

Sipo launches preliminary inquiry into complaint against FF TD Collins

MARY REGAN

The ethics watchdog, the Standards in Public Office Commission (Sipo), has launched a preliminary inquiry into a complaint made against Fianna Fáil TD Niall Collins.

It relates to a complaint made in 2023 by Solidarity TD Paul Murphy following reports on The Ditch website that the junior minister had, when he was a county councillor, voted for the sale of local authority land which was subsequently bought by his wife.

Sipo has now written to Mr Murphy to confirm it has "decided to proceed to the next stage of preliminary inquiry" relating to his complaint, "the purpose of which is to gather more information and to establish the facts of the complaint".

The inquiry can only get under way following the completion of a garda examination, which it is understood found no grounds for prosecution.

Mr Collins became the focus of controversy in April 2023 following reports he allegedly did not recuse himself from the discussion on the sale of land located in the town of Patrickswell in 2007, when Mr Collins was a member of the Dáil.

He had attended a local committee meeting while still a Limerick county councillor, during which local representatives agreed to recommend a full council vote to sell the land.

Mr Collins was present at the meeting, and his wife Éimear O'Connor, a GP, had already written to the council through her

solicitor to express an interest in the land a month previously.

Mr Collins has declined to comment on the matter, pending the outcome of the inquiry. He has previously said he was in no doubt that his actions around the sale of the site were legally correct at all times.

He told the Dáil in April 2023 that the site received a number of offers and was ultimately sold several months after he was elected to the Dáil in 2007.

In his statement, Mr Collins said he was "in absolutely no doubt" that his actions were "at all times legally correct".

He said he was a councillor on Limerick County Council until May 2007 when he was then elected to Dáil Éireann.

He said the potential sale of the property was brought to the Bruff Area Committee meeting by the council executive in January 2007, which he attended.

Mr Collins said there were various expressions of interest by members of the public in the property and that one of those came from Dr Éimear O'Connor, "who is also my wife".

He said it was agreed at the area committee meeting that the property should be sold on the open market and there was no vote taken and no disagreement to the proposal by the council executive.

"It is important to state that an area committee of a local authority, which in the case of the Bruff Area Committee included only seven councillors, does not have disposal rights in regard to the sale of council property," he said.



Fianna Fáil
TD Niall
Collins



Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council

NOTICE OF PROPOSED VARIATION NO. 7 (MONASTEREVIN SETTLEMENT PLAN) OF THE KILDARE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029 (AS VARIED)

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 58(7)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended), that Kildare County Council, proposes a variation to the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (as varied). The Proposed Variation will be incorporated into Volume 1 and Volume 2 of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (as varied).

Reason for Proposed Variation No. 7 (Monasterevin Settlement Plan)

The Proposed Variation will provide a Settlement Plan for Monasterevin to replace the Monasterevin Local Area Plan 2016-2022. The Settlement Plan will provide a planning policy framework to guide the future sustainable development of housing, employment, transportation, retail and social infrastructure for the town of Monasterevin. The Settlement Plan aligns with the overarching plan hierarchy which has been set out at national, regional and county level.

Contents of Proposed Variation No. 7 (Monasterevin Settlement Plan)

Proposed Variation No. 7 (Monasterevin Settlement Plan) of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (as varied) will comprise a Written Statement and maps and is accompanied by:

- A Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) Report pursuant to the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC),
- An Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening determination;
- A Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report pursuant to the Land Use Planning - Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations 2025;
- A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening determination;
- A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Report, pursuant to the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009);
- A Settlement Capacity Audit (SCA), pursuant to the Development Plans - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2022);
- A Surface Water Management Strategy (SWMS);
- A Social Infrastructure Audit (SIA);
- A Local Transport Plan (LTP); and
- A Statement of Character on the Monasterevin Architectural Conservation Area.

Kildare County Council has undertaken a screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment in accordance with Section 58 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended) which determined that the Proposed Variation would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects. Therefore, the Proposed Variation does not require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Kildare County Council has undertaken a screening for Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Section 58 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended) which determined that the possibility of any significant effects on any European sites, whether arising from the plan alone or in combination with other plans and projects, can be excluded. Therefore, an Appropriate Assessment is not required for the Proposed Variation.

Display of the Proposed Variation and Supporting Documents

A copy of Proposed Variation No. 7 (Monasterevin Settlement Plan) and supporting documents may be inspected from **Tuesday, 1 September 2026 to Tuesday, 29 September 2026** at the following locations:

- Online at: <https://consult.kildarecoco.ie/en/browse>.
- Planning Office, at the address below, during normal opening times of 9.30 a.m. - 4.00 p.m., Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

Please note, the consultation portal <https://consult.kildarecoco.ie/en/browse> will remain open at all times during the statutory consultation period.

How to Make a Submission

Written submissions may be made in respect of the Proposed Variation and accompanying reports before **12.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 29 September 2026** and will be taken into consideration before the making of the Variation. Your name and address should be stated in your submission, and where relevant, the body or organisation represented. Children or groups/associations representing the interests of children are welcome to make submissions. Please make your submission via one of the following mediums only (late submissions, e-mail or faxed submissions will not be accepted):

- Online at: <https://consult.kildarecoco.ie/en/browse> or
- In writing to: Senior Executive Officer, Planning Department, at the address below.

Submissions will be published on the Council's Consultation Portal. A report will be prepared on submissions received and will include the names of those who made submissions. This report will be published on our website. Details of your privacy entitlements and obligations under GDPR can be read here:

<https://www.kildarecoco.ie/YourCouncil/GovernanceandCompliance/DataProtection/>.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: 12.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 29 September 2026.

Signed:

Alan Dunney,
Director of Service - Planning, Enterprise, Economic Development and Emergency Services,
Kildare County Council.

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