

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL

HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE ON
TUESDAY 11TH AUGUST 2020 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT	<p>Cllr J. Carroll, D. Owens (R), N. Cribbin (R), E. Dooley (R), P. Ormond (R), D. Harvey (R), R. McDermott (R), J. Leahy (R), E. Fitzpatrick (R), J. Clenndennen (R), S. O'Brien (R), K. Smollen (R), M. Hackett (R), L. Quinn (R), F. Moran (R), C. Claffey (R), N. Feighery (R)</p> <p><i>[(R) denotes remote access]</i></p>
APOLOGIES	<p>Cllr T. McCormack, and J. Foley.</p>
IN ATTENDANCE	<p>Ms. A Delaney, Chief Executive, Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S. (R), Ms. A. Dillon, A/ D.O.S. (R), Ms. S. Kennedy D.O.S. (R), Mr. M. Connelly (R), Mr. G. Bruton, Meetings Administrator</p> <p><i>[(R) denotes remote access]</i></p>
COVID RESTRICTIONS INTRODUCED FOR OFFALY AUGUST 7TH 2020	<p>The Cathaoirleach opened the meeting and thanked the members for attending the Special Meeting at short notice.</p> <p>He referred to the Covid restrictions introduced in Offaly on Friday 7th August 2020, and noted the effects that these measures would have on the county and the neighbouring counties of Laois and Kildare. These measures, coupled with the lockdown measures introduced earlier in the year, would have a huge impact on the economy of the county which was only beginning to recovery from the earlier measures. He noted that the introduction of the measures were as a result of the positive test results increasing across the three counties, and he questioned why a full county lockdown was necessary when parts of the county were a considerable distance from the affected areas and meat plants. He stated that in his view, intensive testing and contact tracing should have been implemented in the locations of the plants. He noted that there were low numbers of cases in the west of the county and he didn't believe that these numbers justified the closure of businesses in that part of the county. He feared that many of the businesses forced to close across the county might never re-open. He noted the considerable investment in the county's Tourism sector and the recent uplift in this area however the sudden closure of these businesses would do irreparable harm to the sector.</p> <p>He noted that the measures came on top of the other challenges facing communities in Offaly, with the closure of West Offaly Power in Shannonbridge and the cessation of Bord Na Móna peat production in the county, with the job losses these entailed.</p> <p>He proposed that the Council would write to the Táinaiste Leo Varadkar T.D., Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation and also Stephen</p>

Donnelly T.D., Minister for Health seeking an immediate meeting with both Ministers to address the concerns of the Members and the citizens of Offaly. He stated that the Council should seek an immediate special stimulus package for the county.

The Chief Executive addressed the meeting; she advised the members that the Cathaoirligh from each of the counties had attended a meeting with the Taoiseach and the Acting Chief Medical Officer (CMO) on Friday evening of the announcement of the measures. The Acting CMO had advised on the need for the introduction of the Covid measures across the 3 counties.

She noted that an Emergency response group had been established, and this was a multi-agency group with representatives from An Garda Síochána, the HSE and Laois, Kildare and Offaly County Councils. The group would coordinate the responses across the counties and was coordinated by the HSE Emergency Management Office. She advised that she would circulate contact details of the group to the members. She advised that all queries in relation to the measures should be forwarded to this office, and daily updates would be issued by the office.

She noted that Offaly County Council had reactivated the Community Call Helpline with calls being managed by the staff in the Community and Culture Section and PPN. She noted that the Community Response Forum would be meeting on Wednesday 12th August. She advised that the Council Offices would continue to operate the amended Opening Hours, 9.30 to 1.00 pm, Monday to Friday. She noted that the Public would still be encouraged to conduct their business with the Council by phone, email or on-line. She advised that the Tourism Office in Tullamore was closed.

She noted the number of supports already in place for businesses and advised that the Council would continue to link with Enterprise Ireland, the IDA and other relevant bodies to ensure the full range of economic supports would be available to businesses in the county.

Mr. M. Connolly, Head of Finance, reminded the members that the Re-Start Grant Plus was launched and was available to support businesses. He noted that he had circulated the details of the Scheme to the Members.

The members expressed concern that the measures were introduced on Friday evening, they stated that they should have been activated on Monday at the earliest, to give businesses more time to prepare and to deal with the bookings and business they had scheduled for the weekend. They also stated that the HSE should have speeded up the testing regime to allow results to be issued in a timely fashion. The members all agreed that the use of county boundaries to implement these measures was wrong and better method would have to be devised to implement control measures in the future. The members stated that they were at a loss to understand why businesses across the county were forced to close when the meat plants at the centre of the outbreak remained open.

The members agreed with the Cathaoirleach's proposals to write to the Ministers concerned. They stated that a stimulus package for the county was urgently needed. They also called on Central Government to launch

	<p>a promotional campaign for the three counties, when the measures were lifted, to address the damage done to the tourism sector.</p> <p>The Chief Executive noted that the Public Health advice was paramount in this situation and she noted that if the members had any queries on this advice or Public Health related issues they should be directed to the HSE Coordination Group. She again reminded members of the existing business supports available and asked them to make this information available through their social media contacts and she noted the number of Grant schemes available to Community Groups. Ms Kennedy advised the members that the Sports Partnership section had announced a grant scheme for Sports clubs and that the LCDC had recently launched their Community Enhancement Programme for 2020.</p> <p>The Cathaoirleach closed the meeting and thanked the members for their contributions. He advised that the members would be kept informed of developments and would be advised when the meetings with the Ministers were agreed and scheduled.</p>
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This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED:

CATHAOIRLEACH

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21st September 2020