

**MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON THE
27th OF FEBRUARY 2023 IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE**

PRESENT:	Councillor	Thomasina Connell	In The Chair
	Councillors	Willie Aird John Joe Fennelly James Kelly Caroline Dwane Stanley Conor Bergin Padraig Fleming Ben Brennan P.J. Kelly Seamus McDonald	Paddy Bracken Aidan Mullins Barry Walsh John King Paschal McEvoy Catherine Fitzgerald Ollie Clooney Aisling Moran Marie Tuohy

IN ATTENDANCE:

Messrs John Mulholland, Chief Executive, Donal Brennan, Director of Services, Simon Walton, Director of Services, Ms. Angela McEvoy, Director of Services, Mr. Gerry Murphy, Head of Finance, Ms. Irene Delaney, A.O., & Ms. Michelle McCormack, S.O.

26. VOTES OF SYMPATHIES

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly the Members unanimously agreed to pass a vote of sympathy to the Clooney family on the recent death of Mr. Paddy Clooney, Ballytarsna, Abbeyleix, Co. Laois.

On the proposition of Councillor James Kelly, the Members unanimously agreed to pass a vote of sympathy to the Hooban family on the recent death of Mr. Pat Hooban, 20 Cherrygarth, Portlaoise, Co. Laois.

On the proposition of Councillor Willie Aird, the Members unanimously agreed to pass a vote of sympathy to the Walshe family on the recent death of Mr. Tom Walshe, Laurel Court, Dublin Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois.

On the proposition of Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley, the Members unanimously agreed to pass a vote of sympathy to the Pilch family on the recent death of Ms. Natalia Pilch, Rathevan Heights, Portlaoise, Co. Laois.

On the proposition of Councillor Ben Brennan, the Members unanimously agreed to pass a vote of sympathy to the Farrell family on the recent death of Mr. Tony Farrell, 3 Oakley Park, Graiguecullen, Carlow.

On the proposition of Councillor John King, the Members unanimously agreed to pass a vote of sympathy to the Walshe family on the recent death of Mr. Padraig Walshe, Bishopswood, Durrow, Co. Laois.

On the proposition of Councillors Willie Aird & Padraig Fleming, the Members unanimously agreed to pass a vote of sympathy to the Dunne family on the recent death of Mr. Patrick Dunne, Ballycorman, Ballylinan, Co. Laois.

On the proposition of Councillor Willie Aird, the Members unanimously agreed to pass a vote of sympathy to the Rafter family on the recent death of Ms. Vanda Wrafter, Glenside, Portlaoise, Co. Laois.

On the proposition of Councillor Willie Aird, the Members unanimously agreed to pass a vote of sympathy to the Dunphy family on the recent death of Ms. Amy Dunphy, Marian Avenue, Portlaoise, Co. Laois.

27. MINUTES OF THE JANUARY MONTHLY MEETING HELD ON THE 30TH OF JANUARY 2023 & THE ADJOURNED JANUARY MEETING HELD ON THE 3RD OF FEBRUARY 2023

On the proposition of Councillor Willie Aird seconded by Councillor John King , the Members unanimously agreed the minutes of the January Meeting held on the 30th of January 2023 and the adjourned January meeting held on the 3rd of February 2023 as circulated.

28. REPORT ON CPG MEETING HELD ON THE 23RD OF JANUARY 2023

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor Padriag Fleming, the Members unanimously agreed the report on CPG meeting held on the 23rd of January 2023.

29. REPORT ON MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETINGS HELD IN JANUARY 2023

On the proposition of Councillor Paschal McEvoy seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley, the Members unanimously agreed the report on the Municipal District meetings held in January 2023.

30. FILLING OF CASUAL VACANCY ON LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

The Members were advised that notification had been received from the Labour Party on the 3rd of February 2023 nominating Ms. Marie Tuohy, Anfield House, Summerhill Lane, Portlaoise, Co. Laois to fill the casual vacancy on Laois County Council following the resignation of Mr. Noel Tuohy.

On the proposition of Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley seconded by Councillor Willie Aird, Ms. Tuohy was unanimously co-opted to Laois County Council to fill the casual vacancy on Laois County Council.

The Members individually and collectively formally welcomed Councillor Marie Tuohy to Laois County Council. The Chief Executive, Mr. John Mulholland on behalf of the Management & Staff of Laois County Council also extended a warm welcome to Councillor Tuohy to the ranks of Laois County Council.

Councillor Tuohy thanked the Elected Members for their support and subsequently took her seat on Laois County Council. The Members assured Councillor Tuohy of their support to her going forward.

31. NOMINATION OF MEMBER OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL TO THE FOLLOWING:

TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT & EMERGENCY SERVICES STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

On the proposition of Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly, the Members unanimously agreed to nominate Councillor Marie Tuohy to the Transport, Environment & Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee.

NAMING COMMITTEE FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS, COMMEMORATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE PROVISION OF MONUMENTS & PLAQUES

On the proposition of Councillor Ben Brennan seconded by Councillor James Kelly, the Members unanimously agreed to nominate Councillor Marie Tuohy to the Naming Committee for Housing Developments, Commemorative Infrastructure and the provision of monuments and plaques.

LAOIS ARTS THEATRE COMPANY

On the proposition of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh, the members unanimously agreed to nominate Councillor Marie Tuohy to the Laois Arts Theatre Company.

LAOIS LEISURE

On the proposition of Councillor Willie Aird seconded by Councillor Aisling Moran, the members unanimously agreed to nominate Councillor Marie Tuohy to Laois Leisure.

TREO NUA

On the proposition of Councillor Thomasina Connell seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly, the members unanimously agreed to nominate Councillor Marie Tuohy to Treo Nua.

32. PART VIII OF THE PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, DISPSOAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001

On the proposition of Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly, the Members unanimously agreed to the Part VIII of the Planning & Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended) in relation to the proposed development of a Civil Defence Headquarters and ancillary works at Laois County Council Depot, Portlaoise Business & Technology Park, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois

33. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT

DISPOSAL OF 0.41 HECTARES OF LAND AT NEWTOWN, DURROW

On the proposition of Councillor Ollie Clooney seconded by Councillor John King, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of 0.41 hectares of land at Newtown, Durrow in the

townland of Toberboe or Killenny More to Cullohill Agricultural Co-Operative Society Ltd., Cullohill GWS, Galesquarter, Cullohill, Co. Laois for a consideration of €300.00

DISPOSAL OF 0.11 HECTARES OF LAND AT NEWTOWN, DURROW

On the proposition of Councillor Ollie Clooney seconded by Councillor John King, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of 0.11 hectares of land at Newtown, Durrow in the townland of Newtown to Cullohill Agricultural Co-Operative Society Ltd., Cullohill GWS, Galesquarter, Cullohill, Co. Laois for a consideration of €300.00

RECTIFICATION OF A BOUNDARY OF 0.0057 HECTARES OF LAND AT 9 THORNBERRY, ABBEYLEIX

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh, the Members unanimously agreed to the rectification of a boundary of 0.0057 hectares of land at 9 Thornberry, Abbeyleix, Co. Laois in the townland of Abbeyleix.

34. MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 2023

The Members were circulated with a copy of the Monthly Management report for February 2023. The Director of Services responded to the various queries raised by the Members.

35. TRAINING AND CONFERENCES

The Members were circulated with a copy of the conferences and training for ratification and same was agreed on the proposition of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly.

36. CORRESPONDENCE

The following correspondence was circulated which was received since the last meeting:-

- (i) Correspondence dated the 14th of February 2023 received from Wicklow County Council in relation to a Notice of Motion which was passed in relation to the Coillte decision to partner with a UK based investment fund in the purchase by the fund of thousands of hectares of Irish forestry
- (ii) Correspondence dated the 22nd of February 2023 received from Sligo County Council in relation to a Notice of Motion which was passed in relation to Sligo and the North West having not been included as a surgical hub
- (iii) Correspondence dated the 22nd of February 2023 received from Sligo County Council in relation to a Notice of Motion which was passed in relation to retired old age pensions transferring their homes to their next of kin to avail of older and disability grant scheme

- (iv) Correspondence dated the 22nd of February 2023 received from Sligo County Council in relation to a Notice of Motion which was passed in relation to legislation to trace social media accounts
- (v) Correspondence dated the 22nd of February 2023 received from Sligo County Council in relation to a Notice of Motion which was passed in relation to the introduction of a scheme to address realignment and other safety issues
- (vi) Correspondence dated the 23rd of February 2023 received from Kerry County Council in relation to a Notice of Motion which was passed in relation to the awarding of medals to the veterans of Jadotville
- (vii) Correspondence dated the 27th of February 2023 received from the Minister for Health in response to Notice of Motion 01/2023 passed at the January meeting of Laois County Council
- (viii) Correspondence dated the 27th of February 2023 received from the Minister of Housing, Local Government & Heritage in response to a letter issued from the Director of Services with responsibility for Housing in relation to revised arrangements for social housing acquisitions in 2022

37. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Notice of Motion No: 08/2023

Councillor Aisling Moran proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council write to both the Assistant Secretary General with responsibility for Disability and the Secretary General in Department of Children Equality Disability Integration and Youth to enact/expedite the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This International Convention was ratified by the Houses of the Oireachtas in March 2018 and has only been partially implemented to date”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that correspondence would issue to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in this regard.

Notice of Motion No: 09/2023

Councillor Aisling Moran proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council please explain why the Graiguecullen-Portarlinton Municipal District, with 33% of the population of Laois only received €76,000 which is 2.3% of the funds allocated to the County of Laois out of a €3.3m budget. I would also like a list of all monies allocated to Portlaoise in Low Carbon funding, a breakdown of all projects in the Portlaoise area that has a low carbon focus. I require project name, commencement date and projected budget, final budget post & ex ante appraisals, monies received and paid out, a map showing the location, the position and overall project area. This can be in an annual form. I require a complete breakdown of all projected & anticipated Low Carbon projects for the town of Portlaoise and for absolute completeness and clarity, I require the same done for each of the 3 MD’s. I’m asking for this in the interest of absolute transparency”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Padraig Fleming. The Members were advised that the process of seeking 2023 NTA Active Travel funding commenced in October 2022. Laois County Council has secured €3.3m in Active travel funding which is a very welcome investment in Active Travel measures across County Laois.

In the two years prior to 2023, many longed-for footpath schemes throughout County Laois have been funded by the NTA through the Active Travel fund. For 2023, the NTA outlined that, in keeping with the Government's Climate Action Plan, the focus of the 2023 fund, was to be on '**key projects in the main urban areas.**' Laois County Council made two funding submissions to the NTA towards the end of 2022. The funding allocation provided was ultimately decided by NTA.

Regarding the second part of the Motion, Portlaoise – Low Carbon Town funding derives from the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund. Under URDF Round 1, Laois County Council was allocated €2.026m (a 75% grant) for the following Portlaoise-based Low Carbon Town projects;

- Triogue Bluway (€487,500)
- Cycle Routes (€337,500)
- Solar Compactor Bins (€54,450)
- Public Lighting Retrofit to LED (€996,923)
- E-Charging Points (€131,250)
- Summerhill Park and Stride (€18,750)

Portlaoise is the only qualifying town in County Laois (based on population) for Urban Regeneration and Development Funding.

Notice of Motion No: 10/2023 – Councillor Willie Aird

“That Laois County Council liaise with insurance companies regarding the timeframe for securing mortgage protection”

Notice of Motion No: 11/2023 – Councillor Willie Aird

“That Laois County Council confirm what roads and laneways can be included for improvement under the additional €12.5 million announced recently”

Due to the absence of Councillor Willie Aird at the time of the discussion for the Notice of Motions, it was requested by Councillor Aird that the two Notice of Motions be deferred to the March Meeting for consideration:-

Notice of Motion No: 12/2023

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***“That Laois County Council write to the Minister of Environment, Climate Change & Communications, Mr. Eamon Ryan, T.D., to seek an increase in the current grant provided for the replacement or upgrade of all septic tanks.*”**

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. It was agreed that correspondence would issue to the Minister of Environment, Climate Change & Communications in this regard. The Members noted that the maximum grant available

(€5000) now falls some way short of the current average costs for domestic waste water treatment system remediation/upgrade works. The Members also requested that consideration be given to extending the grant scheme to include Sports Clubs and other Community-based organisations.

Notice of Motion No: 13/2023

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council implement Choice Based Letting with regard to the operation of the allocation of our social housing units.”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that Choice Based Letting is a different approach to allocations, whereby applicants can make bids for social housing properties advertised by the local authority, and the applicant with the highest priority under the Scheme of Letting Priorities is allocated the property. From both a policy and operational perspective, there are considerations to be made regarding the introduction of a Choice Based Lettings policy and system, and its suitability as an all-encompassing system of allocation, or just for particular properties.

As part of the Housing, Planning and Regeneration SPC Work Programme for 2023, it intended to review the Laois County Council Scheme of Letting Priorities and to recommend an updated scheme for adoption by full Council later this year. As part of this review, a Choice Based Letting policy and system will be discussed and an issues paper will be presented to the SPC in due course in this regard.

SIGNED: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

CERTIFIED: _____
DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
CORPORATE AFFAIRS