

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

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

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE
ON MONDAY, 27TH MARCH 2017 AT 2.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:	Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, Cathaoirleach (Presiding), Cllrs. N. Bourke, J. Carroll, J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, D. Dolan, E. Dooley, S. Dooley, J. Foley, D. Harvey, B. Killeavy, J. Leahy, S. Maher, F. Moran, T. McKeigue, M. O'Reilly, P. Ormond, D. Owens and L. Quinn.
IN ATTENDANCE:	Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive; Mr. D. Conlon, H.O.F.; Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S; Mr. D. Kirrane, D.O.S; Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S; Ms M. Cleary, Meetings Administrator; Mr. Peter Scully, Chairperson Audit Committee; Ms. L. Moran, Internal Auditor; Mr. T. Shanahan, S.E. Mr. M. Mahon, S.E.E.; Mr. J. Cunningham, E.E.; Ms. A. Pedlow, Heritage Officer, Ms. M. Brady, Arts Officer; Ms. F. Flaherty, C.O
	<p>The members paid tribute to their former colleague Mr. Paddy Mitchell, former member of Offaly County Council, who recently passed away. They extended their sympathies to his family. As a mark of respect the meeting was adjourned for 10 minutes.</p> <p>The monthly meeting resumed at 2.20p.m.</p>
VOTES OF SYMPATHY:	<p>Votes of sympathy were unanimously extended to the following:-</p> <p>Mrs. Mary Glennon & Family, Rahan Road, Tullamore on the death of her husband, Mr. Chris Glennon;</p> <p>Mr. John Cregan & Family, Spollanstown, Tullamore on the death of his wife, Mrs. Eleanor Cregan;</p> <p>The Family of the late Mr. Martin McGuinness;</p> <p>The Families of the members of the Irish Coast Guard Helicopter 116 tragedy;</p> <p>The Family of the late Mr. Paddy Mitchell, Charleville Road, Tullamore;</p> <p>Mr. Mike McEvoy, Kilnabin, Clara on the death of his brother, Mr. Vincent McEvoy;</p> <p>Mr. John Flaherty, Charleville View, Tullamore on the death of his wife, Mrs. Margaret Flaherty;</p> <p>Mr. Willie Bolton, Cloneyhurke, Portarlinton on the death of</p>

	<p>his uncle, Mr. Paddy Doyle;</p> <p>Ms. Eileen Jones, Garryhinch, Portarlinton on the death of her brother, Mr. Joseph (Nixon) Shaw;</p> <p>Ms. Ann McGuigan, 14 Silverdale Estate, Kilcoursey, Clara on the death of her cousin, Ms. Annie Bracken;</p> <p>Ms. Phil Deehan, 21 Silverdale Estate, Kilcoursey, Clara on the death of her brother, Mr. Vincent McEvoy;</p> <p>Mrs. Maura Cooke & Family, Military Road, Crinkle, Birr on the death of her husband, Mr. Edward (Ted) Cooke;</p> <p>Mr. Joe Hernon, Annagh, Birr on the death of his sister, Ms. Geraldine Cleary;</p> <p>Mr. Jim Murrin, Assumption Road, Edenderry on the death of his father, Mr. Maurice Murrin;</p> <p>Mr. Henry Groome, Kinnefad, Edenderry on the death of his mother, Mrs. Eileen Groome;</p> <p>The Chief Executive, on her 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. T. McKeigue, seconded by Cllr. L. Quinn, the members resolved to adopt the minutes of the February meeting of Offaly County Council held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore on 20th February 2017.</p>
<p>MINUTES FOR NOTING:</p>	<p>The minutes of the following meetings were noted by the members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minutes of Corporate Policy Group Meeting held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on 16th January 2017; - Minutes of Economic Development, Enterprise & Planning SPC Meeting held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on 17th November 2016; - Minutes of Roads, Transportation & Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on 30th November 2016.
<p>SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS:</p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. F. Moran the members agreed to suspend Standing Orders to allow Mr. Peter Scully, Chairperson of the Audit Committee to present the Audit Committee Report and for Mr. D. Conlon, H.O.F., to update the members on the Rates Revaluation process.</p>
<p>AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT:</p>	<p>Mr. Peter Scully, Chairperson of the Audit Committee, gave a brief overview of the <i>Audit Committee Annual Report 2016</i> that was circulated in advance of the meeting.</p>

	<p>He highlighted the number of meetings held, items discussed, the importance of follow-up audits, and, the continued reduction in the revenue deficit by Offaly County Council.</p> <p>In concluding his report Mr. P. Scully thanked the committee members, council staff and elected members for their continued support.</p> <p>The members acknowledged the work of the Audit Committee and thanked Mr. P. Scully for his comprehensive report. On the proposal of Cllr. D. Dolan, seconded by Cllr. L. Quinn, the members resolved to adopt the <i>Audit Committee Annual Report 2016</i>.</p> <p>The member resolved to adopt the <i>Audit Committee Charter 2017</i> on the proposal of Cllr. D. Dolan and seconded by Cllr J. Carroll.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. D. Dolan, seconded by Cllr. S. Dooley, the members agreed to adopt the <i>Audit Committee Work Plan 2017</i>, as previously circulated.</p>
<p>REVALUATION UPDATE:</p>	<p>Mr. D. Conlon, H.O.F. advised the members that all rate payers in the county were issued with their Proposed Valuation Certificate by the Valuation Office in the week ending 4th March 2017. He advised that walk-in clinics were held in Birr, Tullamore and Edenderry enabling ratepayers to discuss issues regarding their proposed valuation with the Valuation Office staff. Mr. D. Conlon, H.O.F., noted that the closing date for appeals is 14th April 2017. Formal valuations will be notified to the Council, by the Valuations Office, on 15th September 2017.</p> <p>A lengthy discussion followed during which a number of members expressed their concern that the valuations had increased by multiples and will pose significant issues for small to medium businesses throughout the county. Members expressed their concerns that the increase may force some businesses to close. They sought clarification on whether the valuation was based on turnover or profit and whether the rental market was based on urban or rural locations. The difference in the rate liability between Mullingar, Athlone and Tullamore was queried with some suggesting that Tullamore's higher rate liability will deter foreign direct investment from locating in Offaly. Cllr. J. Clendennen requested that the executive examine and compare the rate income by sector in 2015/2016 and following the revaluation. Cllr. J. Foley proposed that the rates be reduced by 15%. The members acknowledged that the income raised from rates was critical to allow Offaly County Council to effectively discharge its functions and accepted that unless the Government changed the funding structure that any reduction in income for rates would be a serious concern for the Authority.</p> <p>In responding to questions raised Mr. D. Conlon, H.O.F., stated that the overall income from rates will not be affected by the revaluation process. He suggested that where</p>

	<p>ratepayers felt their valuation was excessive they should appeal by 14th April and that their accounts could be submitted to support their appeal. The Head of Finance advised that Westmeath's rates have historically been lower than Offaly. Mr. D. Conlon, H.O.F., noted that a 15% reduction in rates would cost Offaly County Council €2.5m. He reiterated that the AVR of 0.26 was an indicative figure and a final figure could not be determined until 15th September 2017.</p> <p>In drawing the discussion to a conclusion the Chief Executive stressed the importance of observing the appeals mechanism and advised that the Council was not in a position to be definitive about the AVR until 15th September 2017.</p>
<p>ELECTION /NOMINATION/ APPOINTMENT TO FILMOFFALY:</p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. T. McKeigue, seconded by Cllr. D. Dolan, Cllr. J. Clendennen was appointed to the Board of FilmOffaly.</p>
<p>ROADWORKS SCHEME 2017:</p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. T. McKeigue, seconded by Cllr. E. Dooley, the members agreed to adopt the <i>Roadworks Scheme 2017</i>, as previously circulated.</p> <p>It was agreed by the members to discuss Cllr. J. Clendennen motion this time -</p> <p><i>'Request Offaly County Council to identify options in the annual budget process to allocate funding towards CIR and LIS Road Schemes in 2018, whilst also write to the Department of Transport seeking additional funding for roads across the county in light of the recent National Oversights & Audit Commission Report.'</i></p> <p>Cllr. J. Clendennen proposal that the wording be amended to read '<i>... allocate funding towards reinstating the CIR and LIS Road Schemes in 2018</i>' was agreed. The motion was seconded by Cllr. T. McKeigue and unanimously supported.</p> <p>During the ensuing discussion Cllr. J. Clendennen proposed that the manner by which the Department allocates funding for roads is not effective and that funding should be based on needs rather than population. The current funding mechanism, he suggested, does not take into account the difficulty Offaly experiences in maintaining roads based on peat foundation. Cllr. T. McKeigue proposed that funding for LIS needs to be reinstated, noting that no works have been approved since 2008. He proposed that the Oireachtas members be briefed on the Council's position in advance of the Chief Executive's meeting with the Department.</p> <p>Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S., advised that the SPC will explore funding options at their next meeting. He informed the meeting that the Chief Executive, Senior Engineer and himself are meeting with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in the coming week and are seeking a meeting with the Minister and senior Department officials.</p>

	<p>The Cathaoirleach agreed to consider the notice of motion, included in the correspondences, from the Municipal District of Birr. Cllr. S. Maher advised that traffic in Birr was an issue and that the Council should lobby for funding to develop the ring road as outlined in the Birr Town Plan 2010. During the discussion that followed some suggested that the proposed ring road was too long and that traffic management in the town should be examined and the possibility of more cost effective measures be considered. The importance of maintaining a vibrant town centre was acknowledged by all.</p> <p>Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S., advised that the estimate for priority capital road projects in Offaly in 2014 was €123m. He advised that the first priority for Offaly was the Tullamore to Kilbeggan link road. He suggested that this still remains the most strategic project for Offaly.</p>
<p>OFFALY HERITAGE PLAN 2017-2021:</p>	<p>Mr. D. Kirrane, D.O.S. advised the members that the <i>Offaly Heritage Plan 2017-2021</i> was placed for public consultation and no submissions were received.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. F. Moran, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the <i>Offaly Heritage Plan 2017-2021</i>, as previously circulated, was adopted by the members.</p>
<p>CREATIVE IRELAND:</p>	<p>Ms. A. Pedlow, Heritage Officer briefed the members on the Creative Ireland programme, noting that it is a legacy Government initiative evolving from the successful 1916 commemorative centenary programme. She advised that a local committee comprising of the County Librarian, County Architect, Arts Officer and SEO, Corporate Services will oversee the county programme and that she was assigned Coordinator for 2017.</p> <p>The Creative Ireland programme, she advised, aims to place creativity and culture at the centre of public policy. Each Council is currently preparing a county Culture Plan for 2017-2022. She advised that a public consultation meeting will be held on 4th April at 7.15p.m. in Tullamore Central Library. She invited the members to attend and to communicate the event to others.</p> <p>Ms. A. Pedlow, Heritage Officer advised that funding of €65,000 was provided by the Department for 2017 and that this funding will be used to provide greater access to and deepen engagement in the current local heritage, arts and culture and library service programmes in 2017.</p>
<p>DRAFT RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLANS:</p>	<p>Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., informed the meeting that public consultation on the Draft <i>River Basin Management Plans</i> is on-going. He advised that interested parties are invited to make written submissions or comments to help inform the development of the final plans no later than 5.30pm on Thursday, 31st August 2017.</p>

<p>PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON IRELAND'S NITRATES ACTION PROGRAMME:</p>	<p>Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., advised that submissions, observations and comments on the third review of <i>Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme</i> are currently being sought and that the consultation period will run until Friday, 28th April 2017.</p>
<p>MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT:</p>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive drew the members' attention to the monthly management report which had circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>She drew the members' attention to the circulated <i>Offaly Tourism Statement of Strategy 2017 – 2022</i> which she advised the members will be launched later in the week by the Minister. During the discussion that ensued the members acknowledged the six priority areas listed but stressed that other areas need to be highlighted by the Council. The executive noted the points raised.</p> <p>Cllr. F. Moran requested that a Housing report be included on the next Council agenda.</p> <p>Cllr. E. Dooley noted that €400,000 was provided in the 2017 Budget for Civic Amenities and requested that an update on this item be listed on the next agenda.</p>
<p>CORPORATE POLICY GROUP REPORT:</p>	<p>Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, Cathaoirleach advised that the Corporate Policy Group met earlier that day to consider the Monthly Council Agenda and to approve the list of conferences and training courses for circulation.</p> <p>The Cathaoirleach advised that the CPG had reviewed a proposal received from Ballycommon, Ballinagar and Geashill to enter a formal twinning process with Jaux, France. He informed the meeting that the CPG had determined that in accordance with Part 2, Schedule 3, <i>Local Government Reform Act 2014</i>, the reserved function will be listed on the next Municipal District of Edenderry agenda for their consideration and resolution.</p> <p>The Cathaoirleach advised that Killina Presentation School had requested a Civic Reception for Italian students who will be visiting on an exchange programme. Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, Cathaoirleach advised that the CPG had considered this matter and were proposing that a Civic Welcome be extended to the students. This was proposed by the Cathaoirleach, seconded by Cllr. S. Dooley, and agreed.</p>
<p>NOTICES OF MOTION:</p>	<p>(i) The following notice of motion was proposed by Cllr. M. O'Reilly, seconded by Cllr. B. Killeavy, and agreed:</p> <p><i>'That this Council engages early with the Repair and Leasing scheme and to also cooperate, where possible, with all Approved Housing bodies at a local level, so as to achieve the maximum output in 2017 in reducing the current number of vacant properties in County Offaly.'</i></p> <p>Cllr. J. Leahy noted his reservations with the Scheme</p>

suggesting that it will ultimately exclude people from being able to afford private housing. Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., in responding to questions raised advised that the Council is proactively considering all the housing options available to the Authority and that the Council had reached its target under the Housing Assistance Programme (HAP) in 2016.

(ii) The following motion was proposed by Cllr. M. O'Reilly and seconded by Cllr. B. Killeavy.

'That this Council calls for a full moratorium on all Wind Farm and Wind Turbine developments, until such a time that the Wind Turbine Guidelines have been published'.

During the lengthy discussion that followed, the members raised concerns with regard to the delay in publishing the national guidelines; the proliferation of wind turbines in North Offaly; and, sought a Review of Wind Energy Strategy.

In responding to the issues raised Mr. D. Kirrane, D.O.S., advised that the motion was technically flawed, i.e., the members cannot direct the Chief Executive not to consider planning applications received, noting that the Chief Executive must take local, regional and national policies into consideration; private operators cannot be requested not to submit planning applications; wind turbines are considered within the terms of the Council's adopted Wind Energy Strategy which includes that the overall effect of wind farms in an area will be considered when examining a planning application. Mr. D. Kirrane, D.O.S., advised that the Wind Energy Strategy was adopted by the members in 2014. He advised that the Planners would also welcome the publication of national guidelines but strongly recommended to the members that the local Wind Energy Strategy, as adopted, was significantly robust to address the concerns raised by them. The Director of Services informed the meeting that the current County Development Plan is to 2020 and that work on preparing the next plan will commence later this year which will then afford the members the opportunity to review the Wind Energy Strategy. He advised that the *Local Authority Adaptation Strategy* and *Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy* will also have to be considered and incorporated. A variation of the current Plan, Mr. D. Kirrane, D.O.S., advised will take a six month period.

A number of members expressed their frustration with the system. Cllr. B. Killeavy accepted the comments in relation to the motion but stressed that the current guidelines are outdated and that the Wind Energy Strategy adopted by the Council did not take account of the increased size of current turbines.

Cllr. D. Dolan proposed that the planners provide an update on recent reports regarding amendments proposed in Donegal and Laois County Councils.

	<p>Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, Cathaoirleach, noted that a variation would take six months and agreed that the Wind Energy Strategy should be considered at the next Council meeting.</p>
<p>COMHDHÁLACHA:</p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. F. Moran, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the members noted and approved the conferences and training seminars as follows:</p> <p><u>CONFERENCES:</u></p> <p>Celtic Conferences “What does a Hard Brexit mean for Ireland?” 31st March – 2nd April 2017 The Four Seasons Hotel, Carlingford, Co. Louth <i>It was agreed no Councillor would attend.</i></p> <p>ACE Management & Training "2 Day Social Media Training for Councillors" 19th - 20th April 2017 The Clonakilty Hotel, Clonakilty, Co. Cork <i>It was agreed no Councillor would attend.</i></p> <p>Celtic Conferences “LGAS – An overview of the work of Local Government Auditors?” 21st - 23rd April 2017 The Clonakilty Hotel, Clonakilty, Co. Cork <i>It was agreed no Councillor would attend.</i></p> <p>CMG Events “Irish Planning Conference 2017 – National Planning Framework, the future of urban planning, activating spaces and developing places” Wednesday 14th June 2017 Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. <i>It was agreed no Councillor would attend.</i></p> <p>Celtic Conferences "Money Matters after Death" 12th - 14th May 2017 The Clonakilty Hotel, Clonakilty, Co. Cork <i>It was agreed no Councillor would attend.</i></p> <p>ACE Management & Training "2 Day Social Media Training for Councillors" 15th - 16th April 2017 The Clonakilty Hotel, Clonakilty, Co. Cork <i>It was agreed no Councillor would attend.</i></p> <p>Celtic Conferences "The Fair Deal Scheme What’s the deal with nursing home care?" 19th – 21st May 2017 The Clonakilty Hotel, Clonakilty, Co. Cork <i>It was agreed no Councillor would attend.</i></p>
<p>COMHDHÁLACHA: (contd)</p>	<p><u>TRAINING:</u></p> <p>AILG Annual Conference 6th & 7th April 2017 Tracey's West County Hotel, Ennis, Co. Clare, <i>It was agreed Councillors J. Carroll, J. Clendennen, N.</i></p>

