

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ**

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

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE  
ON MONDAY, 15<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2020 AT 2.00 P.M.**

<b>PRESENT:</b>	Cllr. P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach, Cllrs. J. Carroll, C. Claffey, J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, E. Dooley, N. Feighery, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, M. Hackett, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, T. McCormack, R. McDermott, F. Moran, S. O'Brien, D. Owens, L. Quinn and K. Smollen.
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive; Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S. (R); Ms. S. Kennedy, D.O.S. (R); Mr. M. Connolly, H.O.F.; Ms. A. Dillon, A/D.O.S., Mr. G. Bruton, Meetings Administrator, Mr. R. Bell, H.I.S.; Mr. C. Melia, S.E.P. and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O. <i>[(R) denotes remote access]</i>
<b>VOTES OF SYMPATHY:</b>	Votes of sympathy were unanimously extended to the following: -  Mrs. Rose Nolan, Gracefield, Portarlinton on the death of her husband Paul Nolan;  Mr. Seamus Crombie, Kilcappa, Cloneygowan, on the death of his brother Ber Crombie;  Mr. Joe Gorman, Garryhinch, Portarlinton, on the death of his brother Seamus Gorman.  The Chief Executive, on her own behalf and on behalf of the staff of Offaly County Council, joined with the members in these votes of sympathy.
<b>CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES:</b>	On the proposal of Cllr. N. Feighery, seconded by Cllr. D. Owens, the members resolved to adopt the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Offaly County Council held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> May 2020.
<b>MINUTES FOR NOTING:</b>	The members noted the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Minutes of Corporate Policy Group Meeting held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2020;</li><li>- Minutes of Corporate Policy Group Meeting held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020;</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minutes of the Community, Cultural and Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on the 14th February 2020;</li> <li>- Minutes of the Housing Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 20th February 2020</li> </ul>
<b>SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001, OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSES TO TRANSFER 0.0624 HECTARES OF LAND AT MULLANAFAWNIA, RATH, FOR THE DEED OF RECTIFICATION TO MR JOSEPH O'BRIEN MULLANAFAWNIA, RATH, BIRR, CO. OFFALY</b>	On the proposal of Cllr. J. Carroll seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy the members resolved to the transfer of 0.0624 hectares of land at Mullanafawnia, Rath, for the Deed of Rectification to Mr Joseph O'Brien Mullanafawnia, Rath, Birr, Co. Offaly in accordance with the Section 183 Notice issued on 29 <sup>th</sup> May 2020
<b>SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001, OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSES TO TRANSFER 0.186 HECTARES AT CURRAGHAVARNA AND PORTAVOLLA, BANAGHER FOR THE DEED OF RECTIFICATION TO MS MARY MAHON, MAIN STREET, BANAGHER</b>	On the proposal of Cllr. T. McCormack, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy the members resolved to the transfer of 0.186 hectares at Curraghavarna and Portavolla, Banagher for the Deed of Rectification to Ms Mary Mahon, Main Street, Banagher in accordance with the Section 183 notice issued on 29 <sup>th</sup> May 2020.
<b>SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001, OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSES THE SALE OF 0.072 HECTARES AND 0.00075 HECTARES AT ENDRIM, FERBANE TO GERTRUDE DOLAN</b>	On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey the members resolved to the sale of 0.072 hectares and 0.00075 hectares at Endrim, Ferbane to Gertrude Dolan in accordance with the Section 183 notice issued on 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2020.
<b>SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS</b>	On the proposal of Cllr. N. Feighery, seconded by Cllr. D. Owens the members resolved to suspend the Standing Orders for the Audit Committee Report.
<b>AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT 2019</b>	<p>Mr. Peter Scully, Chairperson of the Offaly Audit Committee advised the members met on three occasions, in 2019. He provided the members with a brief overview of the Audit Committee Report 2019 that was circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>He outlined the various reports that the committee reviewed during the year and acknowledged the co-operation</p>

	<p>received from all parties. He complemented the members' commitment to the continued reduction of the Council's revenue deficit. He thanked the committee members, council staff, the internal auditor and elected members for their support. He recommended that the council consider tendering for a debt collection service to assist in collecting outstanding revenue.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. L. Quinn, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin the members resolved to adopt the Audit Committee Annual Report 2019.</p> <p>The members noted the Audit Committee Charter 2020 and the Audit Committee Work Plan 2020.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. J. Carroll, seconded by Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick the members resolved to adopt the Audit Committee Report to Council on the 2018 Annual Financial Statement and Local Government Auditor's Statutory Report.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive, joined with Cllr. P. Ormond Cathaoirleach in thanking Mr. P Scully and his committee for their work for this Council.</p>
<p><b>STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT (SID) -- DERRINLOUGH WIND FARM</b></p>	<p>Ms. A. Dillon, D.O.S. informed the members that the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) -- Derrinlough Wind Farm application will be decided on by an Bord Pleanála noting that Offaly County Council can submit reports and the Bord are not bound by but are required to have regard to the submissions provided.</p> <p>Mr. C. Melia, S.E.P., provided the members with a detailed presentation on the application and the Chief Executive's Report. He advised the members that the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) Applications are provided for under the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 and An Bord Pleanála (ABP) determined the proposal was a SID in October 2019 as the Wind Farm Threshold for a SID - &gt;25 no. turbines or total output greater than 50MW.</p> <p>Mr. C. Melia outlined the application, informing the members of the location and a summary of the proposed development. He noted that the proposal consists of 21 wind turbines, 2 anemometry masts, 1 substation with associated works, a grid connection, 2 permanent underpasses with a 30-year operational life. The application is sought for 10 years planning permission. He advised the members of the specifications, including a maximum height of 185m. He highlighted the key planning considerations, noting that 7 of the proposed turbines are outside the designated wind area as per the Council's current Wind Energy Strategy. He noted concern about the cumulative visual impact of 37 wind turbines in the locality, the Environment and Water Services Department requirement</p>

for further information or clarity in relation to the noise assessment and the noise criteria selected. He advised the Shadow Flicker is identified to have effects on 5 no. properties and the applicant has committed to a curtailment strategy for all turbines that cause an exceedance of daytime or annual shadow flicker thresholds and it is considered there will be no impact from shadow flicker on residential properties as a result of the proposed development. He informed the members of new draft guidelines for Wind Energy, but highlighted that this application is currently under the 2006 guidelines. He advised the members on the Community Gain proposal in the amount of €10m over the lifetime of the project. He noted two key elements of Community Fund;

- 1) A fixed level of funding, each calendar year, for community led projects
- 2) Near Neighbour Scheme whereby an annual contribution towards the cost of electricity bills will be paid to residents within a prescribed distance of a wind turbine and in addition, contribution to participants with respect to the completion of energy measures on their properties and/or education support.

He noted concern over the limited detail on the breakdown of funding and the implementation of the Community Gain Scheme. He updated the members on the proposed amenities consisting of:

- 18km of amenity pathways which will be available to walkers, trail runners, cyclists and other recreational users
- A new public carpark for 15 no. vehicles to be accessed from the R357 Regional Road.
- 6.5km of dedicated amenity pathways are proposed to provide strategic links through the development site.
- The construction of a permanent underpass on the N62 to enhance the safety and connective of the site for recreational users.

The members thanked Mr. C. Melia for his informative report and raised concerns with regard to the community gain aspect They also noted noise concerns, decommissioning issues after the lifetime of the turbines and the control of shadow flicker. They sought clarification if the funding being provided by the developer in relation to the road network in the area was being included in the proposed Community Gain Funding. Some members raised concerns that the elected members were being removed from the planning process in relation to this development. They also noted the cumulative impact of the number of turbines in this area, particularly on the local residents adjacent to the development. They also noted that the additional internal roadways and tracks being provided on the site of the development should be linked to the Greenway and the Cycle Trails in the Slieve Blooms. The

	<p>members expressed satisfaction with the manner that the developer had engaged with the local communities.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy the members resolved to make a submission to An Bord Pleanála. Cllr. Dooley addressed the meeting and briefed the members on his submission which related to the Community Gain aspect of the development. He noted the success of previous Community funding obtained from ESB post power station closures and requested that the fund from this development be administered by the County Council, through the Local Enterprise Office. He proposed that 70% of the scheme should be ring-fenced for job creation initiatives. He proposed that the remainder of the funding should be used to support community group projects and a greener homes scheme within the local area. A copy of Cllr Dooley’s submission is attached to these minutes</p> <p>Mr. Melia responded to the member concerns and clarified the issues they had raised. He advised that the legislation allowed for oral hearings on this type of development but there were no indications that a hearing would be held in relation to this development.</p> <p>In accordance with the requirements of Section 37 E (6) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). the Council resolved to attach any submissions received from elected members on or before Thursday 18th June 2020 regarding an application by Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd to An Bord Pleanála under the Strategic Infrastructure Development Act 2006 for a Windfarm at Derrinlough, County Offaly and submit them with the Chief Executive’s Report and Meetings Administrators record of the Council meeting to An Bord Pleanála.</p>
<p><b>ANNUAL REPORT 2019</b></p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, seconded by Cllr. R. McDermott the members resolved to adopt the Annual Report 2019.</p>
<p><b>SECTION 40 OF THE DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS</b></p>	<p>Ms. A. Dillon brought the members attention to the Section 40 of the Data Protection Regulations, providing a new procedure for representations. She highlighted the appendices in the Guidance for Compliance with Section 40 of the Data Protection Act 2018, Elected Members Representations and informed them that training and information sessions will be provided. This was noted by the members.</p>
<p><b>FINANCE / LOCAL PROPERTY TAX REPORT</b></p>	<p>Cllr. P. Ormond introduced the members to the newly appointed Head of Finance Mr. Mark Connolly. In addressing the members Mr. M. Connolly noted that he is looking forward to working with them and welcomed the 15% rise in LPT saying it was a very progressive decision. He brought the members attention to the spreadsheet outlining the various projects that the extra funding will provide.</p>

	<p>The members welcomed Mr. M. Connolly and acknowledged that increasing the Local Property Tax was a difficult decision but welcomed it as a platform to drawdown up to four times more funding. They voiced their concerns that the three largest towns in the county are benefitting initially and hoped that the smaller towns will get funding in the next few years. Cllr. N. Cribbin sought clarification on the funding for Edenderry.</p> <p>Ms. S. Kennedy responded in regard to Edenderry Phase one will unlock the link road and phase 2 will concentrate on the Library.</p> <p>Mr. M. Connolly joined Ms. A. Delaney in thanking the members for their positive comments and their support.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. N. Feighery, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll the members resolved to adopt the Local Property Fund Project Proposals 2020.</p>
<p><b>FREE PUBLIC WI-FI IN OFFALY AND DRAFT DIGITAL STRATEGY</b></p>	<p>Mr. R. Bell provided the members with a detailed presentation on Free Public Wi-Fi in Offaly. He advised the members on Offaly tourism, providing Wi-Fi for Greenways, Blueways, Offaly’s Hidden Gems, Kinnitty, Banagher, Shannonbridge and noted the project is funded up to Summer 2024. He outlined the 10 broadband Connection points in community centres and villages in the county which will be completed in 2020. He updated the members on the Wi-Fi4EU initiative, promoting free access to Wi-Fi in public spaces in communities, with 38 locations identified in the county and this project is fully funded up to summer 2025. He informed the members that by the end of 2020 60 locations in Offaly will have access to free public Wi-Fi with an investment of €300,000 over 5 years. He invited the members to contact himself or the Broadband Officer Ms. Catriona Hilliard if they want to pick other locations. He updated the members on the Libraries, Schools, Business parks, remote working spaces and their progress identifying mobile blackspots in order to improve coverage.</p> <p>Mr. R. Bell outlined the Draft Digital Strategy to facilitate development of high speed broadband and digital infrastructure in line with the National Broadband Plan. He advised the members that the strategy aims to develop strategies and digital-proof future capital and development projects to enhance infrastructure at key locations to attract and sustain ICT, data centres, &amp; big data sectors. He informed the members of the Smart services Internet of Things pilot to introduce town Smartzones in Tullamore, Birr and Edenderry.</p> <p>He highlighted the digital enterprise and employment benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the development of sustainable remote working, co-working and business workspaces including opportunities at Broadband Community Points</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support small Irish businesses to trade more online, boost sales and reach new markets, through Digital Marketing and the Trading Online Voucher Scheme</li> <li>• To support I-LOFAR and further enhance Ireland’s world-leading scientific research capability in big data and data analytics.</li> <li>• Continue to develop STREAM (Science, Technology, Research, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) initiatives throughout the county.</li> <li>• Identify, Support and Promote Digitally Focused Projects of scale throughout the County</li> </ul> <p>He outlined the benefits to communities and citizens including collaboration with Education and Learning providers, libraries, tourism, heritage and community and cultural services. He advised the members that a Cathaoirleach Community Digital Prize would be created as part of Offalys community awards and a Digital Summit would be organised with some focus on diaspora input. He noted that the Council website and online service delivery would continue to be provided and improved. This would be governed by a Digital Strategy Committee comprised of representation groups to evaluate all ongoing and new strategies.</p> <p>The members thanked Mr. R. Bell for his excellent presentation and the ongoing work of the Information Systems staff. They welcomed the free public Wi-Fi, the progress on community centres and school’s digital development. They noted that in light of Covid 19 technology has become essential in order to protect jobs, to assist working from home and to provide remote working hubs. The members raised queries on passwords, internet protection, Churches and business input and the status of National Broadband. Cllr. J. Clendennen suggested that underground ducting should be mandatory for all service installations.</p> <p>In responding to the members queries Mr. R. Bell confirmed that no passwords are required for public Wi-Fi, but scheduled times could be investigated. He confirmed that businesses have been accommodating with access and that a project with the church in Kinnitty was successful, however there are no more projects with Churches planned currently. He noted the National Broadband Plan is under contract with Eir and there is a meeting with them scheduled for July. He confirmed that the Clara Interpretative Centre is included in the plan, however sports facilities are not currently included.</p>
<p><b>JUST TRANSITION</b></p>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney provided the members with an update on the Just Transition advising that the team met on 4<sup>th</sup> of June and the closing date for applications for the Start Project was 12<sup>th</sup> June. She noted that there is a good volume of applications received and the criteria to assess them was being developed by the the Department. She advised that workshops will be organised for September.</p>

	<p>The members thanked Ms. A. Delaney for her update and in response called for support for job losses, tourism projects, roads upgrades and waterways improvement works. They queried the status of the Deep Retrofit Programme in light of Covid 19.</p> <p>In response to the members queries Ms. A. Delaney confirmed that Deep Retrofit inspections will resume. She confirmed that the Start programme will provide technical assistance to those most impacted.</p>
<p><b>MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT:</b></p>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney brought the members attention to the May monthly management report as circulated with the agenda. She advised the members that applications are being processed for the Covid 19 Restart Grant and funding has been received from the Department. She informed the members that a number of supports are available to businesses from the Local Enterprise Office, with additional staff assigned to assist with business supports. She updated the members on re-opening with Phase 1 Roads Programme and housing construction commenced, Phase Two click and collect Library Services and playgrounds open. She advised that preparations are being made for Phase Three re-opening on 29<sup>th</sup> June. She updated the members on the Community Response Forum having dealt with approximately 420 calls. She informed the members that the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, Clár and outdoor recreation schemes are currently being processed. She highlighted the Local and Community Development and the Libraries newsletters now available.</p> <p>The members thanked the Chief Executive for her informative report. Cllr. D. Harvey requested an update on the Disable Persons Grants. Cllr. S. O'Brien questioned the uptake for the Re-start grant and the timeline for payment. The members sought clarification on the phase 3 re-opening.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney confirmed that Disabled Persons Grant payments are being processed and inspection will resume soon in accordance with health and safety guidelines. She advised that the uptake for the Re-Start grant is at 20% with 347 applications and the turnaround for payment is 2 weeks. She called on the members to raise the profile for the grants to increase the take-up. She advised the members that the re-opening is guided by the public health business continuity plan and it is regularly being updated. She informed the members that Planning have re-opened on an appointment only basis, all services have been available by phone and email and the re-opening on the 29<sup>th</sup> June will be on a phased basis with social distancing and remote working will continue.</p>
<p><b>CORPORATE POLICY GROUP REPORT:</b></p>	<p>Cllr. P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach informed the members that the Corporate Policy Group met on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June and</p>



