

Minutes of March Monthly Meeting

Held on 28th March 2022, in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road,
Tullamore and via Zoom

Present

Cllr. Declan Harvey Cathaoirleach

Cllr. John Carroll	Cllr. John Leahy
Cllr. Clare Claffey	Cllr. Tony McCormack
Cllr. John Clendennen	Cllr. Robert McDermott
Cllr. Noel Cribbin	Cllr. Frank Moran
Cllr. Eamon Dooley	Cllr. Sean O'Brien
Cllr. Neil Feighery	Cllr. Peter Ormond
Cllr. Eddie Fitzpatrick	Cllr. Danny Owens
Cllr. Mark Hackett	Cllr. Liam Quinn
	Cllr. Ken Smollen

The Meetings Administrator carried out a roll call to confirm attendance.

Apologies

Cllr. J. Foley

Officials in Attendance

Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive; Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S.; Ms. S. Kennedy, D.O.S.; Mr. A. Murray A/D.O.S. (R); Mr. M. Connolly, H.O.F.; Mr. E. Fennell, S.E.O. (R), Mr. G. Bruton, Meetings Administrator, Mr. C. Kelly, S.O.; Mr. P. Scully, Chairman of Audit Committee and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O. (R)

Votes of Sympathy

Votes of sympathy were unanimously extended to the following:

Alison Kelly, Offaly County Council, on the death of their father David Galbraith;

Patricia Marron, 62 Arden Vale, on the death of her mother Bridget Graham;

The Horan Family, The Square, Clonaslee, Co. Laois on the death of their father, Thomas Horan;

Marian Healy, Ballyoran, Ballyboy, Kilcormac, on the death of her partner Brendan Milne.

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.

1. Confirmation of Minutes

On the proposal of Cllr. N. Feighery, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy, the members resolved to adopt the minutes of the Ordinary meeting of Offaly County Council held on 21st February 2022.

2. Minutes for Noting

The members noted the following minutes:

- Minutes of the Climate Action, Environment, Water & Transportation Strategic Policy Committee meeting held on 15th December 2021;
- Minutes of the Community, Culture and Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee meeting held on 15th December 2021;
- Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 14th January 2022.

3. Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001

On the proposal of Cllr. N. Cribbin, seconded by Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, the members resolved to adopt Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001, to dispose of 0.001 acres of land at St. Bridgids Road, Edenderry to the Electricity Supply Board for the sum of €1.00.

4. Audit Committee Annual Report 2021

Mr. P. Scully advised the members that the Committee met on 4 occasions in 2021 as per legislative requirements and the Audit Committee Meetings in 2021 were attended the Chief Executive, Head of Finance, Directors of Service, Local Government Auditor, Procurement Officer and SEO Corporate Services. They considered and received briefings on Offaly County Council's Annual Financial Statement 2020, Offaly County Council's Annual Report 2020, updates on Local Government Audit Service Statutory Auditor's Reports, Quarterly finance report and Quarterly updates on the Internal Audit Plan progression.

He advised that the Audit Committee were further briefed on follow up reports from the Audit Recommendation Tracking System. Also, Internal Audit staff prepared the Internal Audit Charter 2021, Internal Audit Risk register, Internal Audit Draft Strategic Plan, Internal Audit Plan for 2021/2022 and Audit Committee Work Plan 2021/22 which were approved by the Audit Committee as part of their duties throughout the year.

All meetings in 2021 were held virtually in adherence with public safety guidelines.

The Internal Audit Unit provided administrative support to the Audit Committee in the fulfilling of its duties in 2021. This included preparing the agendas and relevant supporting documentation for the hosting of 4 Audit Committee meetings online, and the Chairs annual report to the Council.

Mr. P. Scully welcomed the member's commitment to reducing the revenue deficit and recommended they continue to provide for the deficit when approving the annual budget. He raised concerns with

regard to long term financing of the Tullamore Arts Centre and he advised prudence due to the precarious financial position following from the impact of decarbonisation.

In response Ms. A. Delaney advised that Offaly County Council management are liaising with the Department in looking for a permanent solution for the impact of decarbonisation and the resulting loss of rates income, and she hopes it will be resolved soon. She highlighted the comprehensive work programme for 2022 and advised that the recruitment of a replacement Internal Auditor is in process. She thanked the Audit Committee for their work and their comprehensive report.

The members joined with Cllr. D. Harvey in acknowledging the important work carried out by the Audit Committee and the issues highlighted by the committee.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll the members resolved to adopt the Audit Committee Annual Report 2021.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll the members resolved to adopt the Audit Committee Charter 2022.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll, the members resolved to adopt the Audit Committee Work Plan 2022.

5. Local Community Development Committee Change of Membership

Ms. S. Kennedy, D.O.S. advised members of a vacancy that has arisen on the Local Community Development Committee and she thanked the contribution of Mr. Ryan McKay to the committee and welcomed his replacement Mr. Colm Purcell as the new representative for the Department of Social Protection.

On the proposal of Cllr. D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick the members resolved that in accordance with Section 128C of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, Mr. Colm Purcell is to replace Mr. Ryan McKay, as representative of the Department of Social Protection under the 'Statutory Interests – State Agencies Sector on the LCDC.

6. Roads Programme 2022

Mr. T. Shanahan D.O.S. brought the members attention to the Roads Programme 2022 previously circulated in the Municipal Districts and he acknowledged the contribution of both members and staff to the programme. He highlighted the budget in the amount of €23.46m, an increase of nearly €3m, since last year and which had doubled from 6 years ago. He welcomed the NTA funding and he noted Offaly County Council own resources in the amount of over €2m. He advised the members that the budget does not including public lighting. He outlined some of the projects included in the budget such as the Edenderry Inner Relief Road, €75k to Birr Distributor Road and further funding for the Greenways. He informed the members that funding for the N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan link has not yet received any funding, however the route will be finalised and submitted to Department. He welcomed the member's approval of the Section 85 Agreement with Kilkenny County Council for the Public Lighting Energy Efficiency projects and noted that the tender process has just concluded and the full benefit of these works will be seen in 2024. He advised the members that the speed limit review will be take place this year. He cautioned that there are significant challenges on the programme with

the cost of materials and contractors rising in the current climate and this may result in reviewing the scope of the programme. Further challenges include the availability of contractors, required climate action initiatives, and the fact that road works require high energy use. This has to be balanced with efforts to reduce carbon footprint. He acknowledged the contribution of Jean Ryan, Barry Lennon, Willie Ryan and Phyllis Hughes to the programme.

The members thanked him for his report and they raised concerns about the lack of funding allocation for the N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan link, the need for more investment for the county roads network and the policy on the use of speed ramps.

Cllr. J. Carroll sought clarity on public lighting and a dangerous junction in Birr. Cllr. N. Cribbin raised concerns about the delays in fixing public lighting and the repairs that will be required on Edenderry Main Street due to the amount of works being carried out in the town.

In response Mr. T. Shanahan advised that a detailed submission has gone to TII in relation to the junction in BOLLANARRIG, N62 Birr and he will revert to the members with regard to the public lighting. He noted the members concerns in relation to speed ramps and advised that speed ramps are included in the policy for traffic calming, with each location examined on its own merits and the policy is due to be reviewed. He highlighted that the CIR allocations has benefitted Offaly County Council when other counties did not use their full allocation. He agreed with their concerns about the N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan Link and advised that when the route is finalised this may present an opportunity for funding. He informed the members that the pilot peat roads project will identify locations that require works and will also develop an analytic tool to prioritise locations for further funding allocations.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin the members resolved to adopt the Roads Programme 2022.

7. Just Transition

Mr. A. Murray provided the members with an update on Just Transition, advising them that the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communication (DECC) and the East and Midlands Regional Authority (EMRA) are working on the Ireland Territorial Just Transition Plan, likely to be adopted by the European Commission at the end of the year, and on the Operational Plan.

He informed the members that a meeting had taken place with the ESB at the Dalton Centre in Shannonbridge. The building is now empty and will be transferred to Offaly County Council following further discussions.

He also advised the members that a meeting with Bord na Mona and the Members has been arranged. On the proposal of Cllr. J. Clendennen, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin the members agreed to submit questions in advance of the Bord na Mona meeting, to be reviewed by the CPG to ensure the relevant issues are raised at the meeting.

Cllr. J. Leahy stressed the importance of highlighting the issues in relation to Just Transition with the MEPs and Oireachtas members.

Cllr. F. Moran sought clarity on funding for feasibility studies. Cllr. K. Smollen voiced his concerns with the costs involved in retro fitting and the rising cost of fuel.

8. Monthly Management Report

Ms. A. Delaney brought the members attention to the monthly management report as circulated with the agenda. She outlined the Regeneration projects and the allocations under the Towns and Villages Renewal Scheme and the Architectural and Heritage Schemes. She thanked the members for their approval of the Roads Programme 2022. She highlighted the National Spring Clean in April with litter packs from Offaly County Council available for volunteers. She acknowledged the success of Seachtain na Gaeilge with many events organised by the Library Services. She thanked the staff for their contribution to Seachtain na Gaeilge and the for the robotics event held in Birr Castle.

The members thanked her for her report and sought clarity on the Rural Water Monitoring Programme and collateral damage due to road works on the Clonaslee Road.

Cllr. K. Smollen called on Offaly County Council to investigate the use of Drayton Villa, Clara for an all-weather playing surface and the possibility of using the property for housing Ukrainian refugees.

Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S. advised that the roads- works in Clonaslee are being carried out by a contractor on behalf of Irish Water. Responsibility and any damage incurred would be under Irish Water's remit.

9. Corporate Policy Group Report

Cllr. D. Harvey informed the members that the council meeting agenda was discussed at the Corporate Policy Group meeting. He thanked the members for their support for his trip to New York for St. Patricks day and he noted it was a huge honour to represent the council. He advised that they had attended three beneficial meetings with Enterprise Ireland, IDA and Tourism Ireland.

10. Notices of Motion

On the proposal of Cllr. M. Hackett, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin, the members resolved that the policy for the Taking in Charge of Estates is reviewed and updated, and that the taking in charge of various housing estates across the county will be considered.

11. Comhdhálacha / Conferences

2022 AILG Annual Conference 23rd and 24th March 2022 in the Inishowen Gateway Hotel, Buncrana, Co. Donegal. *Approval was sought for the attendance of Cllrs. F. Moran, D. Harvey, E. Fitzpatrick and N. Cribbin*

Rural Regeneration Post Pandemic: The Challenges and Opportunities to Unlocking Our Potential taking place on the 27th & 28th April 2022 in the Abbey Hotel, Co. Roscommon. *It was agreed no member would attend.*

On the proposal of Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin, the members approved the conferences and training.

12. Comhfhreagras / Correspondence

The members noted the correspondence issued with the agenda.

13. Any Other Business

Cllr. M. Hackett sought clarity on an issue that a member of the public had brought to him, in relation to a hedge and tree removal at Meelaghans, during nesting season.

In response Mr. T. Shanahan advised that he will revert to him when it has been investigated.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy seconded by Cllr. J. Clendennen, the members resolved to host a civic reception for the Offaly Minor camogie team following their All Ireland Title win.

Cllr Declan Harvey, Cathaoirleach, informed the meeting that there are several agencies in Offaly working very hard at the moment to deal with the refugee crisis which is likely to increase in numbers. Cllr. T. McCormack thanked the Offaly Local Development Company, Ms. M. Cleary and housing staff in conjunction with the Offaly Volunteer Centre for their assistance in the Ukrainian refugee crisis. He invited members to meet at the Central Hotel, Tullamore on Wednesday March 30 to welcome the Ukrainian refugees to Ireland and Offaly. Cllr M. Hackett advised the members that the Geashill community have organised accommodation for five Ukrainian families.

The members paid tribute to staff and agencies that are assisting the refugees in providing them with accommodation, PPS numbers, medical cards, banking facilities, in a very efficient manner. The members sought a point of contact for information and an update at future council meetings.

Ms. S. Kennedy D.O.S. informed the members that IPAS (the International Protection Accommodation Services) is overseeing the housing of the refugees, with County Councils asked to assist IPAS with the humanitarian crisis. She advised the members that the EU passed a temporary protection directive which is ensuring that the people who are displaced will have the necessary services made available to them. The Council was contacted 10 days ago and was asked to assist. A number of agencies are assisting and services will evolve as emerging needs arise. She advised that the Community response forum has reconvened and is now pivoted to assist in the Ukrainian crisis. The various agencies will be sharing information, providing wrap-around services and she thanked all those involved, including the support from the Department of Rural and Community Development.

She noted there is a huge desire to help from many people in the community and the refugees are currently being housed in B&Bs and hotels for the short term, with work on-going to identify medium to longer term solutions. She agreed to provide further updates to the members. She advised that there is no one point of contact currently and she agreed that various properties including Drayton Villas in Clara will be examined to house the Ukrainian refugees.

Cllr. D. Harvey thanked Offaly Association and in particular Paddy Hogan and Martin Furlong for their warm hospitality in New York.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED:

CATHAOIRLEACH

RUNAÍ

25th April 2022

