

**MINUTES OF THE PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY
16TH SEPTEMBER 2020 IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, PORTLAOISE**

PRESENT Mr. Thomasina Connell, Cathaoirleach (In the Chair)
Ms. Mary Sweeney, M.C.C.
Ms. Catherine Fitzgerald, M.C.C.
Ms. Caroline Dwane Stanley, M.C.C.
Mr. John Joe Fennelly, 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 JULY MEETING OF PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT HELD ON THE 15TH OF JULY 2020

On the proposal of Councillor Willie Aird seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly, the minutes of the July meeting held on the 15th of July 2020 were confirmed as circulated.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING HELD ON THE 15TH OF JULY 2020

There were no matters arising from the Minutes of meeting held on the 15th of July 2020.

It was noted that Green Pine Consultants would facilitate a presentation at the October meeting of the Municipal District on the wildflower meadows on the Portlaoise Southern Ring Road.

The issue of anti-social behaviour at the Courthouse was again raised and Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services confirmed that he would have the issue of activities in and around the Courthouse on days when the Court is sitting giving rise to an intimidatory atmosphere and a general reduction in town centre amenity raised with An Garda Siochana at the JPC Meeting scheduled for next week. In particular Members sought proposals from An Garda Siochana as to any enhancements to existing practices that support addressing the issues highlighted here.

Members also sought an update from the Courts Service as to how proposals to re-locate the Courthouse to the new site on the Portlaoise Southern Circular are advancing.

3. PROJECT UPDATES

Mr. Wes Wilkinson, Senior Executive Engineer gave a brief update on the progress made to date on the Schedule of Municipal District Works including the following:

- Regional and Local Road Maintenance and Improvements
- Bridge Rehabilitation Works
- Safety improvement Works on Regional and Local Roads
- Community Involvement Road Works Schemes
- Footpath Works
- Environmental, and Recreation & Amenity Works

4. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Notice of Motion No: 99/2020

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That LCC change the Chaff Road (L27762) to one way from the Portlaoise entrance to the Walkways car park entrance"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD Roads Office will examine this location in more detail and revert to the members at the next Portlaoise MD Meeting with feedback and proposals.

Notice of Motion No: 100/2020

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council repair the road on R425 between Larchfield Ballyroan and St. Patrick's Graveyard"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that The Portlaoise MD office will make arrangements to carry out road repairs on the R425 at this location.

Notice of Motion No: 101/2020

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council consider repair works to the Tullore road L-6719-27, Ballyroan and that it be considered for the 2021 Roads Programme"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD office will make arrangements to carry out road repairs on the L-6719-27 at Tullore Ballyroan. The location will be noted and kept on file for consideration for surfacing as part of the 2021 Road Programme.

Notice of Motion No: 102/2020

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

"That this Council install the pedestrian crossing outside Cholaiste Dhun Masc School, Tower Hill as possible"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that Laois County Council have a design complete which is currently out for review particularly in relation to the proposed junction improvements/pedestrian crossing, any feedback received will be incorporated and we will proceed to procure and undertake the works from there. The timeline for completion is end of 2020.

Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley and other Members raised concerns in relation to this location, the substantial number of crossings by students and the absence of a formal crossing point. Mr. Simon Walton DoS confirmed that a commitment for a pedestrian crossing by September 2020 had been made and would be fulfilled. However, circumstances had

dictated against its provision in the timeframe envisaged. Mr. Walton outlined that an interim, temporary measure would be introduced pending delivery of the agreed crossing.

Notice of Motion No: 103/2020

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

"That this Council clean the stream and cut back the trees along the riverbank in the Grange"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD office has arranged for the trees along the surface channel at the Grange to be examined by a Tree Surgeon / Tree Service Contractor. Once our office has received the assessment and estimated costs of the works, funding will be sought to carry out the works.

Notice of Motion No: 104/2020

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

"That this Council CPO the vacant site at the front of Market Mews, Maryborough Estate, Mountrath Road, take in charge the small section or road at the back of the vacant site and reinstate the boundary fence at along the river bank"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Mary Sweeney. The Members were advised that there is still a live permission on this site - 03/1241 which expires on 31/12/2021. It is my understanding that this area is intended to be a retail development as part of the Housing Development. The Developer intends to complete this development. In relation to the road this will be taken in charge when the estate is completed. Laois County Council's Housing Department will seek quotes for the repair of this fence. Subject to funding the Housing Department will proceed with this repair.

Councillor Dwane Stanley expressed concern regarding the broken fence at this location. It was agreed that the matter be followed up with the Housing Department.

Notice of Motion No: 105/2020

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

"That this Council install extra traffic calming measures on Ballyroan Road, Abbeyleix especially from Scoil Mhuire to entrance to Abbey Crescent"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Mary Sweeney. The Members were advised that Laois County Council has already introduced a number of traffic calming measures including the introduction of a speed limit at this location of 50km/h and a School Periodic Speed limit of 30km/h is also in place. Driver Feedback Sign indicating Drivers speed is installed at this location. Road Design will arrange a site meeting with Elected member to identify specific issues and possible Traffic Calming proposals.

Councillor Fennelly indicated that proper traffic calming measures are required at this location – suggesting a meeting to take place with An Garda Siochana and the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire. It was noted also that a footpath be provided in Abbey Crescent.

Notice of Motion No: 106/2020

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

"That this Council ask ESB to install extra car charging point on Lower Main Street, Abbeyleix"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that a request for additional Charging point in Lower Main Street will be sent to ESB.

Notice of Motion No: 107/2020

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

"That this Council repair or replace the boundary fencing in cross on Newtown, Ballyroan"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that arrangements are being made to carry out repairs to the broken fencing at this location. Funding will be sought to replace the full section of fence.

Notice of Motion No: 108/2020

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council work with all stakeholders to restore Portlaoise Leisure Centre as the major community resource of the town and surrounding areas"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell. The Members were advised that the Council is anxious to work with the range of stakeholders who will positively contribute to the future viability of the Portlaoise Leisure Centre.

It was noted that a full update on the Leisure Centre would be given at the September Meeting of Laois County Council.

Notice of Motion No: 109/2020

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council replace broken fence in Woodgrove Lawns"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. will meet Councillor Fitzgerald on site to examine the location and determine the extent of the works required.

Notice of Motion No: 110/2020

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council cut back trees overhanging houses in Glenbarrow"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Stanley. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD office has arranged for the trees on the boundary of Beechlawn and Glenbarrow to be examined by a Tree Surgeon / Tree Service Contractor.

Once our office has received the assessment and estimated costs of the works, funding will be sought to carry out the works.

Notice of Motion No: 111/2020

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council take action to solve the ongoing anti-social behaviour problem in the People’s Park, Portlaoise”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell. The Members were advised that Pairc an Phobail is open 365 days/year at the following times;

1st May – 30th Sept 08:30 – 21:30
1st Oct – 30th April 08:30 – 18:30

Since the beginning of 2020 to early September of this year there have been 5 call-ins to the Garda and 1 complaint received into the Portlaoise MD Office. Laois County Council staff have not experienced antisocial behaviour on a regular basis during working hours.

Pairc an Phobail has been awarded a “Green Flag” each year since 2016 in recognition of its achievements under the “Green Flag for Parks Award Scheme” which is a benchmark international standard that recognises and encourages good standards in management of Parks and Green Spaces. Pairc an Phobail was awarded a “Green Flag” again in 2020.

The Portlaoise MD Office will engage with the Gardai over the coming weeks to determine if any additional measures can be put in place address potential anti-social behaviour out of hours or late at night.

The Members noted ongoing problems, in particular night time security fears for residents with properties backing onto the Park or backing onto access lanes to the Park. Whilst it is a minority creating the problems, they are of concern, nonetheless.

Councillor Connell indicated that any measures would be beneficial – it was agreed that the views of the Gardai be requested with a view to dealing with the matter.

Notice of Motion No: 112/2020

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Portlaoise Municipal District includes in its submission for the application for the safe improvement schemes for 2021, the junction of L5679 and L 2690 at Coole, Raheen leading to Derrykearn”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that this location will be examined and included on the list of schemes submitted to the Road Design Office to be included in the application for funding for 2021.

Notice of Motion No: 113/2020

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:

“That Portlaoise Municipal District requests Adrian Barrett, Senior Engineer, Laois County Council, to amend the speed limit bylaws to reduce speed on the the R425 at Rathleague

from 80km to 50km in order to allow a pedestrian crossing to be installed to service the Portlaoise grounds”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that the speed limit review was concluded in 2019 - according to Speed limit Guidelines this section of the road did not qualify to reduce speed limit. This section of the road will be reviewed again in next Speed Limit Review. However, Road Design will examine the location to explore other options to facilitate traffic calming measures at this location on the R425.

Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services indicated that the review of speed limits on local and regional roads is a complex, elongated statutory process. Altering speed limits is also a Reserved Function of Elected Members. In expanding on the Motion Members outlined that there were general concerns for the safety of patrons accessing and egressing the GAA grounds. Mr. Walton agreed that an overall road safety review, in keeping with the Notice of Motion and including consideration for pedestrian crossing facilities, will be undertaken at this location on the R425 and the outcome of that review would be presented to Members.

Notice of Motion No: 114/2020

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:

“That Portlaoise Municipal District requests a meeting in Saint Peter and Paul’s cemetery, with the Director of Services, Donal Brennan, Carmel McNicholl and John Quigley along with the cemetery committee to discuss remedies to the present situation whereby some graves are being damaged by cars”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Mary Sweeney. The Members were advised that The Director of Services and staff would be happy to meet on site with the members of the Municipal District.

Notice of Motion No: 115/2020

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council undertake soft landscaping enhancements at the main approach roads to Portlaoise to enhance the aesthetics of our town to visitors and tourists"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that The Portlaoise MD Office in conjunction with Portlaoise Tidy Towns has put in place an extensive biodiversity planting scheme on the Portlaoise Southern Circular Route - during the summer of 2020. The Portlaoise MD Office & Tidy Towns are actively seeking opportunities to install similar soft landscaping features as part of the installation of new roads infrastructure and also to embellish existing infrastructure.

Councillor Connell requested that some additional ‘Welcome to Portlaoise’ signage be provided.

Mr. Wes Wilkinson, A/Senior Executive Engineer also advised that soft landscaping works will be undertaken on a selection of roundabouts in Portlaoise in 2021 and the intentions of the Notice of Motion will be addressed, as resources allow, in conjunction with Tidy Towns.

Notice of Motion No: 116/2020

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council immediately put in place line markings at Laurel Drive, Esker Hills, Portlaoise to improve safety measures in the estate"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that I will meet Councillor Connell on site to examine the specific location and make arrangements to carry out the works with a Line Marking Contractor.

Notice of Motion No: 117/2020

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council establish a method to combat the current traffic problems arising each morning in Portlaoise in and around the locus of our schools, and in particular consider the 'Park & Stride' initiative that has been invoked in other locations in Ireland"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that A Park and Stride is to be developed as part of a new school development in the area of the Timahoe Road/Southern Circular Road. Development proposals for the school are being advanced and "surplus" lands will be developed as a Park and Stride to serve the broader school network in this area of Portlaoise. Over and above Park and Stride the delivery of the Portlaoise Town Bus Service, the development of the Triogue Blu-Way and the expansion of walking and cycling facilities throughout Portlaoise will also all support more sustainable means of school's access.

Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services advised that the Executive will engage with Mr. Joe Cunningham, Chief Executive Officer of the LOETB with a view to discussing the Park & Stride option.

5. Correspondence

There was no correspondence received since the last meeting.

Councillor Aird raised the matter of the Feasibility Study for the Downs, Portlaoise.

Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley raised the matter of the lighting in the vicinity of O' Moore Park – there is a lack of lighting on one side of the park. Other Members highlighted other estates with similar concerns. It was agreed that Mr. Farhan Nasiem, A/Senior Executive Engineer will be requested to attend the October meeting to give an update on public lighting.

Councillor Willie Aird proposed that a vote of good wishes be extended to St. Joseph's Accordion Band on their re-grouping and also that Mr. Peter Smith be acknowledged on his retirement.

6. Fix Time, Date & Venue for the next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting will be held on 21st of October 2020 at 11.00 a.m. in the Council Chamber.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

Thomasina Connell, Cathaoirleach