

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

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

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TULLAMORE
ON MONDAY, 26TH MARCH 2012 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, T. McLoughlin, J. Leahy, 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. F. Heslin, D.O.S., Ms. S. O'Reilly, Arts Officer, Mr. E. Lynch, A.P., Mr. C. McCarthy, S.E., Ms. M. Cleary, Meetings Administrator, Ms. S. Parnell, C.O.
VOTES OF SYMPATHY:	<p>Votes of sympathy were unanimously extended to the following:-</p> <p>Brid Coughlan & Family, Ferbane Street, Cloghan, Offaly on the death of her husband Johnny.</p> <p>Angela Maher & Family, Derrybeg, Clareen, Birr, Offaly on the death of her husband Joseph.</p> <p>Aileen & Noel Mannion, Creevagh, Shannonbridge, Offaly on the death of her father Joseph.</p> <p>Cannon Family, Attinkee, Banagher, Offaly on the death of their mother Teresa.</p> <p>Marie Carroll, Clonin, Rhode, Offaly on the death of her husband Malachy.</p> <p>Barry Ryan, Square Carace, Portarlinton, Laois on the death of his father Sean.</p> <p>Anne Silke & Family, Ballynasrah, Lusmagh, Banagher, Offaly on the death of her husband Joe.</p> <p>Elizabeth O'Meara & Family, Beech Avenue, Cree, Birr, Offaly on the death of her husband Thomas.</p> <p>John O'Halloran, Seffin, Birr, Offaly on the death of his father Michael.</p> <p>Angela Maher, Derrybeg, Clareen, Birr, Offaly on the death of her husband Joe.</p> <p>Stephanie McEvoy & Family, Dereen, Cloneygowan, Offaly on the death of her brother Willie.</p> <p>Lilly Gorman & Family, Connaghmealín, Blueball, Tullamore Offaly on the death of her husband Willie.</p>

<p>VOTES OF SYMPATHY: (continued)</p>	<p>Eamon Moran, Coolagh Cross, Clonaslee, Laois, on the death of his uncle John.</p> <p>Billy Mullins, 40 Pound Street, Birr, Offaly on the death of his mother Elizabeth (Babbie).</p> <p>G. Meara & Family, Beech Avenue, Fortel, Birr, Offaly on the death of her husband Tom.</p> <p>Margaret Conway, Ballydaly, Tullamore, Offaly on the death of her sister Kathleen.</p> <p>Clare & Tom Daly, Broghal Rd, Kilcormac, Offaly on the death of their son Colm.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES:</p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy the minutes of February Monthly Meeting held in Áras an Chontae on 20th February, 2012 were agreed and adopted.</p>
<p>MINUTES FOR NOTING:</p>	<p>The following minutes were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Birr Area Committee Meeting held 13th September 2011; - Corporate Policy Group Meeting held 16th January 2012.
<p>SECTION 183, LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 LEASE OF PREMISES AT JOHN'S PLACE, BIRR, CO. OFFALY:</p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. T. McKeigue, seconded by Cllr. S. Moylan-Ryan, the members resolved to the lease of land at John's Place, Birr, Co. Offaly in accordance with the terms of the notice dated 8th March 2012.</p>
<p>SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS:</p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. D. Dolan, seconded by Cllr. T. McKeigue, the members resolved to suspend Standing Orders to allow Mr. Niall Hughes, Connect Ireland to give his presentation.</p>
<p>CONNECT IRELAND PRESENTATION:</p>	<p>Mr. N. Hughes gave a comprehensive presentation on Connect Ireland. He advised that Connect Ireland were appointed by IDA Ireland to promote, market and deliver <i>The Succeed in Ireland Initiative</i>. They aim to complement the work of IDA Ireland and create jobs in Ireland by increasing foreign direct investment. He outlined how Connect Ireland affords everyone the opportunity to help create jobs in Ireland and detailed the rewards that are available.</p> <p>The members thanked Mr. Hughes for his presentation.</p>
<p>ROAD WORKS PROGRAMME 2012:</p>	<p>Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S., advised the meeting that members were briefed on the Road Works Programme 2012 at the Area Committee meetings.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. D. Dolan, seconded by Cllr. E. Dooley, the members resolved to adopt the Road Works Programme 2012.</p>

<p>ARTS ACT GRANTS 2012:</p>	<p>Ms. S. O'Reilly, Arts Officer in responding to questions raised advised that applications were assessed in accordance with the evaluating criteria outlined in the application form.</p> <p>Cllr. J. Butterfield expressed his dissatisfaction with the allocation to funds to the Mountbolus Pipe Band and proposed that the money be divided equally between the three bands. The proposal was not seconded.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. L. Quinn, seconded by Cllr. D. Dolan, the members resolved to adopt the Arts Act Grants 2012 as circulated.</p>
<p>ANNUAL REPORT 2011:</p>	<p>Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., drew the members' attention to the Draft Annual Report 2011 and the commemoration booklet of the visit of the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama and the First Lady, Michelle Obama to the President's ancestral home of Moneygall on 23rd May 2011.</p> <p>The members' welcomed the commemoration booklet and noted the number of positive achievements that had taken place during 2011.</p> <p>It was agreed to defer further consideration of the Annual Report to the April monthly meeting.</p>
<p>HOUSEHOLD CHARGE:</p>	<p>Mr. D. Conlon, H.O.F., drew the members' attention to the Press Release which had issued earlier that day. He informed the meeting that the Household Charge was due by 31st March and that penalties would apply thereafter. He advised that payments could be made online, by post or at the Council offices in Tullamore, Birr and Edenderry during the week. He advised that Áras an Chontae would open on Saturday, 31st March to facilitate persons wishing to pay before the deadline.</p> <p>During the ensuing discussion members' sought clarification if local Library and Fire services would be restored if the Household Charges were paid in Offaly.</p> <p>Cllr. D. Owens, Cathaoirleach requested that the Household Charge and Cllr. G. Plunkett's Notice of Motion be considered concurrently. Cllr. G. Plunkett proposed <i>"that the Strategic Policy Group with responsibility for County Libraries investigates their workings with a view to extending opening hours in rural libraries"</i>. He expressed his frustration at the decision to reduce the library service in Banagher, Ferbane and in particular Daingean. He highlighted the need for public libraries in rural communities, noting that the library was the only source of broadband for a number of people. He proposed that the decision to reduce hours be deferred until the SPC had the opportunity to re-examine the matter and consider initiatives, such as internships etc. Cllr. N. Hogan seconded the motion. A number of members spoke in support of the motion and expressed their frustration that the media campaign in relation to Household Charges suggested that library services</p>

<p>HOUSEHOLD CHARGE (continued):</p>	<p>would be maintained.</p> <p>Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., in responding advised that the Library Service is a Standing Item on the S.P.C. Agenda. He noted that the review of opening hours was highlighted in the Budget 2012 report. Mr. S. Murray agreed to refer the matter to the SPC for consideration but advised that members should be mindful of the resources, financial and human, available to the service. He clarified that the Tullamore Library refurbishment was a capital project. Mr. S. Murray informed the meeting that the reduction in services would commence on 12th April. The Notice of Motion was agreed and Mr. S. Murray agreed to place the motion on the SPC Agenda for the SPC members' consideration on the understanding that any consideration be mindful of the resources available both financial and human.</p> <p>In responding to the general comments made by the members in relation to the Household Charge the County Manager thanked the citizens who had paid their charge and informed the members that a low compliance rate would have implications for the Council's finances. The Local Government Fund allocation for 2012 was based, he advised, on the assumption of full payment of the Household Charge.</p>
<p>TWO YEAR PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE BIRR TOWN AND ENVIRONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2010-2016:</p>	<p>Mr. D. Kirrane, D.O.S., advised that the County Manager is required to prepare a progress report two years after the adoption of a Development Plan. He noted that the Progress Report on the <i>Birr Town and Environs Plan 2010-2016</i> were discussed in detail at Birr Town Council's meeting. Mr. E. Lynch, A.P., drew the members' attention to the notable achievements that were delivered in the Town and Environs area.</p> <p>The members thanked Mr. E. Lynch for his report.</p>
<p>LAUNCH OF 'PORT'S VISION 2020':</p>	<p>Mr. P. Gallagher, County Manager, informed the members that Offaly County Council was represented on the group which developed the '<i>Port Vision 2020</i>'. He advised that he hoped the plan would generate initiatives across a number of areas for Portarlington.</p>
<p>C.P.G. REPORT:</p>	<p>Cllr. D. Owens, Cathaoirleach advised that the item was omitted from the Council's Agenda in error.</p> <p>The Cathaoirleach advised that the C.P.G. had considered the issues included on the Council Agenda.</p> <p>Cllr. D. Owens advised that Minister Deenihan, T.D., had extended his apologies at not being able to attend the Engage with Architect programme but would visit the county in the coming months. The members agreed to this arrangement.</p> <p>The Cathaoirleach advised that the C.P.G. had agreed to recommend his proposal to hold the May monthly meeting of the Council in Mountbolus Community Centre. On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. T. McKeigue the members resolved to hold the May monthly meeting, on</p>

C.P.G. REPORT (continued):	21 st May 2012, in Mountbolus Community Centre.
NOTICES OF MOTION:	<p>(i) The following motion was proposed by Cllr. M. Buckley, seconded by Cllr. T McKeigue, and adopted:</p> <p><i>“That this Council prepare a scheme to temporarily reuse vacant properties in the town and County similar to schemes for the creative sector in other local authority areas.”</i></p> <p>(ii) The Cathaoirleach advised that Ms. M. Cleary, Meetings Administrator, had confirmed that Cllr. J. Butterfield’s Motion was received in accordance with the Standing Orders and was omitted from the Council Agenda in error.</p> <p><i>“That this Council provides parking on the Green Area of the Áras Building beside the Spollanstown Road, Tullamore.”</i></p> <p>Cllr. J. Butterfield proposed the motion and stated that the Council should provide adequate parking at Áras an Chontae for the public. The motion was seconded by Cllr. J. Foley.</p> <p>Cllr. T. McKeigue advised that the Council had greatly improved car parking facilities and that the wildlife park, proposed by Cllr. J. Butterfield for a car park, was an important element of Tullamore’s Tidy Town application. Cllr. T. McKeigue counter proposal, i.e., that the Council retain the Green Area, was seconded by Cllr. M. Buckley.</p> <p>Following a show of hands the Cathaoirleach declared that Cllr. T. McKeigue’s amended motion was adopted.</p> <p>(iii) Cllrs. J. Leahy, P. Ormond, E. Dooley, S. Dooley, S. Moylan-Ryan, P. Rowland, G. Plunkett, E. Fitzpatrick, J. McLoughlin, N. Bourke & D. Owens:</p> <p><i>“Offaly County Council deplores the recent changes in the Staffing Schedules, announced in Budget 2012 and calls on the Minister for Education and Skill to reverse this decision and reinstate the staffing schedule as it was in September 2011.”</i></p> <p>Cllr. J. Leahy in proposing the motion, which was seconded by Cllr. N Bourke, advised that there was a need to protect small schools. Cllr. T. McKeigue advised that he did not support the motion. The motion was supported by the majority of members and it was agreed that a letter would be sent to the Minister for Education and Skills.</p> <p>(iv) The following motion was proposed by Cllr. J. Leahy, and seconded by Cllr. E Dooley.</p> <p><i>“That Offaly County Council calls on the Minister for</i></p>

<p>NOTICES OF MOTION (continued):</p>	<p><i>Health to conduct a full review on procedures in dealing with new and existing medical card applications”.</i></p> <p>A number of members raised concerns with regard to the cumbersome application process of the national medical card application system and the backlog that now existed. Cllr. T. McKeigue advised that the matter was raised at a recent HSE Regional Forum meeting and that they were informed that the backlog would be addressed by the end of April. The members resolved that Offaly County Council write to the Minister requesting a review of the procedures.</p> <p>(v) Cllr. T. McKeigue proposed the following motion, which was seconded by Cllr. M. Buckley and agreed:</p> <p><i>“In view of two recent reports regarding I.D.A. supported jobs in County Offaly over the past two years and the report showing Offaly to be the second lowest income per head of population, I propose that we invite the Minister for Enterprise Jobs and Innovation and the I.D.A. to meet with Offaly County Council to look at measures to boost employment.”</i></p> <p>(vi) <i>“That Offaly County Council calls on the Minister for Justice to put in place legislation to recover some of the costs associated with The Free Legal Aid Scheme from clients who are fined or convicted by the Courts.”</i></p> <p>Cllr. T. McKeigue in proposing the motion noted that The Free Legal Aid Scheme cost the state €58m in 2011. Cllr. S. Dooley seconded the motion which was agreed by the members.</p> <p>(vii) <i>“That Offaly County Council put in place a committee to plan The Gathering 2013.”</i></p> <p>Cllr. M. Buckley proposed that the Housing, Social and Cultural SPC develop a plan for Offaly for <i>The Gathering 2013</i>. Cllr. T. McKeigue seconded the motion. The members welcomed and agreed to the proposal.</p>
<p>COMHDHÁLACHA:</p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. M. Buckley, seconded by Cllr. L. Quinn, conferences were approved as follows:</p> <p><i>“Disability Access Certificate”</i> The Kingsvalley Hotel, Merlin Park, Dublin Road, Galway City 6th – 7th April 2012 It was agreed that no member would attend.</p> <p><i>“Finance Bill 2012”</i> Manor West Hotel, Killarney Road, Tralee, Co Kerry 20th - 21st April 2012 It was agreed that no member would attend.</p>

