

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 4TH OF SEPTEMBER
2020 IN THE DUNAMAISE ARTS CENTRE & THEATRE**

PRESENT:	Councillor	Catherine Fitzgerald	In The Chair
	Councillors	Willie Aird	Paddy Bracken
		John Joe Fennelly	Aidan Mullins
		Padraig Fleming	James Kelly
		Seamus McDonald	Paschal McEvoy
		Aisling Moran	Mary Sweeney
		Noel Tuohy	Caroline Dwane Stanley

APOLOGIES:	Councillor	Conor Bergin	Ben Brennan
		Thomasina Connell	Ollie Clooney
		John King	Tom Mulhall

IN ATTENDANCE:

Messers John Mulholland, Chief Executive, Donal Brennan, Director of Services, Simon Walton, Director of Services, Ms. Angela McEvoy, A/Director of Services, Ms. Julie Bergin, A/Head of Finance, Ms. Irene Delaney, A.O., & Ms. Michelle McCormack, S.O.

83. Local Property Tax – Notice of Consideration of Setting A Local Adjustment Factor

The Chief Executive set out the position of the Council as it commenced the preparation of the 2021 revenue budget.

Mr. Gerry Murphy, Head of Finance briefed the members on the Local Property Tax and the report dated the 4th of September 2020 from the Chief Executive. The report included the following details:-

- Matters to which the Local Authority must have regard
- Estimation of Income & Expenditure for 2021
- The financial position of Laois County Council
- The feedback from public consultation
- The financial effect of the varied rate
- Appendix 1 – 2020 LPT Additional funding allocated
- Appendix 2 – 2021 LPT Additional Funding to be allocated

The Members were advised that the LPT is used to fund or part-fund a range of local services such as road maintenance, footpaths, public lighting, traffic calming, libraries, parks playgrounds, burial grounds and grants to communities and tidy towns committees, etc. It is an essential source of income for the Council in providing local services.

The Members were advised that the accumulated revenue credit at the 31st of December 2019 was €5,009, but that Covid-19 has left this Council with significant challenges in balancing its books for 2020. Income from parking charges and planning fees is unlikely to meet our budgetary targets. The Council is experiencing difficulties in rent and loan collection and arrears have increased in both of these areas. The collection of rates from businesses will be difficult. The six month waiver of commercial rates for businesses forced to close or which remained open but suffered significant reductions in turnover due to Covid-19 is very welcome as is the decision by Government to refund the cost of this waiver to local authorities.

The Members were also advised that in preparing the budget for 2021, the Council will need to make increased provision for resolving homelessness, the maintenance of local authority houses, a book fund for the new Portlaoise Library, maintaining existing staff resources, economic, enterprise and community development, tourism, urban and village renewal including the public realm in our towns and villages and match funding for co-funded activities, to name just a few.

It was recommended that members provide the same level of funding for 2021 with no increase over 2020 for householders. On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor James Kelly, the Members unanimously agreed the recommendation.

**84.DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001 –
78 COLLEGE AVENUE, PORTLAOISE, CO. LAOIS.**

On the proposition of Councillor Paddy Bracken seconded by Councillor Seamus McDonald, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of freehold interest at 78 College Avenue, Mountmellick, Co. Laois in the townland of Townsparks for a consideration of €300.00.

**85.RATIFICATION OF MS. DEIRDRE O’ CONNELL-HOPKINS TO THE TRANSPORT,
ENVIRONMENT AND EMERGENCY SERVICES SPC**

On the proposition of Councillor Paddy Bracken seconded by Councillor Paschal McEvoy, the Members unanimously agreed to the ratification of Ms. Deirdre O’ Connell-Hopkins to the Transport, Environment and Emergency Services SPC

86. FIX DATE FOR THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

The following dates for meetings were unanimously agreed by the Members:-

- Budget Meeting in Committee to be held on the 5th of November 2020 at 11.00 a.m.
- Statutory Budget Meeting to be held on the 9th of November 2020 at 11.00 a.m.
- October Monthly Meeting to be held on the 19th of October 2020 at 11.00 a.m.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

SIGNED:

CATHAOIRLEACH

CERTIFIED:

DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
CORPORATE AFFAIRS