

**MINUTES OF THE PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY  
19<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2020 IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, PORTLAOISE**

**PRESENT** Mr. John Joe Fennelly, Cathaoirleach (In the Chair)  
Ms. Mary Sweeney, M.C.C.  
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. 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 THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY MEETING OF  
PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT HELD ON THE 15<sup>th</sup> OF JANUARY 2020**

On the proposal of Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, the minutes of the January meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2020 were confirmed as circulated.

**2. MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING HELD ON THE 15<sup>th</sup> OF JANUARY 2020**

Simon Walton provided an update in respect of the previous meeting's record regarding proposals for a new roundabout adjacent to Rockview Estate, Mountrath Road. He outlined that the €300,000 approved by Elected Members for the Roundabout, as part of the Capital Budget 2020-2022, was to be funded by the Department of Transport (not Laois County Council). As such progress for the new roundabout is dependent on a successful application to the DoT. To date one unsuccessful application has been made. A new application will be made in 2020. In the meantime Mr. Walton reconfirmed that temporary, interim works will be undertaken at the roundabout in the short term as the current presentation of the roundabout is unsatisfactory.

A draft Agenda is to be circulated in respect of the proposed meeting with TII. Acknowledging correspondence from TII, in which they outline that they will facilitate one meeting per local authority per annum, Municipal District Members agreed to offer an opportunity for other Elected Members (one per the two Municipal Districts) to attend at the meeting with TII so that matters pertaining to the National Road Network can be discussed on a county wide basis.

**3. SCHEDULE OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICT WORKS 2020**

It was agreed that a formal resolution in respect of the Schedule of Municipal District Works 2020 will be sought at the March Meeting of the Committee. In the meantime, following meetings with the Elected Members in respect of the Roadwork Programme 2020 and in order to facilitate an early commencement to the roadworks programme, Elected Members agreed that the €8.5 million roadworks programme outlined in the draft Schedule of Municipal District Works 2020 will not be subject to variation when the matter comes before the Members in March 2020.

#### 4. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

##### Notice of Motion No: 22/2020

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That Laois County Council examine road at Ballymullen/Raggetstown between Ballinakill and Abbeyleix as the roads needs repair (LS5731)"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that it is proposed to re-surface a section of the L-5731 at Ballymullen as part of the 2020 Annual Roads Programme. It is expected that the re-surfacing works will be carried out in Quarter 3 of 2020. The Portlaoise MD office will carry out localised repairs to the road to address issues that arise in the interim.

##### Notice of Motion No: 23/2020

Caroline Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That Laois County Council install ramp signs on the Ridge Road similar to those installed on Colliers Lane"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that the existing advance warning signage on the Ridge Road (L-2120-69) will be reviewed and upgraded in the coming weeks. Road markings will also be refreshed.

##### Notice of Motion No: 24/2020

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That Laois County Council investigate the situation at Crookedy Road which is being used as a by-pass between Mountmellick Road and Dublin Road and is not capable of handling such traffic, particularly at the Ballytegan T Junction and there are a few areas where two cars are unable to pass"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that a request will be submitted to the Road Design Section to install traffic counters on the L-2115-0 known as Crookedy Road. Subject to the survey findings, the Portlaoise MD office will engage with the Road Design section to implement safety measures.

##### Notice of Motion No: 25/2020

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

***"That Laois County Council allocate 10% of the new homes to be constructed as cost to rental in Portlaoise Tower Hill and the convent site"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that this request will be forwarded to Cluid Housing Association for their consideration as part of the overall development of their project. The Convent site however, cannot be considered as this is

being funded through the Capital Assistance Scheme which is specifically designated for Elderly, Disabled and those at risk of homelessness.

Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley raised the issue of financial thresholds for affordable housing. She indicated that there are many people just under the threshold who cannot afford to purchase homes. Councillor Stanley proposed that this Council consider the allocation of 10% of houses to cost rental going forward and that a meeting be requested with Mr. Joe Delaney, Director of Services to discuss the Cost To Rental Scheme and how Laois County Council plans to address this requirement. It was also suggested that a special SPC meeting be scheduled to discuss the matter. Councillor Thomasina Connell, Chairperson of the Housing Regeneration & Planning SPC, indicated that she would raise the matter at the next SPC meeting scheduled for the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2020.

Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services indicated that the Part VIII for the Convent Site was scheduled for consideration at the February meeting of Laois County Council and that Part VIII proposals for the CBS Site will be presented to Elected Members very shortly. Councillor Stanley requested that Mr. Joe Delaney, Director of Services revert to the Members with a plan for the provision of affordable housing.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 26/2020**

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

***"That Laois County Council be requested to install a dropped kerb at Church Street near the cinema in Portlaoise"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The location will be examined and drop kerbs will be installed where required.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 27/2020**

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

***"That this Council contact Iarnróid Éireann and request that they provide more bicycle racks at the train station in Portlaoise"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that correspondence will issue to Iarnród Éireann in this regard.

#### **Notice of Motion 28/2020**

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That this Council replace signs at entrance to Kilminchy and also to resurface the entrance after it was recently dug up"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that The Portlaoise MD office will arrange for the trench to be re-instated. The office has also been in contact with the residents regarding the request for replacement of signage. Once some details have been clarified, Laois County Council would expect to order replacement signage in the coming weeks.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 29/2020**

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That this Council address safety issues on the Abbeyleix Road N77 at Doogues Cross"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that Road Design Section is arranging for a Traffic Survey to be conducted at this junction including right hand turning manoeuvres by northbound traffic turning from the N77 to the minor road for Clonad. Subject to the survey findings, we will engage with TII to implement safety measures. This is a Transport Infrastructure Ireland controlled road, accordingly all interventions here are subject to TII approval and funding.

Members expressed the view that this is a very dangerous junction and requested that the matter be tabled on the agenda for the forthcoming meeting with T.I.I.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 30/2020**

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That this Council install a pedestrian crossing from Bull Lane to Hynds Square"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that it is proposed to re-surface a section of the L-21339 Bull Lane as part of the 2020 Annual Roads Programme. As part of the proposed works, it is intended that pedestrian access from Hynds Square, across Main Street to Bull Lane will also be improved as part of these works.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 31/2020**

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

***"That this Council repair the road and improve drainage at Dysart/Aughnacross, Ballinakill"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD staff will carry out road repairs to address the damage that arose during the recent storm events. This location will also be considered for funding for drainage works as part of the 2020 Annual Drainage Funding.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 32/2020**

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

***"That this Council repair the access door for people with disabilities at the public library in Abbeyleix"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that it is expected that this issue will be resolved in the next two weeks – the Company maintaining the library doors have had issues in obtaining replacement parts for the model of the push button

devise that automatically opens the doors. Staff are very vigilant to the access needs of all customers visiting the library and are offering assistance to those with mobility issues until the matter is resolved.

Councillor John Joe Fennelly complimented and extended thanks to the staff in the library for their ongoing assistance to those with mobility issues.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 33/2020**

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

***"That this Council erect a sign stating new road layout at the Top Square, Portlaoise especially for traffic approaching from the Abbeyleix side"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that following recent road works at this location, road markings have now been restored.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 37/2020**

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That this Council give an update on the Public Toilet facility in Portlaoise"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that works are now underway to enable the re-opening of the public toilets in Lyster Square, Portlaoise. The new toilet facility will consist of two single, Male/Female, units, both units universally accessible. The overall footprint of the toilet facility will be reduced by comparison to the previous toilet facility. The surplus, available floor space will be also be refurbished and will be given over to local community uses such as Portlaoise Tidy Towns or similar. The works period is likely to be in the order of 14 to 16 weeks with a view to having the toilets available by the end of May 2020.

The issue of the loss of two disabled parking spaces was discussed and Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services indicated that he would investigate the matter with a view to providing alternative, temporary spaces as required.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 38/2020**

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That this Council undertake a review of the Sports Ground, comprising of Running Track/Athletics Field, at Harpurs Lane, Portlaoise with a view to making an appropriate application in conjunction with appropriate stakeholders, for funding to upgrade the existing running track and dressing rooms in situ"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald.

The Meeting was advised that, following recent discussions at the February 2020 County Council Meeting, a scoping exercise is underway to identify suitable location(s) that can facilitate the development of an appropriate, affordable and accessible sports facility to service various sports and

particularly minority sports. The facility the subject of the NoM is not in the ownership or control of Laois County Council. Separately there are sports and community capital grants available for which the owners and/or operators of the site may wish to seek access, at their discretion. A more detailed report in respect of the preferred location for a sports facility will be presented to Elected Members later in 2020.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 39/2020**

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That this Council provide an update in relation to the review of the existing pedestrian crossing adjacent to the Killeshin Hotel on the Dublin Road, Portlaoise and advise on potential improvements to be made"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that new Belisha Beacon and Street lights were recently installed as safety measures, which has improved safety for pedestrians, particularly at night time. Roads Design Section will be reviewing this pedestrian crossing in the coming months with a view to addressing speeding issues and further safeguarding of pedestrians at this location.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 40/2020**

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That this Council undertake a review of both the Derelict Sites register and the Vacant Properties List in the Portlaoise LEA and provide up to date schedules"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that the Planning Department are awaiting resources to carry out a review on the Derelict Sites Register for the Portlaoise MD. It is expected that this will commence in March 2020.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 34/2020**

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That this Council install bollards on the Borris Road in order to stop illegal parking of cars on the cycleways"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that the Notice of Motion relates to a 230m section of cycleway on the L-2133-59 Borris Road. In 2020, as part of the Portlaoise Low Carbon Town capital works programme, an investment of €450,000 will be made in the upgrading and expansion of the cycle network in Portlaoise. Such works will focus on key cycle routes to, from and around the town centre and also seek to provide for additional cycling infrastructure such as cycle stands etc. The works suggested will be referred to the Capital Office and undertaken, as appropriate, in line with other necessary cyclist friendly works in and around Portlaoise. As stated in the Notice of Motion it is an offence to park a vehicle in a cycle lane.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 35/2020**

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

*"That this Council install yellow boxes outside Cherrygarth and Kylebrook because of the increased volume of traffic with the opening of the new road"*

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that road markings works will be carried out at these locations in the coming weeks.

**Notice of Motion No: 36/2020**

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

*"That this Council investigate an alternative to the road markings at the roundabout at the Top Square, Portlaoise as motorists are confused as to the exits for both the Mountmellick and Montrath Roads"*

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that following recent road works at this location, road markings have now been restored.

**4. Correspondence**

There was no correspondence received since the last meeting.

**8. Fix Time, Date & Venue for the next meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 at 11.00 a.m. in the Council Chamber.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

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John Joe Fennelly, Cathaoirleach

