

**MINUTES OF THE PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 8TH OF DECEMBER 2021 IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN
CHONTAE, PORTLAOISE AND BY MICROSOFT TEAMS**

PRESENT Mr. John Joe Fennelly, Leas Cathaoirleach (In the Chair)
Ms. Catherine Fitzgerald, M.C.C.
Ms. Caroline Dwane Stanley, M.C.C.
Mr. Willie Aird, M.C.C.
Mr. Noel Tuohy, M.C.C.
Ms. Thomasina Connell, M.C.C.
Ms. Mary Sweeney, M.C.C.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services
Mr. Wes Wilkinson, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. Michelle McCormack, Staff Officer

1. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THE 17TH OF NOVEMBER 2021

On the proposition of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley, the minutes of the meeting held on the 17th of November were confirmed as circulated.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING HELD ON THE 17TH OF NOVEMBER 2021

There were no matters arising from the meeting of the 17th of November 2021

3. Notice of Motions

Notice of Motion No: 180/2021

Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley proposed the following Notice of Motion:

"That this Council carry out a road safety audit at Scoile Bhríde, Knockmay and at the entrances to the estate"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD office will shortly proceed to tender to carry out a road safety audit at this location.

Following a query regarding the timeline Mr. Wes Wilkinson, Senior Executive Engineer indicated that an update would be available for the Members at the March meeting of the Municipal District.

Notice of Motion No: 181/2021

Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council give an update on progress made to secure a building in Portlaoise for the Civil Defence”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that in their recent adoption of the Capital Budget 2022-2024, Elected Members approved provision of €1.5million to enable the purchase of a Portlaoise-based facility to support the ongoing operations of Laois Civil Defence. Laois County Council continues to seek to identify suitable, on-the-market properties that will meet the ongoing and future needs of Laois Civil Defence.

A discussion ensued during which the Members complimented the work done by the Laois Civil Defence across the County. Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services responded to the various queries raised and advised that the Members would be kept apprised of any developments related to acquiring a suitable site/premises.

Notice of Motion No: 182/2021

Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council give a time frame for the flood relief works to begin between the houses and the railway line at Clonboyne”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that it is intended that drainage works in the vicinity of the railway line at Clonboyne will commence in early Q. 2 of 2022.

Notice of Motion No: 183/2021

Councillor John Joe Fennelly proposed the following Notice of Motion:

"That this Council repair manhole covers on the Ballacolla Road and the Main Street in Abbeyleix"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that these locations will be examined and included in our list of works to be carried out in the coming weeks.

Notice of Motion No: 184/2021

Councillor John Joe Fennelly proposed the following Notice of Motion

"That this Council reline the street markings and stop lines at the Kilkenny Road/Durrow Junction in Ballinakill"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that the stop lines and markings at this junction have been recently refreshed - the clearway will be completed in the coming weeks.

Notice of Motion No: 185/2021

Councillor John Joe Fennelly proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council install ramps on the approach road to Abbeyleix from Ballacolla at Sweetview"

This notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that a road safety audit will be carried out shortly with a view to identifying the most appropriate traffic calming measures for this location and an update will be given to the Members when it becomes available

Notice of Motion No: 186/2021

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council complete the pedestrian crossings at the entrance to Aghnaharna and the top of Summerhill Lane"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that these works are now complete.

Notice of Motion No: 187/2021

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council extend Christmas wishes and gratitude to all frontline staff, retail workers and all categories of workers who will be working over the holiday period at this the end of a difficult year"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The sentiments were noted by the meeting.

Notice of Motion No: 188/2021

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council give an update on the opening of Portlaoise Leisure Centre"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that the pool is open since November 22nd on a controlled basis to accommodate swimming through Laois Marlins Swimming Club. The Club has 13hrs per week provision from November 29th. AstroTurf Pitches have been opened. Lighting upgrades mean that individual pitches can now be illuminated. Previously, all pitches were illuminated when the floodlights were turned on. The further opening of the Centre will be controlled by Laois Leisure and will be influenced by the rate of recruitment of staff as well as market conditions along with the availability of suppliers/contractors to complete some aspects of the upgrades.

A lengthy discussed ensued regarding this matter Leisure Centre – it was agreed that Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services would seek a more detailed response from the Director of Services.

Notice of Motion No: 189/2021

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council install double lines outside Ballard lodge nursing home"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. has examined this location and it is appropriate for the installation of double yellow lines subject to the agreement with the Members here today.

Notice of Motion No: 190/2022

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council consider the provision of a footpath/ cycle Lane on the main road at Ballyclyder"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell. The Members were advised that the Council is currently progressing a targeted suite of projects within the Town of Portlaoise that will deliver considerable improvements to existing footpath / cycle facilities including on the N77 Abbeyleix Road, Father Brown Avenue, Dublin Road. Additionally, the Council will be engaging with the National Transport Authority in early 2022 for the development of a Laois County Cycle Network Plan that will identify opportunities for the continued development and improvement of cycling infrastructure within the County and linking to adjoining counties. The proposal of this Notice of Motion will be included as part of this process.

Notice of Motion No: 194/2021

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council erect additional lighting at the Grange, Borris Road, Portlaoise as a matter of urgency"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that there is one additional light required and will be installed in the Grange.

Notice of Motion No: 195/2021

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council provide an update on the installation of a bottle bank on the Mountmellick road side of Portlaoise"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that condition No.13 of Planning Permission 17/155 (Dunnes Stores) provides for the provision of a bring bank facility in the Dunnes Store Car Park on Mountmellick Road. The Environment Section will contact Dunnes Stores Management early in the New Year regarding compliance with Condition No.13 of the Planning Permission and with a view to the prompt provision of the Bring Bank.

Notice of Motion No: 196/2021

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council provide an update on issuing monthly parking discs with discounted rates at County Hall for local workers as previously raised”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that there are approximately 150 car parking spaces in and around County Hall to which all day parking rates apply. This is to facilitate all-day parkers and to support turnover of spaces in the town centre which in turn is supportive of local economic activity. Applicable parking rates are set out further to local car-parking bye-laws. All day parking rates (€2.40/day) apply to approximately 220 car parking spaces controlled by Laois County Council immediately adjacent to Portlaoise Town Centre.

A discussion ensued and Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services responded to various queries and indicated that there are a number of issues to be addressed. A previously discussed Parking Survey and Overview has not been completed but will be completed in 2022. In this way coherent, sustainable alterations to existing parking bye-laws can be developed and implemented, including provision for competitively priced, long term parking areas.

Notice of Motion No: 191/2022

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council resurface the stretch of road at Clonkeen leading to where the Archery Club are located”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that this location has been examined and will be considered for inclusion in the 2022 Annual Roadworks Programme

Notice of Motion No: 192/2021

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council examine the pedestrian crossings that don’t have public lights on them”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that the Road Design Section will carry out lighting survey on all pedestrian crossing in Portlaoise. It was noted that this matter would be raised at the next Transportation SPC Meeting regarding the development of a suite of

specifications for pedestrian crossing development commensurate with the proposed location together with other, road design related requirements.

Notice of Motion No: 193/2021

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council be given an update on what monies were returned, if any, to Central Government from Laois County Council in 2021 and an update as to what unspent monies were returned from the Housing Section and reasons why in respect of the Portlaoise Municipal District”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell. The Members were advised that no monies were returned by Laois County Council to Central Government during 2021. As regards Housing, a Disabled Persons/Improvement Works in Lieu Grant of €1,031,000 million was approved to Laois County Council in May 2021. €431,377 has been claimed by LCC in 2021. The amount claimed in 2021 represents a 72.5% increase compared to any other individual year. Projects not completed in 2021 will be prioritised for completion in 2022. A Grant for Private Houses allocation of €1,200,000 was approved to Laois County Council in 2021. €1,050,000 has been claimed by LCC in 2021. Some applicants did not proceed with works in 2021 notwithstanding grant approval and other applicants await availability of contractors.

A discussion ensued and the Members noted that the Chief Executive would be addressing this issue at the December Monthly Meeting of Laois County Council and that this would be awaited.

Councillor Stanley was dissatisfied with the response on this Notice of Motion.

Councillor Connell was satisfied that the matter would be dealt with at the December meeting.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

It was noted that no correspondence had been received since the last meeting.

5. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS & FIX DATE & TIME FOR NEXT MEETING

The schedule of meetings was circulated and it was agreed that the September meeting should take place on the 21st of September 2021. It was noted that when

the dates of the National Ploughing Championship for 2022 is announced, the date could be reviewed.

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on **19th of January 2022 at 11.00 a.m.**

6. FAREWELL TO COUNCILLOR MARY SWEENEY

It was noted that this was Councillor Mary Sweeney's last meeting and a presentation was made to Councillor Sweeney in this regard. Members and officials paid tribute to Councillor Sweeney on her contribution to public life since her election in 1999.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
John Joe Fennelly, Leas Chathaoirleach