

**MINUTES OF THE PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, 7TH OF DECEMBER 2022 IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, PORTLAOISE**

PRESENT: Mr. Barry Walsh, Cathaoirleach (In the Chair)
Ms. Catherine Fitzgerald, M.C.C.
Ms. Caroline Dwane Stanley, M.C.C.
Ms. Thomasina Connell, M.C.C.
Mr. Willie Aird, M.C.C.
Mr. John Joe Fennelly, M.C.C.
Mr. Noel Tuohy, 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 16TH OF NOVEMBER 2022

On the proposition of Councillor Willie Aird seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, the minutes of the meeting held on the 19th of October 2022 were confirmed as circulated.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING HELD ON THE 16TH OF NOVEMBER 2022

There were no matters arising from the meeting held on the 16th of November 2022.

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald paid tribute to all involved with the Christmas Lights, the Reindeer display and the general presentation of the town. Councillor Fitzgerald expressed thanks to the staff of the Portlaoise MD Office, Downtown Portlaoise and Portlaoise Tidy Towns. A note of thanks was also extended to the Business Support Unit for securing funding.

The Members referred to the recent announcement that the suggested downgrading of Portlaoise Hospital was now over. Members outlined that this news was given by the Minister for Health, Mr. Stephen Donnelly, T.D., to the Portlaoise Hospital Action Group who, in turn, had confirmed that the plans are shelved. Furthermore, the Minister announced a €14 million investment plan for the hospital.

Councillor Aird paid tribute to Mr. Michael Knowles, former General Manager of the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise, who had sought to retain and enhance the status of Portlaoise Hospital. Tributes were also paid to the Hospital Action Committee on their work.

Councillor Thomasina Connell raised the matter of the free parking for Portlaoise on the Saturdays in December and it was agreed that the communication strategy for this be reviewed next year for more advertisement of same.

3. Notice of Motions

Notice of Motion No: 173/2022

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council review the lighting at the Stradbally Road, from the St. Fintan's entrance to the church with a view to the installation of additional street lamps"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that the Road Design Office will arrange to meet with Cllr Connell on site to assess the problem and identify a solution.

Notice of Motion No: 174/2022

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council undertake a traffic calming review in Kilminchy with a view to the installation of safety measures to include ramps where appropriate"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. will make himself available to meet with Councillor Connell and residents onsite in Kilminchy to examine this location with a view to installing traffic calming ramps as appropriate.

Notice of Motion No: 175/2022

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council install an additional light at Carlow Road, Abbeyleix in order to improve the lighting situation for the many residents who utilise this route walking to and from Abbeyleix Town Centre"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that the Road Design Office have recently engaged our Lighting Contractor to install an additional light on the Carlow Road in Abbeyleix. The light will be energised in the coming weeks and will provide additional lighting

for all residents who utilise this route walking to and from Abbeyleix Town Centre.

Notice of Motion No: 176/2022

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council include in it's road gritting programme the hill in the village of Raheen adjacent to the new pedestrian crossing"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that Laois County Council winter salting operation consists of 7 routes that treat 479.5km of public roadway in county Laois. The capacity of the salting vehicles is utilised fully i.e. there is no salt remaining when a route is salted. The inclusion of any additional lengths of road for salting would be subject to the removal of an existing salted road.

Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services advised that this route is not on the salting programme. There is currently no capacity to include the route on the regular salting roster, other than an existing route is removed from the roster. Separately, Mr. Walton confirmed that Laois County Council would make salt available in a stock-pile or bin close to the church going forward and that the area (the hill in Raheen Village) would be salted during extreme weather events, as required.

Notice of Motion No: 177/2022

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That the Portlaoise Municipal District call on the Roads Section of Laois County Council to immediately install traffic calming measures such as signage, i.e 'slow down', speed radar signs and concealed entrance signs on the Block Road, Portlaoise"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that arrangements will be made to refresh existing road markings, install additional road markings and erect 'concealed entrance' signs at this location. The Portlaoise MD office will arrange for the installation of a speed radar sign at this location under the Councillors Discretionary funding for Speed Radar Signs.

Notice of Motion No: 178/2022

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council request from Irish Water to undertake the works that will solve the problem of raw sewerage on the Ridge Road entering houses when there is a flood - this seems to be backing up with the overload from the sewerage system at Esker Hills"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that there are a number of houses on the Ridge Road which are low relative to the trunk sewer in the public road. When this trunk sewer surcharges during times of heavy rainfall it may cause issues for these connections in the lowest part of the sewer network. Laois County Council have made a request to Irish Water that a level survey is conducted in this area and have also requested to have this area included in the current Drainage Area Plan work being undertaken for Portlaoise. In the short term Laois County Council will be recommending to Irish Water that Non-Return Valves are installed on these connections. This may require the co-operation of the property owners and in some cases the Non-Return Valves may have to be installed on private property.

The Members extended their thanks to Mr. Brendan Garry and Mr. Martin Dunne for their prompt assistance with the recent issues at Ridge Road/Esker Hills.

Notice of Motion No: 179/2022

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

"That Laois County Council carry out drainage work at Ballymullen, Abbeyleix to deal with flooding and water springs in this area"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD Office has commenced drainage works on the L-5731 at Ballymullen, Abbeyleix. It is expected that works will be completed by the end of this week.

Notice of Motion No: 180/2022

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

"That Laois County Council install a kerb line on road leading to playground/swimming pool at Ballinakill at back of houses in Heywood Village and a hedge to determine the natural boundary. This road should also be included in the Roads Programme for 2023 as it is used by walkers"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that works to replace the hedging will be carried out in early 2023. The location will be considered for drainage works and kerbing in Q. 1 of 2022, subject to the availability of Drainage Funding in 2023. The L-77974 in Heywood Demesne will be examined for consideration for road surfacing as part of the 2023 Roads Programme.

Notice of Motion No: 181/2022

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

"That Laois County Council work with the staff, Residents Association and the Board of Management of Knock NS to install road markings for bicycle users and also to install signage for the one way system at this school"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that I will make myself available to meet with Councillor Fennelly to examine the issues and proposals for road markings and signage at this location.

In relation to the road markings Councillor Aird indicated that he would join the meeting with Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. and Councillor Fennelly.

Notice of Motion No: 182/2022

Councillor Barry Walsh proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council request that the department of transport zone Portlaoise as a commuter zone to Dublin and in turn apply commuter zone fares for public transport including railway services in the form of a Leap card or similar"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that Laois County Council will issue correspondence in line with the provisions of the Notice of Motion.

Notice of Motion No: 183/2022

Councillor Barry Walsh proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council carry out a public lighting survey in the village of Ballyroan. Some areas in the village are in complete darkness and existing lighting is not adequate"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that the Road Design Office will arrange to meet with Cllr Walsh on site to assess the problem locations and identify a solution.

Notice of Motion No: 184/2022

Councillor Barry Walsh proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council carry out road safety impact assessments on the Bog road and Portlaoise road Ballyroan"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD Office will arrange for a Road Safety Impact Assessment to be carried out on the R425 Main Street Ballyroan from the Entrance to the Cross of Newtown to soccer Pitch on the Portlaoise Road, to also include the L-2715 Bog Road Ballyroan from the junction with Main Street to the 50kph speed Limit.

Notice of Motion No: 185/2022

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council request an update from the HSE on the Ambulance service for Portlaoise and the number of ambulances available to service the area"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. It was agreed that a letter issue to the HSE in this regard and to also seek a representative from the HSE to address a future meeting of the MD.

Notice of Motion No: 186/2022

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council request a safety scheme for junction at Ratheven/Rathnamanagh Road and also have an update on measures proposed for the CBS/SCOIL CHRIST RI campus"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that Laois County Council has submitted an application for funding under Active Travel to the NTA for improvements on the Boris Road. A response to this is expected in early 2023. Members were also advised that an application for funding under the Low Cost Safety Improvement Works Programme 2023 has been made to the Department of Transport in respect of the Junction of the L-6136-0 & L-2133-59 at Ratheven, Portlaoise.

Notice of Motion No: 187/2022 (Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald) & 188/2022 (Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley) were taken together as follows:-

“That this Council give an update on the local bus service for Portlaoise” in the name of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald.

“That this Council liaise with the NTA to ensure the proposed two new buses routes that are to be rolled out on Portlaoise are Electric buses” in the name of Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley.

These Notice of Motions were seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that Laois County Council, funded by the National Transport Authority, has recently completed the design of the 72 bus-stops required to support delivery of the Portlaoise Town Bus Service. The designs have been lodged with the NTA. Two further tenders/works packages are required to deliver/implement the Bus Service, a tender to appoint a civils contractor to construct the 40 bus stops (to be advanced by LCC subject to NTA approval/funding) and a tender for the operation of the bus service (to be advanced by the NTA). In keeping with Portlaoise’s Low Carbon Town status, LCC is promoting electric busses to service the bus routes, from the date of commencement of the Bus Service.

Notice of Motion No: 189/2022

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

“That this Council liaise with the approval housing bodies to establish if they have a maximum rent for their Tenants”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. Following lengthy discussion, it was agreed that clarification in this matter will be provided by the Housing Department.

Additionally, the Members were advised that the annual Approved Housing Body Forum with local authorities in the region will take place on the 8th of December 2022, at which this query will be raised.

Notice of Motion No: 190/2022

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

“That this Council include the following two roads in the roads programme. Primrose Avenue Esker Hills and road number L26965 Burnwood”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that the L-81085 Primrose Avenue and Buttercup Avenue Esker Hills Portlaoise and the L-26965 Burnwood, Clonad will be examined for consideration for road surfacing as part of the 2023 Roads Programme.

Notice of Motion No: 191/2022

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council provide extra resources if required by the dog warden to ensure that owners of dog breeds that require a muzzle are following the rules and are not allowed to roam freely, especially in light of the attack on a child in Enniscorthy recently and the life changing outcomes of this”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that the Dog Warden will continue to ensure compliance with regard to restricted breeds under the Control of Dogs Regulations 1998. The Council's Environmental Complaints system provides for complaints regarding dogs and their behaviour to be logged and referred to the Dog Warden for to deal with as efficiently as possible. Members of the public are also encouraged to contact the Gardai and the I.SP.C.A. NATIONAL ANIMAL HELPLINE: - 1890 515 515 LAOIS S.P.C.A.: - 087 6883333 with any concerns they may have.

Councillor Tuohy also made enquiries regarding the dog park – Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. indicated that potential sites have been identified and that he would revert to Members in early 2023 when further design details are confirmed.

Notice of Motion No: 192/2022

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council offer our thanks to the frontline workers who will be working over the Christmas period”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The sentiments of the Notice of Motion were noted by the Members.

4. Approval of Business Incentive Scheme for Ballinakill

The Members were circulated with a copy of the Business Incentive Scheme for Ballinakill. Ms. Sheila Cahill, Staff Officer, Local Enterprise Office gave a brief presentation on the Incentive Scheme and responded to the various queries. The scheme was unanimously agreed on the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh.

5. Correspondence

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

6. Vote of Sympathy

On the proposition of Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy, the Members unanimously agreed to pass a Vote of Sympathy to the Kerry Family, Greenmill Lane, Portlaoise on the recent death of Mr. Michael Kerry.

7. (i) Fix Date for Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on **Wednesday, 18th of January 2023.**

(ii) Schedule of Meetings 2023

The Schedule of Meetings for 2023 was agreed as circulated.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Director of Services

