

**MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD
IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE ON THE 26TH OF SEPTEMBER 2016**

PRESENT:	Councillors	Tom Mulhall	In the Chair
		William Aird	Paddy Bracken
		Ben Brennan	Caroline Dwane Stanley
		Padraig Fleming	David Goodwin
		James Kelly	John King
		Seamus McDonald	Paschal McEvoy
		John Moran	Catherine Fitzgerald
		Aidan Mullins	Mary Sweeney
		Noel Tuohy	Brendan Phelan
	APOLOGIES:	Councillor	John Joe Fennelly
		Councillor	Jerry Lodge

IN ATTENDANCE:

Messers John Mulholland, Chief Executive, Gerry Murphy, Head of Finance, Kieran Kehoe, Director of Services, Mr. Donal Brennan, Director of Services, Ms. Irene Delaney, Administrative Officer, & Ms. Michelle McCormack, Executive Secretary.

104. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE JULY MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 25TH OF JULY 2016

On the proposition of Councillor Councillor Seamus McDonald seconded by Councillor Paddy Bracken, the Minutes of the July meeting held on the 25th of July 2016 were agreed and circulated.

105. VOTE OF SYMPATHY

On the proposition of Councillor William Aird seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, it was unanimously agreed that a vote of sympathy be extended to the Graham family on the recent death of Mr. Richard Graham, Ridge Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois.

On the proposition of the Cathaoirleach, Councillor Tom Mulhall, it was unanimously agreed that a vote of sympathy be extended to the Handy family on the recent death of Mrs. Ann Handy, Knocknabragher, Stradbally, Co. Laois.

On the proposition of the Cathaoirleach, Councillor Tom Mulhall, it was unanimously agreed that a vote of sympathy be extended to the Byrne family on the recent death of Mr. James Byrne, 6 Court Square, Stradbally, Co. Laois.

On the proposition of Councillor Ben Brennan, it was unanimously agreed that a vote of sympathy be extended to the Keogh family on the recent death of Mr. John Keogh, Keelogue, Killeshin, Carlow.

On the proposition of Councillor Ben Brennan, it was unanimously agreed that a vote of sympathy be extended to the Brennan family on the recent death of Mr. Danny Brennan, Arles

106. REPORTS ON MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETINGS HELD IN SEPTEMBER 2016 FOR NOTING

On the proposition of Councillor Mary Sweeney seconded by Councillor John Moran, the reports on Municipal District Meetings held in September 2016 were noted by the Members.

107. REPORTS ON SPEC MEETINGS HELD IN JUNE & SEPTEMBER 2016 FOR NOTING

On the proposition of Councillor Brendan Phelan seconded by Councillor Paddy Bracken, the reports on SPC meetings held in June & September 2016 were noted by the Members.

108. PRESENTATION BY MR. GERRY GALLAGHER, OPW PROJECT ENGINEER FOR SOUTH EAST AND SUIR CFRAM ON THE DRAFT CFRAM PLAN SUPPORTED BY RPS CONSULTING ENGINEERS

Mr. Gerry Gallagher, OPW Project Engineer delivered a very comprehensive presentation on the Draft Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management. The presentation included the content and purpose of the plans and outlined the recommendations for County Laois. Mr. Gallagher also explained the Implementation of Flood Risk Management Options.

The Members were advised that the plans are on display at the offices of Laois County Council and also on line at www.opw.ie/Flood Plans. It was noted that the closing date for Local Authorities for submissions on the Barrow & Nore plan is the 21st of November 2016 and for the public is the 28th of October 2016 and for the Shannon Lower is the 17th of October 2016 for Local Authorities and for the public was the 23rd of September 2016.

A number of queries were raised in relation to flood zones around the County and Mr. Gallagher responded to the queries.

The Members were advised that the public consultation day is scheduled for the 12th of October 2016 from 2.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. in Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise where members of the public can ask questions in relation to the draft Flood Risk Management Plan specific to their particular area. It was noted that the areas included in the draft Flood Risk Management Plans are Athy, Ballyroan, Carlow, Mountmellick, Mountrath, Portarlinton, Portlaoise and Rathdowney.

109. LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL – MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2016 (IN ACCORDANCE WITH CIRCULAR LETTER LG 18/2014)

Mr. John Mulholland, Chief Executive briefed the meeting on this matter and the report for August/September was circulated. The report for August /September July 2016 was unanimously agreed and noted. A number of queries were raised on the report and the Directors of Services responded to the various queries raised.

During the consideration of the Monthly Management Report a discussion was had in relation to the allocation of funding from the Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government to implement the MY Open Library initiative in Portarlinton Library in the sum of €31,165.00. Notice of Motion No: 26/2016 proposed by Councillor James Kelly and seconded by Councillor Pdraig Fleming was brought forward and discussed as follows:-

Notice of Motion No: 26/2016

“That this Council defer indefinitely the plan to implement unstaffed hours in Laois County Council Library Branch Network”

The Members were advised that Laois County Council has been recently been approved for grant assistance under the national “My Open Library” initiative. Under this initiative library members can sign up to use their library outside of normal opening times, for example, on evenings and weekends typically between 8am and 10pm. Similar Open Libraries have been running very successfully in Banagher, Tullamore and Tubbercurry and a further 10 libraries throughout the Country are due to implement this service under this initiative. The Open Library concept provides an enhanced library service to members of the public particularly those who commute or work irregular hours. Laois County Council proposes to trial the Open Library concept in Portarlinton; the project will include enhanced CCTV and security features in the Library. The Council will keep under review the impact of the initiative; however based on experience elsewhere it is expected to provide benefits to the library using public. It is important to stress that normal opening hours are not affected by this initiative.

Introducing the motion Councillor Kelly stated there were staff concerns associated with this proposal, that there were staff consultation issues and that he held concerns about safety for members of the public where library staff were not present. Councillor Kelly referred to matters such as Audio Books, people with literacy problems, visually impaired and the issue of a safe environment. He stated staff in libraries contribute to building communities. An extra 10 hours up to 8 p.m. would be 80 hours a week or equivalent to 2 additional staff being employed. He said there has been no research of how the scheme will impact on staff or library user – the public will no longer use the library.

Chief Executive, Mr. John Mulholland, interjected and advised that to stray from the Motion to include discussions on staff matters would not be in order as these were executive functions of the Council. He also advised that industrial relations mechanisms are the appropriate methods for dealing with staff concerns notwithstanding there are no changes to terms and conditions of employment for any staff member. He reminded members that the matter of Open Libraries has been set out in Government policy in 2013 via the “Opportunities For All” document. He advised Council, given the early stage of the process, that the proposed initiative for Portarlinton including operational requirements should, more prudently, be considered in full by the relevant Strategic Policy Committee.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Pdraig Fleming and following contributions from the Members the motion was unanimously carried.

110. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001

(i) DISPOSAL OF 0.5023 HECTARES OF LAND AT CLONMINAM BUSINESS PARK, PORTLAOISE

On the proposition of Councillor William Aird seconded by Councillor Caroline James Kelly, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of 0.5023 hectares of land at Clonminam Business Park, Portlaoise in the townland of Knockmay for a consideration of €60,000

(ii) DISPOSAL OF 3.575 HECTARES OF LAND AT BALLYDAVIS & RATHBRENNAN

On the proposition of Councillor Paschal McEvoy seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of 3.575 hectares of land at Ballydavis & Rathbrennan in the townland of Ballydavis & Rathbrennan for a consideration of €80,000

(iii) DISPOSAL OF 0.358327 HECTARES OF LAND AT KYLECLONHOBERT

On the proposition of Councillor Paddy Bracken seconded by Councillor Willie Aird, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of 0.358327 hectares of land at Kyleclonhobert in the townland of Kyleclonhobert for a consideration of €18,000.

111. FIX DATE FOR MEETINGS

(i) Budget Meeting in Committee

Mr. Gerry Murphy, Head of Finance advised that the Budget Meeting in committee is scheduled for the 10th of November 2016 at 2.00 p.m.

(ii) Statutory Budget Meeting

Mr. Gerry Murphy, Head of Finance advised that the Statutory Budget meeting is scheduled for the 14th of November 2016 at 11.00 a.m.

(iii) October Monthly Meeting

The Members were advised that the October Monthly Meeting is scheduled for the 24th of October 2016 at 11.00 a.m.

112. APPROVAL OF OVERDRAFT ACCOMMODATION IN THE SUM OF €8,000,000 FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2017 TO FINANCE WORKING CAPITAL

On the proposition of Councillor John King seconded by Councillor Paddy Bracken, the Members unanimously agreed to the approval of overdraft accommodation in the sum of €8,000,000 for the year ending 31st of December 2017 to finance working capital

113. APPROVAL OF €15,000,000 FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2017 TO FACILITATE ANY TIMING ISSUES REGARDING THE PAYMENT OF PAYROLL AND PENSIONS IN RELATION TO MYPAY

On the proposition of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald seconded by Councillor Mary Sweeney, the Members unanimously agreed to the approval of €15,000,000 for the year ending 31st December 2017 to facilitate any timing issues regarding the payment of payroll and pensions in relation to MyPay.

114. DRAFT PROPOSALS FOR URBAN & VILLAGE RENEWAL

The Members were circulated with a copy of the draft proposals for Urban & Village Renewal and details of the projects for consideration which was noted by the Members. It was noted that the allocation for Laois County Council is €380,000 with match funding of 15% to be provided also by Laois County Council.

115. PRESENTATION BY MR. KIERAN KEHOE, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES ON THE ROLL-OUT OF THE NATIONAL BROADBAND PLAN

Mr. Kieran Kehoe, Director of Services delivered a presentation on the National Broadband Plan which included the current status of Broadband in County Laois, the key elements of the new network including strategic connection points and strategic community access hubs. The presentation also detailed the SIRO Broadband Rollout in Portlaoise. Mr. Kieran Kehoe, Director of Services responded to the various queries raised by the Members.

116. REGULATION OF LOBBYING ACT, 2015

The Members noted the following documents which were circulated to them:

- A summary of the main provisions of the Regulation of Lobbying Act, 2015
- Guidelines for Local Authority Members
- Guidelines on lobbying in relation to the development and zoning of lands

117. RATIFICATION OF CONFERENCES & ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING

On the proposition of Councillor John Moran seconded by Councillor Ben Brennan, the Members unanimously agreed to the ratification of conferences/attendance at training as circulated.

118. CORRESPONDENCE

The following correspondence was noted which had been received since the last meeting of the Council:-

- (i) Correspondence received from Minister Leo Varadkar, T.D. dated the 27th of July 2016 in relation to the Carer's Allowance applications
- (ii) Correspondence received from Clúid Housing dated the 22nd of August 2016 in relation to the policy regarding people in their own accommodation to purchase same
- (iii) Correspondence received from Minister Simon Harris dated the 24th of August 2016 in relation to the services at Portlaoise General Hospital
- (iv) Correspondence received from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs dated the 20th of September 2016 in relation to the National Rural Development Forum in the Bridge House, Bridge Street,

Tullamore, Co. Offaly on Wednesday, October 5th at 9.30 a.m. – it was agreed that the Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council, the Chairs of each Municipal District and Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley would attend the forum

119. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Notice of Motion No: 24/2016

Councillor John King proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council apply to the Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government for adequate funding to carry out maintenance on our two main rivers, The Nore & The Barrow”.

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor William Aird. It was agreed that a letter issue to the Department in this regard.

Notice of Motion No: 25/2016

Councillor James Kelly proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council undertake to carry out a detailed audit of all vacant residential properties in the County as part of the initiative in resolving the housing crisis in our County”.

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that work has commenced on the carrying out of a detailed audit of vacant properties as part of the initiative in resolving the housing issue in our County.

Notice of Motion No: 27/2016

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:

“That Laois County Council call on the Minister for Education & Skills, Mr. Richard Bruton to put in place national protocols and procedures which will facilitate the use of school facilities particularly sports halls after hours and during holiday times. At present these excellent facilities are very often under utilised and out of bounds to local sporting clubs and voluntary community organisations even though their Members attend these schools”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. It was agreed that a letter issue to the Department in this regard.

Notice of Motion No: 28/2016

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council commends the role of Laois County Council in the organisation of the Electric Picnic Festival in Stradbally and calls on the Local Authority in its responsibility as the licencing authority for the event, to ensure the commitment to the highest standard of services and facilities to protect the safety and enjoyment of the 50,000 fans who attend the event annually”.

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Paschal McEvoy.

Notice of Motion No: 29/2016

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council request Department of Health & Children to include in the forthcoming budget an increased allocation for the provision of Home Help”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Brendan Phelan

This concluded the business of the meeting.

SIGNED: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

CERTIFIED: _____
**DIRECTOR OF
CORPORATE AFFAIRS**