

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

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

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE
ON MONDAY, 18TH MAY 2020 AT 2.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:	<p>Cllr. P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach, Cllrs. J. Carroll, C. Claffey, J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, E. Dooley (R), 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 (R) and K. Smollen.</p> <p><i>[(R) denotes remote access]</i></p>
IN ATTENDANCE:	<p>Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive; Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S.; Ms. S. Kennedy, D.O.S. (R); Mr. T. Mawe, A/H.O.F.; Ms. A. Dillon, A/D.O.S., Mr. G. Bruton, Meetings Administrator, Ms. E. McGinn, County Librarian and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O.</p> <p><i>[(R) denotes remote access]</i></p>
CATHAOIRLEACH ADDRESS	<p>Cllr. P. Ormond thanked the Information Systems section and all staff in Offaly County Council for efficiently meeting the challenges and allowing work to continue during the Covid 19 crisis. He welcomed the members both in the Chamber and those joining the meeting remotely, including the press. He called a minute's adjournment in remembrance of the citizens of the county who have passed away during the Pandemic.</p>
VOTES OF SYMPATHY:	<p>Votes of sympathy were unanimously extended to the following: -</p> <p>Mrs. Bernie Molloy, Burkes Hill, Birr on the death of her husband Mr. Paddy Molloy;</p> <p>Mr. Milo Burns, 6 Coolagarry, Walsh Island, on the death of his wife Mrs. Sheila Burns.</p> <p>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.</p>
CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES:	<p>Cllr. F. Moran noted that he had requested that the Rates Demand should not issue and his request was ignored.</p> <p>In response to his query Ms. A. Delaney advised the members that issuing the rate demands is an executive function and approximately 400 demands issued and 1,600 demands were still to be issued. She informed the members that the government have approved a commercial rates waiver scheme for a three-month period beginning on 27 March for businesses that have been forced to close due to public health requirements. She advised that the scheme may be extended and that a Restart Grant will be available for small to medium</p>

	<p>businesses. Mr. T. Mawe also advised the members that the revenue collectors have worked with the rates customers to ensure that any businesses not currently operating due to Covid 19, do not receive a rates demand and he noted that a number of customers have paid their rates as normal.</p> <p>The members welcomed the waiver and the grants schemes but raised concerns that the waived Rates would have to be paid in the future, that some businesses while opened are operating at a loss and that some businesses may take a long time to recover or may never re-open. They also noted that the Restart Grant of €2,000 per business may not be sufficient.</p> <p>Mr. T. Mawe responded that the waiver is a write off and Offaly County Council will be re-imbursed by the Government. He informed the members that the Restart Grant scheme is available for businesses with a turnover of less than €5m per year, with less than 50 employees that have been either closed or effected by Covid 19. Ms. A. Delaney noted that the current situation is challenging with information changing on daily basis and that the issue is being reviewed nationally.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. C. Claffey, 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 20th April 2020.</p>
<p>MINUTES FOR NOTING:</p>	<p>The members noted the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of Corporate Policy Group Meeting held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on Monday 17th February 2020; • Minutes of Meeting of Land Use, Planning and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on 3rd December 2019.
<p>SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001, OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSES TO DISPOSE OF TWO PLOTS OF LAND IN THE TOWNLAND OF RAHEEN, CLARA, CO. OFFALY TO MR. JOE PRICE</p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. F. Moran, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey the members resolved to the disposal of two plots of land in the townland of Raheen, Clara, Co. Offaly to Mr. Joe Price in accordance with the terms of the Section 183 notice issued on 2nd March 2020.</p>
<p>SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001, OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSES TO TRANSFER OF LAND OF 0.051 HECTARES AT ENDRIM FERBANE TO CATHAL</p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll the members resolved to the transfer of land of 0.051 hectares at Endrim, Ferbane to Cathal Mcearney in accordance with terms of the Section 183 notice issued on 6th April 2020.</p>

<p>MCELEARNEY, ENDRIM, FERBANE, COUNTY OFFALY</p>	
<p>SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001, OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSES TO LEASE THE SITE CONTAINING DISUSED WATER TOWER IN THE TOWNLAND OF RAGHRA, SHANNONBRIDGE TO CIGNAL INFRASTRUCTURE LTD, SUITE 311, Q HOUSE, 76 FURZE ROAD, SANDYFORD, CO. DUBLIN</p>	<p>Cllr. K Smollen brought the members attention to recent concerns raised by Deputy Willie O’Dea with regard the erection of 5G masts and the lack of transparency, planning requirements and consideration for communities. In response the members noted that 5G is not currently available in Offaly and that further communications infrastructure would help alleviate some of the blackspots in coverage including Shannonbridge.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney advised the members that any 5G proposed installation would require a licence.</p> <p>Some members noted the calls from communities across the county for improved mobile phone connectivity. They also noted that businesses were seeking better WiFi and Internet connections to run their businesses.</p> <p>Cllr. K. Smollen proposed to stall the Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001, to lease the Site Containing Disused Water Tower in the Townland of Raghra, Shannonbridge to Cignal Infrastructure Ltd, Suite 311, Q House, 76 Furze Road, Sandyford, Co. Dublin, seconded by Cllr. F. Moran.</p> <p>Mr. G. Bruton informed the members that a roll call would be required, requesting the members to state their preference in relation to Cllr. K. Smollens proposal.</p> <p>The result of the ballot was as follows: For: Cllrs. K. Smollen, F. Moran. Against: Cllrs. J. Carroll, C. Claffey, J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, N. Feighery, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, M. Hackett, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, T. McCormack, R. McDermott, S. O’Brien, P. Ormond and D. Owens. Cllrs. E. Dooley and L. Quinn were excused as they were attending the meeting remotely.</p> <p>The Cathaoirleach deemed the Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001, to lease the Site Containing Disused Water Tower in the Townland of Raghra, Shannonbridge to Cignal Infrastructure Ltd, Suite 311, Q House, 76 Furze Road, Sandyford, Co. Dublin adopted.</p>
<p>SECTION 85 AGREEMENT BETWEEN OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL AND KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL APPOINTING KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL AS THE LEAD AUTHORITY FOR THE EASTERN REGION FOR THE LOCAL AUTHORITY PUBLIC</p>	<p>Mr. T. Shanahan informed the members on the proposed agreement with Kilkenny County Council as lead authority, to upgrade the remaining lights to LED under one contract with 8 other counties. He outlined the possible savings through reduced energy maintenance and upgrade costs.</p> <p>In response the members raised concerns about the standard of the lights under the contract, going into agreement with Local Authority outside the region and the status of our current contractors. They also queried the timeline and if the contract will include new lighting. They noted that the current contractors are doing a good job and their online reporting system is excellent.</p>

<p>LIGHTING ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROJECT</p>	<p>Mr. T. Shanahan responded that it is normal practice to enter into agreement with other Local Authorities to achieve economies of scale and efficiencies. He confirmed that maintenance will revert to Offaly County Council after the contract and that the specification will be assessed and agreed before the contract is awarded. He advised the members that new lighting is provided for in the yearly budget.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. M. Hackett, seconded by Cllr. J. Clendennen the members resolved to adopt the Section 85 Agreement between Offaly County Council and Kilkenny County Council appointing Kilkenny County Council as the lead Authority for the Eastern Region for the Local Authority Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project</p>
<p>PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT, 2000 AS AMENDED, PART 8 OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, 2001 AS AMENDED, FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT FOR EXTENSION TO KILCOURSEY CEMETERY, CLARA</p>	<p>Cllr. F. Moran noted that tarmacadam at the parking space across from the graveyard is required and Cllr. K. Smollen suggested that water and bins should be provided.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. F. Moran, seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery the members resolved to adopt the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as Amended, Part 8 of The Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as Amended, for the proposed development for Extension to Kilcoursey Cemetery, Clara</p>
<p>ROADWORKS PROGRAMME 2020</p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. F. Moran, seconded by Cllr. D. Owens the members resolved to adopt the Roadworks Programme 2020.</p>
<p>DRAFT ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2019 / OVER EXPENDITURE</p>	<p>Mr. T. Mawe brought the members attention to the Annual Financial Statement 2019 / Over Expenditure and advised the members that it is subject to audit. He highlighted the net surplus of €632,096 and the cumulative reduction in the deficit over the last 7 years to €1,873,757.</p> <p>Cllr. F. Moran queried the reduction in income from Irish Water and the progress on housing loans.</p> <p>In response Mr. T. Mawe informed the members that Irish Water introduced operational changes in relation to the purchasing of materials and goods, which accounted for the reduction in revenue and he confirmed that finance staff are working through the housing loans resulting in some improvement.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. J. Carroll, seconded by Cllr. F. Moran the members resolved to approve the excess expenditures for 2019 as detailed in Table 1.</p>
<p>DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2019</p>	<p>Ms. A. Dillon brought the members attention to the circulation of the Draft Annual Report 2019 on 30th April as per the Local Government Act, 2001, Section 221. She noted that the Final draft of the Annual Report 2019 will be presented to the members at the June Council meeting for adoption.</p>

<p>DRAFT SHOPFRONT ENHANCEMENT PILOT GRANT SCHEME</p>	<p>Ms. A. Dillon outlined the Draft Shopfront Enhancement Grant Scheme, noting that 15 grants are available at €2k per business, with 5 for each Municipal District of Birr, Edenderry and Tullamore.</p> <p>Cllr. E. Dooley, Chairperson of the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC recommended the Scheme and advised that it is a pilot scheme.</p> <p>The members welcomed the Scheme noting that it is a good initiative, which will benefit businesses. They voiced their hope that the grant amount would increase and become available to other towns in the county in the future.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. F. Moran, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin the members resolved to adopt the Draft Shopfront Enhancement Pilot Grant Scheme.</p>
<p>LIBRARY PRESENTATION</p>	<p>Ms. S. Kennedy thanked the innovative work of the Library staff, who have embraced the challenges in imaginative and positive ways during the Covid 19 crisis. She noted that they have enabled citizens young and old to access the library services virtually providing them with comfort, solace and education.</p> <p>Ms. E. McGinn provided the members with a comprehensive presentation outlining Offaly County Councils Library objectives of enabling economic growth, serving communities and promoting health and wellbeing. She advised the members that during the Covid 19 crisis the library closed in line with public health advice which brought challenges to meet user demand remotely, promptly and creatively. She outlined their strengths such as the 24/7 digital library access, a vast quality collection, with something for everyone including strong traditional programmes.</p> <p>Ms. E. McGinn informed the members on the development of the Library online services, consisting of ebooks, emagazines, enewspapers, elearning and archives content. She outlined the statistics including online membership increase of 337%, online learning increase of 550%, with new online courses up by 319% and facebook followers doubling. She thanked her staff for their input in providing Spring into Storytime virtually through 30 videos, some of which are as gaelige to almost 2,000 people and 133,542 views. She informed the members of other successful services such as Ask the Librarian, weekly blogs, Connecting the Faithful newsletter and the launch of Offaly Libraries first online newsletter. She informed the member of the library's staff assistance on the Community Response Forum. She outlined the new content coming online such as the Kids Corner, eComics and STEAM events. She advised the members of the Library's roadmap to re-opening, including preparing the buildings in line with Government guidelines.</p> <p>The members thanked her for her report and congratulated her and the library staff on their excellent services and response to the Covid 19 crisis. Cllr. C. Claffey commended the library,</p>

	<p>noting its valuable resource and highlighted the popularity and success of Storytime.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney acknowledged the library’s reaction to the crisis and thanked them for their assistance on the Community Response Forum.</p>
<p>MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT:</p>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney brought the members attention to the April monthly management report as circulated with the agenda and noted that an interim report had also issued for their information. She advised the members of the roadmap to re-opening noting the structural changes in Áras an Chontae and she advised the members that they will be updated at each stage. She highlighted that business had continued with Council, Municipal District, Strategic Policy Committee and Local Community Development meetings being held with the assistance of Information Systems. She noted that essential services have continued to be provided including housing, Civic Amenity sites, Community Response Forum Helpline and Local Enterprise Office services. She advised the members on the Stage 1 re-opening with road and construction works returning. She updated the members that the planning section will be open to the public by appointment from Monday 25th May. She updated the members on online initiatives by Community and Culture in relation to health and wellbeing, a Lough Boora report due in the near future and the Just Transition.</p> <p>The members thanked the Chief Executive for her informative report. The members expressed concerns about the increase in anti-social behavior, illegal dumping and the need for on-going resources for both Community Forum and the Local Enterprise Office. Cllr. D. Owens requested that Just Transition should be an on-going item on the agenda. On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. D. Owens the members agreed that the council should write to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESB for clarification on supports they intend to provide after the closure of Shannonbridge Power Station • Bord na Mona for clarification on the community engagement process • Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment or clarification on the PSO levy <p>Ms. A. Delaney acknowledged that there has been significant engagement across the community and agreed that on-going resources would be required to be reviewed nationally. She agreed to issue the letters as requested.</p>
<p>CORPORATE POLICY GROUP REPORT:</p>	<p>Cllr. P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach informed the members that the Corporate Policy Group met on Friday 15th May and discussed the Visiting Dignitaries protocol. He noted the council agenda and Just Transition were also discussed. He advised the members that changes to the standing orders are required to allow alternative locations for meetings due to the Covid 19 crisis.</p>

	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. J. Carroll, seconded by Cllr. C. Claffey the members resolved to insert the following wording in the Standing Orders at Standing Order 6</p> <p><i>“In so far as practicable the place for holding meetings of the Council shall be the principal offices of the local authority and meetings shall normally be held there. The place of meeting of the Council shall be at the Council Chamber, Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore or at such other place within or without the County as the Council shall direct, or in the absence of such direction, as the Cathaoirleach shall fix in any case of urgency, unless when the Council by resolution (which may be passed without notice) otherwise direct.”</i></p>
NOTICE OF MOTION	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. R. McDermott, seconded by Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick the members resolved to call on the Minister for Housing Planning and Local Government to finalise the review of income eligibility limits for social housing and publish its findings as a matter of urgency, as the current situation is causing terrible hardship for tenants in Offaly.</p>
COMHFHREAGRAS	<p>The members noted the correspondence received.</p>
ANY OTHER BUSINESS:	<p>Cllr. J. Leahy called for an investigation into a model to deal with domestic violence, in light of the increased calls to helplines and that no emergency accommodation is currently available in Offaly. He suggested that one safe house per housing development should be reserved to be made available for 12 weeks to allow domestic abuse victims time to assist them in getting help. Cllr. P. Ormond agreed to refer this to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee.</p> <p>Cllr. F. Moran welcomed the donation of 30,000 face masks from China for the Tullamore Hospital organised by Lord Oxmantown, Tullamore Municipal District and Offaly County Council through the twinning arrangement between Tullamore and the city of Lizhou.</p>

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH **RUNAÍ**

18th May 2020