

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

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

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TULLAMORE
ON MONDAY, 22ND MARCH 2010 AT 12.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Cllr. N. Bourke (Presiding), Cllrs. M. Buckley, J. Butterfield, J. Carroll, P. Clendennen, B. Cowen, D. Dolan, E. Dooley, S. Dooley E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, C. Hanniffy, N. Hogan, T. McKeigue, J. Leahy, T. McLoughlin, S. Moylan Ryan, Cllr. P. Ormond, D. Owens, G. Plunkett.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. P. Gallagher, County Manager, Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S., Mr. D. Kirrane, D.O.S., Mr. D. Conlon, Head of Finance, Ms. M. Cleary, Meetings Administrator, Ms. M. Stuart, Co. Librarian, Ms. A. Pedlow, Heritage Officer, Mr. Ms. A. Walsh, E.P., Mr. E. Kelly, E. P., Mr. D. Meehan, E.P, Ms. S. O'Toole, A.P., Mr. K. Keyes, A.P., Mr. M. Daly, Director. Ms. P Kenny, Ms. M. Whelan from the Midland Regional Authority and Ms. N. Troy, Clerical Officer.

APOLOGIES: Cllr. L. Quinn.

VOTES OF SYMPATHY: Votes of sympathy were unanimously extended to the following:-

Mary Daly, staff member of Offaly County Council on the death of her mother-in-law, Nora McLoughlin.

The McLoughlin Family, Morough, Rahan on the death of their mother, Nora.

Brendan Dagg, Arden Vale, Tullamore on the death of his sister, Nora.

Michael Noel Byrne, Arden Road, Tullamore on the death of his sister, Bridie.

Ann Moore, Ross, Screggan, Tullamore on the death of her husband, Peter.

Judy Bryant, Rathrobin, Mountbolus, Tullamore on the death of her husband, Ronnie.

The Long Family, Gortnamona, Blueball, Tullamore on the death of their mother, Mary.

Michael McDermott, Ballybrittas, Co Laois on the death of his father, Donie.

James Hickey & Family, Cooldorrougha, Ballinahown on the death of his wife, Mary.

**VOTES OF
SYMPATHY
(cont'd):**

Mary Pilkington, Syngefield, Birr on the death of her husband, John.

Rose Coughlan, 1 Pound St, Birr on the death of her husband, Frank.

Michael Campbell, Woodland Park, Birr on the death of his mother, Sadie.

Sean Whelan, Clasroe, Ballybritt, Roscrea on the death of his uncle, Willie Joe Bergin

Pat Kennedy & Family, Irishtown, Dunkerrin, Birr on the death of his wife, Joan.

The County Manager on his own behalf and on behalf of the staff of the Council joined with the members in these votes of sympathy.

**CONFIRMATION
OF MINUTES:**

Cllr. Dolan clarified that item number 5 of the minutes of Offaly County Council's February Monthly Meeting should read that he excused himself from the meeting due to an 'in-direct interest' which he had in the lands. It was agreed to amend the minutes accordingly.

On the proposal of Cllr. S. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. M. Buckley, the minutes of Offaly County Council's February Monthly Meeting, held 15th February 2010 were confirmed and signed subject to the above amendment.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Butterfield seconded by Cllr. C. Hanniffy, the amendment to the minutes of Offaly County Council's November Meeting held 16th November 2009 as circulated was agreed.

**MINUTES FOR
NOTING:**

The following minutes were noted:

- Minutes of Environment & Water Services SPC Meeting held on 11th November 2009
- Minutes of Tullamore Area Committee Meeting held on 7th December 2009
- Minutes of Ferbane Area Committee Meeting held on 14th December 2009
- Minutes of Birr Area Committee Meeting held on 17th December 2009
- Minutes of Transportation & Emergency Services SPC Meeting held on Friday 12th January, 2010 in Áras An Chontae, Tullamore
- Corporate Policy Group Minutes held in Áras an Chontae, Tullamore on 18th January 2009

**SECTION 183 OF
LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
ACT 2001 –
DISPOSAL OF
LANDS AT SITE
'P', CLONMULLEN,
EDENDERRY:**

On the proposal of Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, seconded by Cllr. G. Plunkett, the Council approved the disposal of lands at site "P", Clonmullen, Edenderry in accordance with the terms of the Section 183 notice dated 3rd March 2010.

**SECTION 183 OF
LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
ACT 2001 –
DISPOSAL OF
FREEHOLD
INTEREST IN
PROPERTY AT 61
ST. COLUMBAS
PLACE,
TULLAMORE:**

On the proposal of Cllr. S. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. M. Buckley, the Council approved the disposal of freehold interest in property at 61 St. Columbas Place, Tullamore in accordance with the terms of the Section 183 notice dated 5th March 2010.

**SECTION 183 OF
LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
ACT 2001 –
DISPOSAL OF
LEASEHOLD
INTEREST IN
CLONIFFEEN,
GARRYCASTLE,
SHANNONBRIDGE
AND
FRANKFORD,
BALLYBOY,
KILCORMAC.**

Mr. S. Murray, DOS, advised that the Section 183, Disposal of Leasehold Interest in property at Cloniffeen, Garrycastle, Shannonbridge was being withdrawn and would be placed before the April meeting.

On the proposal of Cllr. D. Owens, seconded by Cllr. C. Hanniffy, the Council approved the disposal of leasehold interest in lands at Frankford, Ballyboy, Kilcormac in accordance with the terms of the Section 183 notice dated 3rd March 2010.

**DRAFT PROPOSED
AMENDMENTS
AND ADDITIONS
TO THE SCHEME
OF LETTING
PRIORITIES:**

Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., advised the members that the Scheme of Letting Priorities had been adopted in June 2006. He advised that the amendments and additions circulated complement the existing Scheme and are considered necessary at this time to address a number of local issues in advance of a national review of the Scheme which is proposed to commence later in 2010. He confirmed that the amendments and additions were approved at the Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services SPC in October 2009.

On the proposal of Cllr. M. Buckley, seconded by Cllr. E. Dooley, the members adopted the amendments to the Scheme of Letting Priorities.

**DRAFT
DIFFERENTIAL
RENT SCHEME 2010:**

Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., directed the members' attention to the circulated Differential Rent Scheme 2010. He advised that the Scheme addressed a number of discrepancies and anomalies currently in the system. The Differential Rent Scheme 2010 was in line with the Housing Act 2009 and other relevant legislation,

**DRAFT
DIFFERENTIAL
RENT SCHEME 2010
(cont'd):**

and had regard to recent changes to social welfare payments. Mr. D. Mahon, S.E.O. Housing, informed the members that it is proposed to conduct a full rent review in 2010.

Cllr. M. Buckley, in proposing the Differential Rent Scheme 2010, advised that it had been approved at the Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services SPC in February 2010. Cllr. J. Butterfield seconded the proposal. The members adopted the Differential Rent Scheme 2010.

**OFFALY LIBRARY
DEVELOPMENT
PLAN 2010-2014:**

Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., in introducing the Offaly Library Development Plan 2010-2014, informed the members that it was the first development plan for the library service in Offaly. Ms. M. Stuart, Co. Librarian, gave an overview of the Plan. She outlined the consultative process that had been held and noted the three themes underpinning the Plan, namely: social inclusiveness; openness and accessibility; quality customer service. She detailed the priorities that had been identified for progression during the lifetime of the Plan. The members thanked Ms. Stuart for her informative presentation and paid tribute to the quality library service being provided by her, the library staff and the Director of Services.

On the proposal of Cllr. M. Buckley, seconded by Cllr. B. Cowen, the members adopted the Offaly Library Development Plan 2010-2014.

**ROAD WORKS
PROGRAMME 2010:**

On the proposal of Cllr. D. Owens, seconded by Cllr. J. Foley, the Council adopted the Road Works Programme 2010 as circulated.

**HERITAGE WORK
PROGRAMME 2010:**

Ms. A. Pedlow, Heritage Officer, advised that the Heritage Work Programme for 2010 includes the following projects:

- Offaly Naturalists Field Club Programme
- Heritage Week
- Castles of Offaly
- Heritage Exhibition with Offaly Library Service
- Durrow High Cross
- Tihilly Monastic Site
- Pilgrims' Road Cycle Route
- Birr Public Realm
- Lough Boora Parklands
- Publication on the Geology of Laois and Offaly
- Place Names Project
- Annual Seminar in November.

The members thanked Ms. Pedlow for her presentation and wished her well with the work programme.

**PRESENTATION ON
DRAFT REGIONAL
PLANNING
GUIDELINES FOR
THE MIDLAND
REGION 2010-2022:**

The Cathaoirleach invited Mr. M. Daly, Director, Midland Regional Authority (MRA) and Ms. P. Kenny, Planning, Policy and Research Officer, MRA, to make a presentation to the members on the Draft Guidelines. Mr. Daly and Ms. Kenny gave a comprehensive report on the main components of the Draft Guidelines.

**PRESENTATION ON
DRAFT REGIONAL
PLANNING
GUIDELINES FOR
THE MIDLAND
REGION 2010-2022
(cont'd):**

Mr. Daly informed the members that an Implementation Group consisting of the four (4) Midland Region County Managers, representatives from each of the County Councils' Elected Members and a representative from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) was established. The Group have responsibility for the co-ordination and implementation of the Guidelines for the Midland Region.

Ms. Kenny outlined projected population figures and their relevance to the Draft Guidelines for both the Region and for Offaly. She detailed the priority actions for the Central, Eastern and Western Development Areas of the Region.

Cllr. N. Bourke, on behalf of the members, thanked Mr. Daly and Ms. Kenny for their comprehensive presentation.

Cllr. C. Hannify, Chairperson of the MRA, advised that the aim of the Regional Planning Guidelines is to provide a strategic planning framework for the future physical, economic and social development of the Midland Region. Estimations of population and future needs for development were based on information provided by the Central Statistics Office and on Government Departments' data. The Guidelines, she advised, take account of the Rural Housing Planning Guidelines.

The following is a summary of the issues and concerns raised by members in the ensuing discussion:

- Transportation: transportation issues in North Offaly, which lacks access to a national route and is dependent on secondary and regional roads. While acknowledging that the Edenderry/Enfield Road is outside of the MRA the members felt that a connection to the M4 should be considered. The importance of Portarlinton Railway Station should be prioritised.
- Education: the significant pressure on secondary schools (particularly in Tullamore) and the need to provide secondary education facilities in the North Offaly area. The members stressed the requirement for Government Departments to address the future needs outlined in the Plan.
- Strategic Development Zone (SDZ): the location of the proposed SDZ to the east of Athlone was debated. Some members expressed the view that a location at the centre of the region in proximity to Tullamore should be considered.
- Tourism: the members noted that the Guidelines incorporate a Tourism Strategy for the Region and hoped that this will increase tourism in the region. The members noted a number of possible tourist attractions that could be developed, e.g.: the provision of a heritage park in Croghan; a wildlife area in the proposed Mountlucas Wind Farm Development; improvements to the Daingean/Kilbeggan canal link.
- Population Trends: some members felt that a more measured approach should be adopted with regard to the

**PRESENTATION ON
DRAFT REGIONAL
PLANNING
GUIDELINES FOR
THE MIDLAND
REGION 2010-2022
(cont'd):**

- projected population trends and in particular with regard to the zoning of lands for housing and industrial developments.
- Zoning of Lands: a discussion on the feasibility of rezoning lands took place. Some members expressed their opinion that current zoning arrangements should be maintained and therefore be readily available for development, if required.
 - Agriculture and Rural Life: the need to protect and maintain the region's agricultural and rural base was emphasised.
 - Energy: the members queried the Guidelines approach to solar, wind and peat as possible future energy resources within the region and noted that the proposed Mountlucas Wind Farm, currently in the planning process would, if granted, give opportunities for energy, leisure and wildlife activities.
 - Broadband: the necessity for all areas to have access to broadband was highlighted.

Mr. Daly informed the members that written submission(s) on the Draft Guidelines could be forwarded to the MRA by 28th April 2010.

Mr. Daly advised that the challenges in developing the Guidelines are to ensure that services are in place to meet the needs and demands of the projected increase in population. He stressed that Offaly and the Midlands Region will need to give priority to their strengths and in so doing try to improve co-operation at regional level to help small businesses.

The County Manager acknowledged the work of Offaly County Council Planning Staff in helping to bring the process to its current stage. He advised that the requirement for an SDZ in the region was highlighted in the Indecon Report. He noted that an SDZ is focussed on attracting additional large scale industries to the region. The provision of an SDZ would not supplant the IDA's efforts to attract business to Tullamore. He further noted that it is a matter for the IDA to identify lands for an SDZ and bring forward these lands for approval. The Manager advised that the IDA had not to date brought forward proposals to develop the SDZ.

The members accepted the proposal by Cllr. C. Hanniffy, seconded by Cllr. J. Butterfield, that the Meetings Administrator should prepare a report on issues raised and forward it to the Planning, Economic and Local Development SPC for their consideration. It was agreed that the SPC would forward a written submission on the issues to the MRA by the 28th April 2010.

The Cathaoirleach encouraged each member to forward their own individual submission to the MRA.

NOTICES OF MOTION:

- a) *“That Offaly Co Council arrange a meeting with the O.P.W. and other interested bodies to discuss the progress at Durrow Abbey as the project seems to have stalled in many respects over the past couple of years”.*

The motion was proposed by Cllr. T. McKeigue and seconded by Cllr. M. Buckley. The members agreed that Ms. A. Pedlow, Heritage Officer, should attend the meeting with the O.P.W.

- b) *“That this Council provide a number of workshops at suitable locations to explain and tease out problems regarding the new percolation test for one off rural houses and small businesses”.*

Cllr. T. McKeigue proposed the motion, which was seconded by Cllr. M. Buckley.

Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., advised that an information leaflet for applicants was being drafted and that due to reduced staff resources it was not feasible to provide a number of area workshops. He advised that an information workshop for agents would be arranged. The members agreed to these arrangements.

- c) *“That Offaly Co Council write to Bank of Ireland regarding the fact that there is no ATM service in Clara.”*

Cllr. M. Buckley proposed the above motion, which was seconded by Cllr. T. McKeigue.

Cllr. D. Dolan advised that he had contacted the Manager of the Bank of Ireland who informed him that the Bank had carried out a national review of ATM services following the recent increase in robberies and that the situation in Clara had been regularised in recent weeks. It was agreed that the wording of the motion would be amended and that the Council would write to the Bank of Ireland regarding the ‘... restrictive ATM services that are currently available in Clara’

- d) The following motion was proposed by Cllr. M. Buckley, seconded by Cllr. T. McKeigue, and agreed:

“That Offaly Co Council write to the Taoiseach and Tanaiste regarding the increased cost of briquettes and coal and the impact that has on older people and others living on Social Welfare benefits.”

**NOTICES OF
MOTION (cont'd):**

- e) The following motion was proposed by Cllr. G. Plunkett, seconded by Cllr. J. Foley, and agreed:

"That Offaly County Council request the Department of Education, Offaly VEC & all relevant bodies to meet, as a matter of urgency and make provisions for a second level school in Daingean"

Cllr. G. Plunkett advised that the provision of a secondary school in Daingean would help alleviate the pressure with regard to school places in Tullamore.

COMHDHÁLACHA:

The following conferences were proposed by Cllr. M. Buckley and seconded by Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick.

I.P.I. National Planning Conference 2010 Review – Tullamore Court Hotel 15th/16th April 2010

It was agreed to send Cllr. J. Butterfield

Listowel Downpatrick Linkage Group – Conference 2010 – Kerry Literacy & Cultural Centre 25th/27th March 2010

Exploring Arts & Culture through Town Twinning, Cavan Crystal Hotel, County Cavan 16th April 2010

It was agreed to send Cllr. E. Dooley

BMW Regional Assembly Annual Conference

It as agreed to send Cllrs. C. Hannify, E. Dooley

2010 La Touche Legacy Seminar – Charlestown Gold & Country Club, Greystones – 1st/3rd October 2010

It was agreed to send Cllrs. D. Dooley, M. Buckley, P. Clendennen

New EPA Gruidelines for Single Houses The Glenlo Abbey Hotel, Bushypark Galway 23rd/25th April 2010.

It was agreed to send Cllr.M Buckley

Banking Insurance & Nama “The Effect on Local Government”, Carlton Hotel, Tralee 16th/18th Apr.2010

It was agreed to send Cllr. Sinead Dooley.

Retrospective approval for attendance at LAMA Conference in Sligo Park Hotel for Cllr’s B. Cowen, G. Plunkett and N. Bourke.

COMHFREAGRAS:

Cllr. M. Buckley noted the comprehensive response received from the Department of Health and Children, dated 9th February 2010.

The notices of motion circulated from Carrick on Suir Town Council, dated 10th February 2010 and Wicklow Town Council, dated 12th February 2010 were noted. The members agreed to write to the Minister for Justice and Mr. John Curran TD, Minister of State, to highlight the members’ concerns with regard to lack of regulation and the proliferation of Head Shops.

**ANY OTHER
BUSINESS:**

Fire Services

Cllrs. J. Leahy, G. Plunkett and S. Moylan-Ryan requested an update with regard to the negotiations within the Fire Service on the achievement of further efficiencies in the Service. The County Manager advised that it was proposed to bring a report to the April meeting and that individual matters would be best addressed after receipt of the progress report.

Increased Levels of Littering and Dumping

Cllr. T. McKeigue requested clarification on the Council's response to increased littering and dumping throughout the county. Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., outlined the Council's, owners' and individuals' responsibilities under the Litter Acts. The members noted that the Council's budget for dealing with the matter was limited and agreed that individuals needed to act more responsibly.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED:

CATHAOIRLEACH

RUNAÍ

19th APRIL 2010