

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

**MINUTES OF DECEMBER MONTHLY MEETING
OF OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE ON
MONDAY 13TH DECEMBER 2021 AT 2.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:	Cllr. R. McDermott, Leas Cathaoirleach, Cllrs. J. Carroll (R); C. Claffey (R), J. Clendennen (R), N. Cribbin(R), E. Dooley (R), N. Feighery (R), E. Fitzpatrick (R), M. Hackett (R), J. Leahy (R), T. McCormack (R), F. Moran (R), S. O'Brien (R), P. Ormond (R), D. Owens (R), L. Quinn and K. Smollen (R)
APOLOGIES:	Cllrs. D. Harvey and J. Foley
IN ATTENDANCE:	Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive; Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S. (R); Ms. S. Kennedy, D.O.S. (R); Mr. S. Duclot D.O.S. (R); Mr. M. Connolly, H.O.F.; Ms. A. Dillon, S.E.O.; Mr. E. Henry, S.P.F.; Ms. M. Cleary, S.E.O.; Mr. J. Cunningham, S.E.E.; Mr. G. Bruton, Meetings Administrator, and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O. (R)
VOTES OF SYMPATHY	<p>Vote of sympathy was unanimously extended to the following:</p> <p>The Keenan Family, Beechlawn, Mountrath, Co. Laois, on the death of Mr. John Keenan;</p> <p>The Brophy Family, Marian Place, Tullamore on the death of Mr. John Brophy;</p> <p>The Chief Executive, on her own behalf and on behalf of the staff of Offaly County Council, joined with the members in this vote of sympathy.</p>
CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES	<p>On the proposal of Cllr P. Ormond, seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery, the members resolved to adopt the minutes of the In-Committee Budget meeting of Offaly County Council held on 8th November 2021.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. P. Ormond, seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery, the members resolved to adopt the minutes of the Statutory Budget meeting of Offaly County Council held on 15th November 2021.</p> <p>Cllr. R. McDermott sought an amendment to the minutes of the ordinary Meeting of Offaly County Council on 15th November 2021 to record that on the proposal of Cllr. N. Feighery, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin, Cllr. R. McDermott was nominated to</p>

	<p>represent Edenderry Municipal District on the Offaly Sports Partnership 2021. This nomination was agreed by the members. On the proposal of Cllr. F. Moran, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll, the members resolved to adopt the minutes of the ordinary meeting of Offaly County Council held on 15th November 2021.</p>
<p>MINUTES FOR NOTING</p>	<p>The members noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of the Climate Action Environment Water and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 21st January 2021; • Minutes of the Climate Action Environment Water and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 25th February 2021; • Minutes of the Climate Action Environment Water and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 26th May 2021; • Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on 15th October 2021
<p>SPORTS PARTNERSHIP PRESENTATION</p>	<p>Ms. S. Kennedy brought the members attention to the presentation on Offaly County Council Sports Partnership and acknowledged the detailed analysis carried out to produce a very progressive plan.</p> <p>Mr. E. Henry, Sports Partnership Facilitator, provided the members with a comprehensive presentation on Active Offaly 2021 – 2025. He advised the members that the plan is part of an on-going framework and will be launched next week by Sport Ireland CEO, Mr. John Treacy.</p> <p>He outlined the process of developing this second plan within a 15-year framework. He informed the members that an independent review commenced in 2020, with all 11 national policies considered and various drafts were reviewed by the executive and management. He noted that due to Covid-19 restrictions, consultations were conducted remotely and permission was sought to extend the previous plan by a year and he thanked the executive, management committee and working group for their time.</p> <p>He advised the members that there are similarities to the previous plan with overall objectives remaining and he outlined the five pillars of the plan that will remain unchanged:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instill fundamental & improve youth fitness for primary and post primary age 2. Increase adult/older adult participation 3. Involve the least active (targeted supports) for people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, women especially teenage girls and people from disadvantaged backgrounds 4. Integrate & celebrate sport 5. Improve capacity & Inform the sector in relation to funding, training, education and a huge emphasis on

training opportunities for young people from transition year upwards.

Mr. E. Henry then outlined how the new plan will be different:

- Greater engagement with organised sports clubs (e.g. coming out of Covid-19 grant schemes) and he highlighted a further €30,000 funding that has been just announced
- Supporting the administration of Offaly County Council's sports funding
- Increased investment & Human Resource investment
- ACE project to target children least likely to get picked up by mainstream sport – new for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Growth in community based sport & physical activity through local sports hubs. He highlighted the new hub in Daingean and one in development in Mucklagh with the possibility of a further two hubs being provided under the plan
- New governance structure and a stake holder forum convening in Feb/Mar 2022 which will meet twice yearly.

Cllr. J. Carroll joined with the members in thanking him for his detailed presentation and he noted that it is an important document. Cllr. Carroll highlighted that Offaly has excelled in many areas of sport over the years and this new plan will be a good way to reach the various minorities not represented in sports. He congratulated the St. Rynaghs camogie team for their Leinster Camogie win. He welcomed the further development of sports hubs, noting the success of the hub in Clareen has been a great asset in reaching school goers. He cited the importance of sport for mindfulness and he queried how many hubs may be developed in the new plan.

Cllr. J. Leahy highlighted the success of the Fit class school intervention and Offaly Athletics. He congratulated Danielle Dunican and Lorna Mooney on their representation in the Irish Ladies Athletics team. He also wished the Irish Powerball team success in Australia in 2022 and highlighted that the families are trying to raise funds for this trip.

Cllr. F. Moran sought clarity on the application process for the sports hubs and if the Sports Partnership provide capital funding for projects.

Cllr. D. Owens welcomed the targeted support for groups less likely to join mainstream sport.

Cllr. K. Smollen sought more support of other sports such as basketball, badminton and the community games and he sought clarity on the opportunities for qualified people to be selected for the Offaly Sports Partnership committee.

	<p>The members agreed that sports unifies people and that there is a greater interest now in personal health and the benefits of sports physically and mentally. They wished Offaly Sports Partnership well with the launch of Active Offaly 2021-2025.</p> <p>Cllr. R. McDermott noted that the Minister for Sport Jack Chambers had tagged Offaly Sports Partnership as one of the first to present the new plan.</p> <p>Mr. E. Henry thanked the members for their support and he congratulated the St. Rynaghs Camogie team on their win and acknowledged the success of Daniella Dunican and Lorna Mooney. He welcomed the upcoming Powerball trip to Australia and he commended the contribution of Cathal Devery in the development of the Midlands Wheelchair Club Offaly.</p> <p>In response to the members queries he confirmed that the sports hubs are funded under the dormant accounts scheme and only one per year can be awarded. He advised that there were 6 applications for the last hub. The management committee chose Mucklagh as the successful applicant and no decision about setting up a panel had been made. He confirmed that capital funding is not provided but Sports Partnership do provide support to clubs in any capital funding applications they are making. He informed the members that a lot of people had expressed interest in joining the Sports Partnership Committee with over 30 applications. The decision is made through an independent process by the Federation of Irish Sport and he agreed that he would write to the unsuccessful applicants to invite them to get involved in the stakeholder forum.</p>
<p>HOUSING FOR ALL – HOUSING DELIVERY ACTION PLAN</p>	<p>Ms. S. Kennedy advised the members that a full update on housing had been provided to them at the October meeting. She brought their attention to new Housing For All – Housing Delivery Action Plan. She advised this is a very detailed and complex policy that requires the housing team to submit an action plan to the Department. She noted this plan was presented at the Housing Strategic Policy Committee and a number of issues were raised.</p> <p>Mr. J. Cunningham, S.E.E., outlined the Housing Delivery Action Plan for the Housing For All -A New Housing Plan for Ireland, 2022 to 2026. He advised the members that a circular on how to present the report was issued focussing on the details below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with National and local Plans • Housing Need – type required • Social Housing Delivery Pipeline – how to address need • Land Bank and further Lands Required • Affordable Housing • Disability and Age Friendly Delivery • Use of Vacant Property • Traveller Accommodation • Identify Challenges over the Housing for All Programme

He provided the members with the details in the Offaly Housing Delivery Action Plan for Social Housing as outlined:

- Housing for All Housing 2022-2026 Targets –463 units
- Current Pipeline of Approved Social Housing –356 (i.e., 77% of Target)
- 356 Units: 43% Offaly County Council & 34% Approved Housing Bodies
- Further Land Purchase required to attain Targets –12 Acres
- 65% of Housing Required are 1 & 2 Bed Units
- Disability & Age Friendly: 77 Units will be Ambulant Disabled or Wheelchair Accessible
- Vacant Units –Ongoing work with Planning Section on Derelict Units
- Traveller Accommodation –Delivery of 65 Units up to 2024

Mr. J. Cunningham explained the assessment of Affordable Housing utilising the Housing Needs Demand Analysis Tool (HNDA) which calculates the percentage of Affordable Housing required over a defined period that must be greater than 5%. He noted that the housing strategy in the Offaly County Development Plan 2021 –2027 was developed before the HNDA assessment tool was available. He advised that using the tool, 3,978 houses will be required over the 2021-2027 period. Of those 1,280 do not qualify for Mortgages and 1,213 will qualify for social housing. He informed the members as a result the Affordability Constraint is 2.2% in Offaly (less than 5%), leaving a need to examine town/villages in isolation and further work will be required on towns with populations over 10,000.

He outlined the challenges that face housing services in Offaly, including the complex issue of affordable housing, sourcing of land, the capacity of the construction industry, Department approval process, traveller accommodation and the county's infrastructure. He advised the members that expressions of interest for land will be sought in 2022 to acquire more than 12 acres. He pointed out that the housing section have developed a good relationship with the Department, the process has sped up and the Department are looking at the possibility of using standard designs to further speed up the process. He acknowledged that accessing Water Services Infrastructure, ESB connections and other infrastructure continues to be a challenge.

Cllr. S. O'Brien and K. Smollen expressed their disappointment with the number of units targeted in the plan and raised concerns about the increasing rents, HAP conditions, lack of inspections and the huge gap in housing provision and needs. They also raised concerns about the speed of delivery of houses.

Cllr. F. Moran queried if tenants could avail and be approved for the Tenant Purchase Scheme and called for the scheme to be

extended to the Approved Housing Bodies. He queried if there is a geographical breakdown on land Offaly County Council requires.

Cllr. N. Feighery welcomed the superb housing schemes that have been delivered in recent times, such as in Clonminch and the recently approved scheme in Raheen, Clara. He expressed his concerns about the capacity of the construction industry and the need to get skill set for the younger generation into the industry.

Cllr. P. Ormond acknowledged the challenges facing housing services in sourcing land and welcomed the progress in Birr in delivery of housing.

Mr. J. Cunningham advised the members that the target for housing units is a minimum target and it will possibly be exceeded. He acknowledged that affordable housing supply and demand is a fundamental issue. He confirmed there is no specific geographical area currently being considered for land acquisition and all areas that have housing needs will be investigated.

Ms. S. Kennedy acknowledged the concerns of the members and noted that a lot has been achieved in the delivery of housing in the last few years with previous targets being exceeded by 18-20%. She pointed out that Covid-19 has had a negative impact, staffing resources are an issue and the Department are going to fund new staff in the next few years. She welcomed the adoption of the County Development Plan as this will assist in sourcing lands. She confirmed that at a recent meeting with Irish Water the need for clarity and speed was emphasised to them. She further advised that the capacity of Approved Housing Bodies is improving; a contract to carry out inspections has been awarded; and in Section 3 of the Housing For All plan, the Government alludes to continue to maintain right for tenants of over 10 years to buy out their homes. She advised a further housing update will be presented in February 2022.

The members raised further queries on figures for mortgage arrears, the need for disability and older persons housing, derelict houses, turn keys and traveller accommodation.

Mr. J. Cunningham advised that the new plan focusses more on new houses than acquisitions but there will still be opportunities for buying houses. He advised that all housing needs are examined by Housing Services and Approved Housing Bodies, including disabled and older person's needs. He noted that with current private development there will be opportunities for Part 5 housing. He informed the members that work is on-going in the area of derelict houses, with many identified and progressed and he agreed additional staff will help in this area. He agreed that Turnkey housing is an excellent form of housing supply but supply can be limited. He informed the members that additional staff are being assigned to Traveller accommodation and that the HNDA is

	<p>a useful tool that is available on the Department website that can be downloaded for their information.</p> <p>Ms. S. Kennedy advised the members that a Traveller Tenancy Sustainment Officer will be in place January and targets have been met with the new inter agency group for Traveller Accommodation. She pointed out that a suite of measures are in place for housing design to ensure disability and older persons needs are met. Future developments such as in Raheen will have a mix of building sizes and will focus more on community needs rather than just building housing estates. She thanked members for their support and housing staff for their hard work, noting it has been a difficult two years but output has increased thanks to excellent team leadership in housing services.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive, thanked the members for their support, noting there has been good debate on housing matters including at SPC level. She acknowledged it is a very challenging area and with hard work they will endeavor to exceed targets set out in the plan.</p> <p>Mr. M. Connolly, Head of Finance, advised the members that the loan collection percentage has been maintained throughout the pandemic. The loans committee is made up of senior housing and finance staff and in conjunction with the housing agency applications for loans are reviewed and assessed in line with the criteria. He pointed out it is a robust and transparent scheme.</p>
<p>JUST TRANSITION</p>	<p>Mr. S. Duclot updated the members on Just Transition. He noted that the MRTT meeting was held last week and to date 47 projects are under contract and 11 projects are outstanding due to match funding and other issues. He advised the members that the East and Midland Regional Authority have been appointed as the managing authority for the EU Just Transition fund, and they will also assist the Department in preparing for the public consultation that is due to start before end of the year. This will run for 6-8 weeks. He informed the members that Offaly County Council will make a strong submission for EU Just Transition funding. He advised the members that the Just Transition Commissioner, Mr. Kieran Mulvey, has sent a proposal to the ESB on Shannonbridge. He also advised that Mr. Mulvey's role as Just Transition Commissioner is coming to an end after two years and he will submit his final report to the Department by the end of year.</p> <p>Cllr. E. Dooley raised concerns on the deadline to spend the EU Just Transition funding by the end of 2023 and the difficulty for Offaly County Council on having programmes in place to meet this deadline. He queried if investment in the county's infrastructure will form part of the application for funding. He noted the increase in planning applications and the need for more resources in this area.</p>

	<p>Cllr. J. Leahy welcomed the signing of contracts for the Kilcormac Development Committee to progress the link from Kilcormac to Lough Boora and he thanked the management and staff for their work in gaining funding through the REDZ programme. He acknowledged that as much as possible had been done in liaising with the ESB on the community gain fund.</p> <p>Cllr. D. Owens queried what form the Just Transition Commission would take on the standing down of Mr. Kieran Mulvey.</p> <p>Ms. S. Duclot confirmed that Offaly County Council intend to include investment in infrastructure as part of submission and all has been done to prioritise Offaly for the Just Transition funding. He reiterated that the Just Transition Commissioner has submitted an interim solution to the ESB in regard to the €5m community gain fund and stressed that the most impacted communities will be prioritised. He advised that in regard to the future of the Just Transition Commission, the Climate Action Plan was published in November and no more information is currently available on this. He will communicate more information to the members when it becomes available.</p>
<p>MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT</p>	<p>Ms.A. Delaney, Chief Executive brought the members attention to the monthly management report. She welcomed the Chairman’s Tree of Hope initiative with 18 groups identified to date to receive a tree. She noted the increase in planning applications and the need for staff resources for Planning services. She welcomed the recently announced Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme funding of €200,000 for development of an amenity river walk in Clara and €50,000 for a development plan to expand and compliment the already successful Derryounce Lake and Trails in Portarlington.</p> <p>She advised the members that work on the Greenways is on-going with a recently published part 8 on social media. She acknowledged the significant work carried out on the Built Heritage Investment Scheme and the continuing work in heritage and conservation services.</p> <p>She noted that the Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland, launched in September 2021, acknowledges the need to prioritise the delivery of an appropriate range of housing types and related support services, in an integrated and sustainable manner. Also that it is critically important in order to promote equality of opportunity, individual choice and independent living for people with a disability. She brought the members attention to objective 7 of Housing For All, identifying six key deliverables to increase and improve housing options and supports. She advised the members that a new National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2022 – 2027, is currently being prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Health. Stakeholder and public consultation is on-</p>

going and it is anticipated that it will be published by the end of 2021.

She noted that a key focus of the National Strategy will be to detail the co-ordination and alignment of housing, health and community supports. Following the adoption of the national strategy, Offaly Housing and Disability Steering Group will review the objectives and implementation plan outlined in the Offaly Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2022 - 2027 to ensure that they both support and incorporate the themes and strategies provided for in the national strategy. She informed the members that quarterly updates will be provided by the Housing and Disability Steering Group to the Housing SPC and the Chief Executive.

Ms. A. Delaney informed the members that the Community, Arts and Libraries services are in position to announce the name for the new Arts Centre in Tullamore. It will be named Esker Art Centre and branding and logos will now be developed for same.

She highlighted the continuing supports provided by the Local Enterprise Office to businesses and she welcomed the recent Christmas Market events in Tullamore and Clara. She advised that the finance report and Chief Executive Orders are provided in the monthly report for the Members information.

Cllr. J. Carroll queried if there would be an opportunity to decrease the deficit in 2022.

Mr. M. Connolly responded that until confirmation of the Covid-19 subvention from the Government is received, there is no certainty with the deficit. All Local Authorities continue to engage with the Department and it could be early 2022 before confirmation of funding is received.

Cllr. S. O'Brien complimented the staff of Tullamore Municipal District on the great event in Tullamore and the previous event in Clara, which highlights their responsiveness to needs of the area and the commitment of staff.

Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick noted the increase in planning shows that there is progress within the county and he welcomed the funding for Derryounce Lake and Trails.

Ms. A. Delaney thanked members and staff of all the Municipal Districts for the exemplary work in supporting the events in their areas. She advised the members that a tourism presentation will be provided to them in early 2022.

Cllr. N. Feighery sought continued funding for events to showcase Tullamore and other areas.

Ms. A. Delaney confirmed that events funding is provided through Creative Ireland funding and other festival programmes.

CORPORATE POLICY GROUP REPORT	Cllr. R. McDermott advised the members that at the Corporate Policy Group meeting the agenda was discussed and there was a brief discussion on chains for Municipal Districts.
COMHDHÁLACHA	None
COMHFHREAGRAS	The members noted the correspondence issued with the agenda.
ANY OTHER BUSINESS	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. J. Carroll, seconded by Cllr. S. O'Brien, the members resolved to write to the Minister for Social Protection Minister Humphrey to review her Departments decision to close the Job Clubs in Tullamore and Birr. They expressed concern at the loss of this valuable community-led service and cannot find any clear rationale behind the closure of the service. They also note that the staff of the Job Clubs were given very little notice of this closure. They have requested that this decision be reversed or at the very minimum the closures should be deferred to allow this proposal to be fully evaluated.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive advised that although this is not in the remit of Offaly County Council she agreed to write to the Minister to highlight the member's concerns.</p> <p>On behalf of the Cathaoirleach Cllr. D. Harvey and the members, Cllr. R. McDermott wished everyone a Happy Christmas.</p>

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH **RUNAÍ**

17TH January 2022