

**MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON
THE 24TH OF OCTOBER 2022 IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE**

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Messers 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, S.E.O., Corporate Affairs & Ms. Michelle McCormack, S.O.

119. VOTES OF SYMPATHIES

On the proposition of the Cathaoirleach, Councillor Thomasina Connell, the Members unanimously passed a vote of sympathy to the community of Creeslough on the recent tragedy which occurred on the 7th of October 2022.

On the proposition of the Cathaoirleach, Councillor Thomasina Connell, the Members unanimously passed a vote of sympathy to the Marshall Family, Sheean, Rathangan, Co. Kildare on the recent death of Mr. Chris Marshall, father of Ms. Angela Marshall, Roads Department and former employee of Laois County Council

On the proposition of the Cathaoirleach, Councillor Thomasina Connell, the members unanimously passed a vote of sympathy to the Bergin Family, Parnell Crescent, Portlaoise, Co. Laois on the recent death of Ms. Ann Bergin, sister of Ms. Vera Quinn in the Library Section.

On the proposition of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, the Members unanimously passed a vote of sympathy to the Donellan Family, Glenside, Portlaoise on the recent death of Ms. Patti Donellan.

On the proposition of Councillor Willie Aird, the Members unanimously passed a vote of sympathy to the Gleeson Family, Redwood, Clonkeen , Portlaoise on the recent death of Mr. Joe Bosco Gleeson.

120. VOTE OF CONGRATULATIONS

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly, the Members unanimously passed a vote of congratulations to Abbeyleix on winning the premier intermediate senior hurling championship.

On the proposition of Councillor Willie Aird, the Members unanimously passed a vote of congratulations to Mr. Teddy Fennelly on receiving the National Heritage Hero Award for 2022.

On the proposition of Councillor Ben Brennan, the Members unanimously passed a vote of congratulations to the Killeshin U-15 on winning the A1 Football Championship Final.

121. MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER MONTHLY MEETING HELD ON THE 26TH OF SEPTEMBER 2022

On the proposition of Councillor Willie Aird seconded by Councillor Paschal McEvoy, the minutes of the September monthly meeting of Laois County Council held on the 26th of September 2022 were confirmed as circulated.

122. REPORT ON CPG MEETING HELD ON THE 19TH OF SEPTEMBER 2022

On the proposition of Councillor Pdraig Fleming seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly, the Members unanimously agreed the report on CPG meeting held on the 19th of September 2022 as circulated.

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

(i) DISPOSAL OF 0.001489 HECTARES OF LAND AT 67 NEWPARK, PORTLAOISE

On the proposition of Councillor Noel Tuohy seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of 0.001489 hectares of land at 67 Newpark, Portlaoise in the townland of Maryborough.

(ii) DISPOSAL OF FREEHOLD COMPRISING 0.0423 HECTARES OF LAND AT THE TOWER, AVONDALE, MOUNTRATH

On the proposition of Councillor Willie Aird seconded by Councillor James Kelly, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of freehold comprising 0.0423

hectares of land at the Tower, Avondale, Mountrath, Co. Laois in the townland of Mountrath for a consideration of €300.00

124. PROPOSED MATERIAL CONTRAVENTION OF THE LAOIS COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027 – PLANNING APPLICATION UNDER PL REF: 22/450 TO PROVIDE A PLAYING PITCH AND ALL ASSOCIATED ANCILLARY FACILITIES, WORKS AND SERVICES AT TULLYROE, ABBEYLEIX, CO. LAOIS.

The Members were circulated with a copy of the Planning Report in relation to the above application consisting of the provision of a playing pitch and all associated ancillary facilities, works and services.

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh, the Members unanimously agreed to the proposed material contravention of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 in relation to Planning Application PL Ref: 22/450 to ‘provide a playing pitch and all associated ancillary facilities, works and services’ at Tullyroe, Abbeyleix, Co. Laois.

125. MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL TRAVELLER ACCOMODATION PROGRAMME 2019-2014

The Members were circulated with details on the mid-term review of the Laois County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2014.

On the proposition of Councillor Paschal McEvoy seconded by Councillor John King, the Members unanimously agreed to the mid-term review of the Laois County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 as presented.

126. TRAINING & CONFERENCES

The Members were circulated with a copy of the conferences and training for ratification and same was agreed on the proposition of Councillor Paschal McEvoy seconded by Councillor John King.

127. CORRESPONDENCE

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

- (i) Correspondence from Monaghan County Council dated the 6th of October 2022 in relation to an All-Ireland Citizen’s Assembly
- (ii) Acknowledgement from the Department of Education dated the 6th of October 2022 in relation to Notice of Motion No: 44/2022

- (iii) Acknowledgement from the Minister of State, Department of Agriculture & Food dated the 7th of October 2022 in relation to Notice of Motion No: 45/2022
- (iv) Correspondence from the Minister for Communications, Climate Action & Environment dated the 14th of October 2022 in relation to Notice of Motion No: 42/2022
- (v) Correspondence from the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage dated the 18th of October 2022 in relation to Notice of Motion No: 29/2022

128. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Notice of Motion No: 48/2022

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council undertake a review of their current Social Housing Tenant Complaint Form with a view to reducing the number of pages to be completed and making the form easier to use"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that Laois County Council is currently reviewing its Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2010 and the format of the Social Housing Tenant Complaint Form will be included in this review.

Notice of Motion No: 49/2022

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council write to the Minister for Housing requesting that the minimum grant funding offered under the Croí Conaithe Towns Fund for the Renovations of Vacant Properties launched in July 2022 be increased to €50,000 from €30,000"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh. It was agreed that a letter issue to the Minister for Housing in this regard.

Notice of Motion No: 50/2022

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:

"That this Council sets out as a matter of urgency how it intends to implement the 'Ready To Build Scheme - Serviced Sites For New Homes Scheme' as launched by the Department of Housing and as part of that, set out where these sites will be available and how the public can apply to purchase a site in this scheme"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor James Kelly. The Members were advised that the "Ready To Build Scheme - Serviced Sites For New Homes Scheme" was launched by the Department of Housing in September 2022. The Housing Section are advancing designs on a number of layouts in locations around the County – namely Newtown Doonane, Durrow and Castletown currently with a view to providing serviced sites. The Housing section will be coordinating the marketing of this scheme, inviting applications once a scheme has been approved and dealing with queries in relation to same. A survey in relation to interest by potential purchasers of sites will be available on line in the next few weeks to garner interest in this scheme as well as identifying locations where it could be given priority.

Notice of Motion No: 51/2022

Councillor Aisling Moran proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council carry out the Notice of Motion, which was proposed by myself and seconded by Councillor Tuohy at the full Council meeting in June 2021 to live stream all public council meetings on the Laois County Council website. It has been 16 months since the Notice of Motion and there has been no resolution within this time. I am now calling on Laois County Council to carry out this motion within a reasonable length of time taking into consideration the 16 months that has passed to implement this and have the equipment to carry out live streaming - 30 days is a reasonable length of time for a resolution"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Aidan Mullins. The Members were advised that at the Council meeting of June 2021 the following was proposed by Councillor Moran and seconded by Councillor Tuohy:

"That this Council make provision to live stream all public Council meetings on the Laois County Council website"

The reply on the day to the notice of motion was: ***That the Council would investigate the costs associated with live streaming of all public Council meetings with a view to it being considered in the Budget for 2022"***

A prerequisite for any live streaming from the Council Chamber was that the Audio facilities in the Chamber be upgraded. As can be seen today, the previous audio facilities in this chamber have been removed and new equipment installed.

When upgrading the audio facilities, provision was also made for video camera equipment; there are three video cameras provided which will be able to focus on whichever Councillor may be speaking in the chamber. This equipment will improve the experience for any Councillor who opts to join a meeting via "Teams" or similar remote access software. It is clear that the text of the Notice of Motion in June 2021 that the Motion did not call for live streaming to commence.

In advance of any live streaming commencing, it would be advisable that the Council Standing Orders be revisited to include such provisions as the Council may wish to adopt in this regard. The adoption of revised Standing Orders is a reserved function of the Council.

Should the Council so wish, staff from Corporate Services are available to assist in the drafting of any such revisions to Standing Orders. It will be necessary to ensure that any agreed processes for livestreaming are compatible with data protection and GDPR and that policies and procedures regarding compliance with same are place in advance.

The decisions of the Council in relation to the types of live streaming/broadcast options will affect the degree to which extra equipment may be required for livestreaming to commence.

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed that a sub-committee be set up with two members from each group nominated to same. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Seamus McDonald.

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, the following Members were nominated on behalf of the Fianna Fail Group:-

- Councillor Paschal McEvoy
- Councillor John Joe Fennelly

IT was agreed that nominations from the other groups would be submitted to the Corporate Affairs Section.

Notice of Motion No: 52/2022

Councillor Aisling Moran proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council provide a detailed and itemised list of all costs, valuations expenses and monies in, to date, for the following projects - J17, The Cube and The Library”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that this information would be made available.

Notice of Motion No: 53/2022

Councillor Aisling Moran proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council employ an EU Officer as soon as possible with a view to getting a slice of the €3 trillion on offer in public grants from the EU and in turn provide extra money to the communities in Laois”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor James Kelly. The Members were advised that Laois County Council, similar to all Local Authorities in the East and Midlands Region, makes a contribution to the budget of Eastern and Midlands Regional Authority on an annual basis. EMRA holds responsibility for the Irish Regions Office in Brussels. The Irish Regions European Office is based in Brussels and represents the three Regional Assemblies and 31 local authorities of Ireland, thereby enabling local/regional engagement in EU policy and funding. The Irish Regions Office is also the National Coordinator for Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions.

The Irish delegation to the Committee of the Regions (CoR) represents local and regional government in the EU policy formation and decision-making processes. The Committee is

an advisory body established in 1994 to ensure that the public authorities closest to the citizen, in Ireland, the local and regional authorities, are consulted on European Union policies of direct interest to them. Laois County Council is represented on this committee.

The Regional Enterprise Development, Office hosted by Offaly County Council on behalf of the four Midland Counties (Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath), plays a central role in identifying and advising the local authority and associated organisations of potential EU funding opportunities. The Programme Manager of the Regional Enterprise Development Office, Ms Sarah Morgan, effectively acts as the EU Officer for the Midland Local Authorities and also retains responsibility for managing the implementation of the current Regional Enterprise Plan. Therefore it is not considered necessary that Laois County Council employs a full time EU Officer“

Notice of Motion No: 54/2022

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That the Chief Executive Officer of the Office of the Planning Regulator, Mr. Niall Cussen be invited to address the Members of Laois County Council in relation to the amendment that was made to the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh. The Members were advised that a letter would issue to Mr, Niall Cussen in this regard.

Notice of Motion No: 55/2022

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council afford people the opportunity to withdraw their planning application if the file is going to be refused”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that applicants have every right to withdraw an application at any stage of the planning process under Section 37 of the Planning and Development Act. However under 247 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended applicants are offered the opportunity to carry out a pre planning meeting with planners with respect to potential development.

At this meeting applicants are informed of County Development Plan policy in relation to the development and the characteristics of the site. This avenue is a more prudent avenue for applicants to use in their evaluations as to the likeliness of securing permission on a site. This will avoid potential applicants bearing the unnecessary expense of the costs that arise out of preparing planning applications and the necessary reports.

Notice of Motion No: 56/2022

Councillor Barry Walsh proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council contact the Department of Finance to reconsider the implementation of the recently announced levy to be applied to all concrete products which will ultimately be paid by the end user rather than the manufacturer/supplier. If the levy is to remain in place perhaps a rebate or exemption could be considered for first time new home builders and buyers”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that a letter would issue to the Department of Finance in this regard.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

SIGNED: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

CERTIFIED: _____
**DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
CORPORATE AFFAIRS**