteer networks (21) with a focus on group projects for broader impact and shared workload.

Going forward, it was conveyed that the scheme is evolving year-on-year, aiming for inclusivity, parity across student interests, and greater community impact.

With regards to the education bursary, Cllr Edge raised concerns about inclusivity, particularly for refugees who might face additional barriers to education and Cllr Whelan asked about schools that are currently included in the scheme.

The reports were noted.

**Agenda Item No 4: Equality Officer update**

Grainne Meehan, Equality Officer delivered a presentation giving an overview of the role of the equality office.

The Equality Office seeks to drive inclusion, accessibility, and compliance with disability and equality legislation through a wide range of initiatives. Recent progress includes the reconvening of the Equality & Human Rights Duty Working Group, completion of staff training, and updates to the framework, with the Duty now embedded in three HR policies and further integration planned. Accessibility and autism-focused initiatives are also advancing, with audits of towns and community facilities completed, a submission made for the Access City Awards, and a sensory audit of County Hall scheduled in October as part of Autism Friendly Accreditation. The Disability Advisory Panel has been reconvened and will meet again on 25th September. A strong programme of events and campaigns is in place, including Irish Sign Language Day, Make Way Day, National Accessibility Week, and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in December. Staff support remains available through the Disability Liaison Officer, with details accessible via the intranet. In addition, the office is actively engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals through the SDG Champions Programme and by supporting a Comhairle na nÓg workshop during SDG Week. Overall, SDCC continues to advance accessibility, inclusion, and equality through targeted training, audits, events, and policy development.

There were questions and contributions from Cllr Hayes, Murphy and Edge and the Director of Service, L Maxwell, clarified some queries around the accessibility audits. It was shared that the audits will likely reveal significant issues, as the last audits were in 2006. Concerns were raised about how councillors can interface on accessibility issues, particularly public realm problems. It was suggested that a presentation before OP&F to raise awareness might be considered to inform a wider group about the remit of the Equality Officer.

It was noted that the new equality officer Gráinne Meehan, who succeeded Selena Bonnie in the role, has a broad brief. Councillors expressed strong support, encouragement, and willingness to assist through the SPC (Strategic Policy Committee**)** and other channels.

The report was noted.

**Agenda Item No 5: Active South Dublin Sports Inclusion Programme update.**

Siobhan Gallier, Sports Inclusion Officer delivered an update on her role and work completed to date.

The Sports Inclusion Disability Programme (SIDP), coordinated by South Dublin County Council, is designed to increase participation in sport for people with disabilities through a mix of long-term, short-term, training, and capital initiatives. Long-term programmes include Learn2Cycle, Equestrian, AdaptiveFit, and Climbing, with annual costs ranging from €3,600 to €13,200. Fees are kept as low as possible, and in some cases participation is free through grant support.

Short-term programmes broaden opportunities further, offering holiday camps, Special Olympics basketball and weightlifting, VR canoeing, ISL aqua aerobics, sensory discos, and school track and field events. These are provided free or at low cost to ensure maximum accessibility. Training is another key element of the programme, with inclusive coaching and disability-specific workshops delivered on topics such as guide running, autism in sport, and inclusive fitness.

Capital investment under SIDP has supported the provision of adapted equipment and infrastructure, including voice boards in schools, basketball nets, running buggies (x3), an adapted mountain bike (in progress), a poolpod, and a tri-shaw. The programme has also fostered strong engagement through events such as SportsAbility Day 2025 and glow dance activities., A teen gym programme and day service sports days are both in the planning phase.

To date, nearly 6,100 participants have taken part in SIDP activities in 2025, reflecting the programme’s growing reach and significant impact on inclusion in sport across the county.

There were questions and contributions from Cllrs Hayes, Murphy, Edge, L Maxwell, T McDermott and E Clancy. Members discussed the need for inclusive summer camps, stressing the continued importance of ensuring activities are fully accessible to children with disabilities.

Re-funding, it was emphasised that even small amounts of funding could deliver significant results, particularly in increasing participation in disability-inclusive programmes. The group also noted the value of initiatives supporting parents of children with disabilities, such as yoga sessions, which provide both respite and wellbeing benefits.

The members made a commitment to continue discussions on funding and inclusion going forward.

The report was noted.

The meeting concluded as there was no other business.