

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

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

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TULLAMORE
ON MONDAY, 18TH APRIL 2011 AT 2.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. P. Gallagher, County Manager, Mr. D. Kirrane, D.O.S., Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., Mr. D. Conlon, H.O.F., Mr. E. O’Ceilleachair A/D.O.S Mr. C. McCarthy, S.E., Ms. A. Pedlow, Heritage Officer, Ms. N. Dowler, Community Forum Support Officer, Ms. M. Cleary, Meetings Administrator, and Ms. N. Troy, C.O.

**VOTES OF
SYMPATHY:**

Votes of sympathy were unanimously extended to the following:-

Celia Colgan & Family, Bellavista, St. Mary’s Road, Edenderry on the death of her husband, Sean.

Anne Murphy, Demense View, Birr on the death of her husband, Michael.

Carmel Maher, Rocklane, Birr on the death of her mother, Maura.

Derry Kilroy, Hight St., Tullamore on the death of his father, Dermot.

Padraig Grogan, Brocca, Mucklagh, Tullamore on the death of his mother, Brid.

Kathy Doheny, Knockowen Rd., Tullamore on the death of her father, Kevin.

Sr. Marguerita McCarthy, Charlestown, Clara on the death of her uncle, Frank.

Janet Kenny, Shandra, Portarlinton on the death of her father, Robert Smith.

Paddy McHugh & Family, Backwood, Cloneygowan on the death of his wife, Kathleen.

Margaret Tobin & Family, Cloneygowan, Tullamore on the death of her husband, Fran.

VOTES OF SYMPATHY (cont'd):

Michael Dunne & Family, O'Molloy St., Tullamore on the death of his wife, Elizabeth.

Patrick Norton & Family, Killooley, Blueball, Tullamore on the death of his wife, Ita.

Mrs Duffy & Family, Endrim, Ferbane on the death of her husband, Edward.

Eugene Henson, Clonearl, Daingean on the death of his cousin, Peter.

Peggy Bryan, Rathfeston, Geashill on the death of her husband, Seamus.

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:

On the proposal of Cllr. M. Buckley, seconded by Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, the minutes of Offaly County Council's Monthly Meeting held on 21st March 2011 were agreed and adopted.

Cllr. J. Carroll requested that all foreign travel undertaken by members be approved by the full Council.

MINUTES FOR NOTING:

The following minutes were noted:

- Minutes of Transportation and Emergency Services S.P.C. held 12th November 2010.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS:

On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, the members agreed to suspend Standing Orders to take Mr. Peter Scully, Chairperson, Audit Committee presentation next.

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2010:

Mr. P. Scully, Chairperson, Audit Committee drew the members attention to *Offaly County Council's Audit Annual Report 2010* which was circulated at the meeting. He informed the members that the Audit Committee has a role in promoting good accounting practices, ensuring better and more informed decision making and improving the focus on value for money throughout the organisation. It also supports the Internal Audit function. He advised that the Committee met quarterly and received progress reports on the implementation of the *2010 Internal Audit Plan*. Mr. P. Scully advised that the committee were satisfied with the work undertaken during the year.

The members thanked Mr. Scully for his report and complemented the work of the Audit Committee.

ELECTION OF LEAS CATHAOIRLEACH:

Cllr. D. Owens, Cathaoirleach, advised that a vacancy for the Leas Cathaoirleach's office existed. He advised that the person elected to fill a casual vacancy in the office of Leas Cathaoirleach would hold that office until the next Annual Meeting of the Council.

**ELECTION OF LEAS
CATHAOIRLEACH
(cont'd):**

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. E. Dooley, the members agreed to elect Cllr. P. Ormond to the position of Leas Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. P. Ormond thanked his proposer and seconder and the members for his election.

**ELECTION/
APPOINTMENT/
NOMINATION OF
MEMBERS TO BODIES /
COMMITTEES:**

On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. N. Bourke, the members agreed to elect to the Committees as follows:

- Cllr. P. Rowland to the Housing, Corporate & Cultural Services Strategic Policy Committee;
- Cllr. S. Dooley to County Offaly Vocational Educational Committee;
- Cllr. G. Plunkett to the Association of County and City Councils;
- Cllr. P. Rowland to Clara Swimming Pool Committee;
- Cllr. P. Rowland to Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee;
- Cllr. P. Rowland to Tullamore Area Committee.

**OFFALY HERITAGE
PLAN 2012 - 2016 AND
2011 HERITAGE WORK
PROGRAMME:**

Ms. A. Pedlow, Heritage Officer, gave an informative presentation to the members outlining the various works that were undertaken by the Heritage Office during the past ten years. She highlighted the projects which were achieved by collaboration with other individuals, groups and interested bodies.

Ms. Pedlow drew the members' attention to the 2011 Heritage Work Programme. She informed the members that she was currently preparing the *Heritage Plan 2012-2016* and requested them to forward proposals that may be considered for inclusion in the plan.

The members thanked Ms. Pedlow for her excellent presentation and acknowledged the work being done.

ARTS ACT GRANT 2011:

On the proposal of Cllr. M. Buckley, seconded by Cllr. D. Dolan, the members approved the Arts Act Grant 2011.

It was agreed, having regard to the reduced budget, that the S.P.C. would review the Scheme to ensure that projects funded would demonstrate how they would achieve added value.

**DRAFT BURIAL
GROUNDS PROPOSAL**

In proposing the adoption of the *Draft Burial Grounds Proposal* Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick drew the members attention to the Summary of Recommendations included in Part 3 of the Proposal. He noted that the recommendations will encourage local communities to take ownership of burial grounds.

The members welcomed the improvements included in the Proposal. In responding to questions raised Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., advised that the Burial Ground Proposal set out a framework on how communities can be involved and assisted in the provision and maintenance of burial grounds.

**DRAFT BURIAL
GROUNDS PROPOSAL
(cont'd):**

He informed the members that a programme of works would be prepared following the adoption of the policy and advised that a survey of burial grounds would be carried out during the summer.

On the proposal of Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy, the members adopted the *Draft Burial Grounds Proposal*.

ANNUAL REPORT 2010:

Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., advised that the Annual Report 2010 was currently being prepared. He advised that the Draft Report would be circulated in the coming weeks and will be presented to the members at the next Monthly Meeting.

**TAKE OVER OF
BROUGHAL AND
KILBRIDE GROUP
WATER SCHEMES:**

On the proposal of Cllr. D. Dolan seconded by Cllr. S. Moylan-Ryan the Council agreed to proceed with the take over of Broughal and Kilbride Group Water Schemes.

**ESTABLISHMENT OF
REVOLVING LOAN
GUARANTEE FUND:**

Mr. D. Kirrane, D.O.S., informed the meeting that a number of local groups were experiencing difficulties in attaining overdraft facilities to allow them to draw down funding from agencies.

Mr. Kirrane, D.O.S., advised that it was proposed that Offaly County Council would partner with West Offaly Enterprise Fund and the North Offaly Development Fund to establish a Revolving Loan Guarantee Fund. Each body would provide €50,000. This fund could be used by community groups as security against bridging loans for financial institutions. Mr. Kirrane, D.O.S., noted that there was an element of risk involved but that this would be shared by the partners on an equal basis. He recommended the proposal to the members and suggested that the provision of the fund would assist in generating economic activity.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. N. Bourke the members approved the establishment of the Revolving Loan Guarantee Fund and to the allocation of €50,000 by Offaly County Council.

**2011 PRIORITY LIST FOR
THE LOCAL
IMPROVEMENT
SCHEME**

Mr. C. McCarthy, S.E., informed the members that €70,000 had been allocated to the Local Improvement Schemes for 2011. He requested approval to proceed with 2011 Priority List, as circulated in advance to the members.

On the proposal of Cllr. P. Ormond, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll, the members approved the list as circulated with the agenda.

**STEM SCHOLARSHIP
SCHEME**

Mr. D. Kirrane, D.O.S., in presenting the proposed STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) Scholarship Scheme, informed the members that Bord na Mona, West Offaly Enterprise Fund Ltd., North Offaly Development

**STEM SCHOLARSHIP
SCHEME (cont'd)**

Fund Ltd. and Offaly County Council had each agreed to provide €2,500 per year for the duration of a Degree Course to make a Scholarship available for one student per electoral area in Offaly to pursue Level 8 studies in a STEM subject at a third level institution.

Mr. Kirrane, D.O.S., advised that they had met with the teachers from the secondary schools who had welcomed the initiative. He briefly outlined the nomination process and the criteria and conditions for applying. He advised that the closing date for receipt of applications was the 20th May 2011.

The members welcomed the introduction of the scheme.

**COMMUNITY FIRE
ALARM SCHEME**

Ms. N. Dowler, Community Forum Worker, gave an informative presentation to the members on the Community Fire Alarm Scheme. She advised that Offaly County Council had procured five hundred (500) fire alarms for the Community Fire Alarm Scheme. The Scheme provides for the distribution of smoke alarms to the elderly, people living alone and people living in rural isolation. The consultants fitting the alarms will also be required to give the households a fire safety promotion talk.

Ms. Dowler advised that the initiative is a combined effort of Offaly County Council, Offaly Community and Voluntary Forum and Offaly Fire and Rescue Service working with South and West Offaly Homefix, North Offaly Development Company, Community Services and Tullamore Social Services.

The members welcomed the scheme and complemented Ms. Dowler for her work. It was agreed to circulate the presentation to the members.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS:

(a) The following motion was proposed by Cllr. M. Buckley, seconded by Cllr. T. McKeigue and agreed by the members:

“That Offaly County Council contact the Minister for the Environment to explore the possibility of a scheme to accommodate the group of people who cannot get a mortgage and who do not qualify for Local Authority housing”

It was agreed to circulate the motion to other councils.

COMHDHÁLACHA:

The following conferences were proposed by Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. G. Plunkett, and agreed by the members:

Economic Revival – A Role for Local Government
Fairways Hotel Dundalk
29th/30th April 2011.

No one expressed an interest in this conference.

COMHDHÁLACHA
(cont'd):

IPI National Planning Conference
Innovation in Practice-Reshaping Irish Planning
Radisson Blue Hotel, Galway.
5th/6th May 2011.
No one expressed an interest in this conference.

I.P.A. Conference for Local Authority Members
The Current Challenges Facing Irish Local Authorities
In delivering effective customer service with
Ever-decreasing resources.
Theatre Royal, Waterford
26th/27th May 2011.
It was agreed that Cllr. J. Butterfield would attend.

Border, Midland & Western Regional Assembly
Annual Conference
Sheraton Hotel Athlone
6th May 2011
It was agreed that Cllrs. J. Butterfield, C. Hanniffy and. N. Bourke would attend.

COMHFREAGRAS: The correspondences were noted.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Agri-Environment Scheme

Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick requested that Offaly County Council contact the Minister for Agriculture with regard to the Agri-Environment Scheme. He advised that the Government restrictions were aligned to Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). He informed the meeting that 2.3% of Offaly were designated SAC status while 30% of the West was assigned SAC status.

Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick also stressed that the reduction in the payments would have serious implications for the farming community and requested that clarification be sought from the Department on the reduction in the grant, i.e. the maximum payment under AEOS in the sum of €5,000 was now reduced to €4,000 thereby reducing number of applications and the value of these applications. Cllr. P. Rowland seconded the proposal which was agreed by the members.

Waste Byelaw

Cllr. P. Ormond advised that the waste collectors in the Birr Area had informed customers that they were no longer accepting domestic waste in plastic bags due to an Offaly County Council byelaw prohibiting this practice. He advised that this was a concern to a number of people who, due to the location of their residence they couldn't accommodate a refuse bin and/or the amount of waste they generate did not merit the costs associated with a refuse bin.

Cllr. P. Ormond proposed that the Environment S.P.C. re-examine the byelaws with a view to retracting this byelaw. The proposal was seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll and agreed by the members.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS
(cont'd):**

Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., in response advised that Offaly County Council is governed by EU legislation and the byelaws were adopted after careful consideration. He agreed to bring the issue back to the S.P.C.

Rural Schools

On the proposal of Cllr. P. Ormond, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy, it was agreed to write to the Minister for Education and Skills requesting him to reconsider the proposal of clustering small rural schools.

Special Needs Assistants

Cllr. P. Rowland expressed his concerns in relation to the reduction of Special Needs Assistants in our education system, highlighting the significant benefit that students gain from being assigned a Special Needs Assistant. He suggested that there would be a negative impact on other students if the assistants are removed and that the investment in education should be protected. Cllr. R. Rowland suggested that the reduction in Special Needs Assistants positions would result in more persons claiming social welfare.

Cllr. P. Rowland proposed that the Council write to the Minister to express these concerns. His proposal was seconded by Cllr. G. Plunkett and agreed.

Inspections of Rivers

Cllr. J. Carroll advised that the number of inspections from a number of government bodies of rivers in the Ballybritt/Aghacon area had increased. He requested that the duplication of inspections be eliminated.

Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., in responding advised that all inspections carried of by the Environment Section of Offaly County Council are required by the law.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED: _____

CATHAOIRLEACH

RUNAÍ

16th MAY 2011