

**MINUTES OF THE PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY
9th OF DECEMBER 2020 IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, PORTLAOISE**

PRESENT Ms. 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 NOVEMBER MEETING OF
PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT HELD ON THE 18TH OF NOVEMBER 2020**

On the proposal of Councillor Willie Aird seconded by Councillor Mary Sweeney, the minutes of the November meeting held on the 18th of November 2020 were confirmed as circulated.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING HELD ON THE 18TH OF NOVEMBER 2020

There were no matters arising.

3. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Notice of Motion No: 158/2020

Councillor John Joe Fennelly proposed the following Notice of Motion:

“That this Council give an update on the repairs to the bridge close to the creamery at Spink that was damaged two years ago”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that funding is being sought to carry out the upgrade of the vehicle restraint barrier and repairs to the bridge in the first half of 2021.

Notice of Motion No: 159/2020

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

“That this Council re-surface the roadway at Sandy Lane, Abbeyleix”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that it has been confirmed that this lane is taken in charge and will be considered for re-surfacing in 2021 under the Roadworks Programme.

Notice of Motion No: 160/2020

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

"That this Council repair the manhole covers that are loose on Main Street, Abbeyleix"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that arrangements will be made to carry out manhole repairs on Main Street Abbeyleix.

Notice of Motion No: 161/2020

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council liaise with the shop owners adjacent to the entrance to Lyster Square Carpark with regard to the proposed changes currently being designed"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that Laois County Council will liaise with stakeholders (including shop owners) in pursuit of an improved pedestrian permeability and public realm enhancement scheme for Lyster Square.

Notice of Motion No: 162/2020

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council consider the Lower Main Street, Ballyroan to include Chapel Street in the 2021 Roads Programme "

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that this location will be considered for road surfacing as part of the Roadworks Programme for 2021

Notice of Motion No: 163/2020

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council give an update on the plans for river works in the Portlaoise MD and to include the Gloreen River in Ballyroan"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that the Bolybeg Drainage District and a portion of the Barrow Drainage District, with the River Triogue, lie within the Portlaoise MD Area. The priority for 2021 will be to undertake a condition survey and ecological survey of the river channel of the River Triogue from the confluence with the Barrow to a point 5km upstream to Brittas. The result of the survey will be then be used to formulate a work programme for the section of river.

Notice of Motion No: 164/2020

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council make safe for pedestrians and cyclists the area in the vicinity of the C.B.S. & Scoil Chroist Rí"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. will make himself available to meet with Councillor Fitzgerald on site to review specific issues and possible solutions for this location.

Councillor Fitzgerald expressed concern regarding students cycling to both of these schools and also the necessity for cars to park in the cycle lanes.

Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services confirmed that it is a priority of Laois County Council that cycling infrastructure be upgraded around the town of Portlaoise. There are proposals for park and stride facilities and dedicated parking areas beside the schools. It is intended to liaise with the schools in early 2021 on this matter to advance this. Mr. Walton advised that Laois County Council have recently received approval from Waterford Institute of Technology for the appointment of a Cycling Officer (Masters Student) to focus on the development of a broader cycling culture in the town of Portlaoise. The Officer to be appointed in early 2021. In addition a Part VIII proposal for a portion of the Triogue Blueway will be brought before the Members for their consideration in early 2021.

Notice of Motion No: 165/2020

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council revamp and make safe the old road at Clonadadoran"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that The Portlaoise MD Office will liaise with Councillor Fitzgerald to develop proposals to revamp the old road at Clonadadoran adjacent to the N77 and seek funding for works in 2021

Notice of Motion No: 166/2020

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council install traffic calming measures on the road between the main Mountmellick Road and Larkins Cross"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that the L-2117-0 at Kyletelisha between the N80 and Larkins Cross is a relatively straight section of road in a rural area with an 80 kph speed limit. As such there are a very limited number of interventions that Laois County Council Roads section can put in place to assist with reducing the speed of vehicles at this location. The Portlaoise MD Office will replace the existing 80 kph speed sign with a rural speed limit/slow sign near the junction of this road with the N80.

Notice of Motion No: 167/2020

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council place rumble strips either side of the roundabout at Esker Hills on the Ridge Road to assist in slowing traffic"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD Office will investigate this location and consider measures such as installing yellow bars to assist in the slowing traffic on the approach to the roundabout at Esker Hills.

Notice of Motion No: 168/2020

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council remind people that a dog is for life not for Christmas and also that any dogs which require muzzling be muzzled"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell. The Members were advised that The Control of Dogs Act 1998 prescribes that certain dog breeds must wear a muzzle in public places. It is an offence for a dog owner not to have a muzzle on such dogs when they are in public places. Where a member of the public has concerns that provisions of the Control of Dogs Acts are being breached they can contact the Environment Section of Laois County Council.

Notice of Motion No: 169/2020

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council look at the exit from Rinnucini on the Dublin Road where the traffic has to turn left and turn at the roundabout to come back in the Dublin Road towards town"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that the existing arrangement to turn left is required to safely exit at this junction on to the Dublin Road and is prescribed by planning condition.

Notice of Motion No: 170/2020

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

"That this Council give a detailed report on the road safety audit that I requested to be carried out earlier in the year on the Fieldbrook Roundabout and pedestrian crossings on the Dublin Road, Portlaoise"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that The Portlaoise MD Office has examined details of the Road Safety Audit carried out previously at this location and are currently drawing up proposals to improve advance warning signage, road markings and raising of the centre island of the mini roundabout. Full

details will be made available in January 2021 and it is intended to carry out the works early in 2021.

Notice of Motion No: 171/2020

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

"That this Council roll out a pilot scheme of affordable housing and cost rental housing in the development of Tyrrells land that was bought by the Council in Portlaoise Town"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that the Council completed the purchase of 25.73 acres of land on the Stradbally road earlier this year. The cost of purchase, funded by a loan, was €1.4m. Since then a multi-disciplinary team has been procured to prepare a masterplan for the lands. They are currently carrying out preliminary investigations and assessments. Once completed consultation with key stakeholders will commence in the New Year. The land has a mixture of residential, community type and open space zonings. The Council's primary objective in purchasing this landbank was to deliver additional housing for those who could not fund it from their own resources. In that regard it will explore all viable options for the delivery of such housing including social, affordable and cost rental on these lands. However it should be noted that in the absence of a national subsidy/scheme the Council does not have the financial capacity of its own to deliver an affordable scheme.

Councillor Dwane Stanley requested that Laois County Council consider affordable housing and suggested that, for social housing, the current threshold for a family could be re-considered, i.e. €504.00. She stated that cost rental is also needed that Laois County Council pilot a suitable project on Tyrrells land and that the Department of Housing be lobbied on this. Other Members noted an upcoming announcement from Government on a new affordable housing scheme.

It was requested that the Planning Department meet the 7 Members of the Portlaoise MD in early January to discuss plans for this land and that the Members are part of the Masterplan. Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services confirmed that Consultants have been appointed – once the preliminary proposals have been commenced there will be ongoing engagement with the Elected Members.

Notice of Motion No: 172/2020

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

"That this Council give an update on the progress to take Lakeside Gardens in Kilminchy in charge"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that this estate has been included in the list of estates to be considered for taking in charge in 2021. Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services indicated that he had recently met with Mr. Joe Delaney, Director of Services & Mr. Pat Delaney, Administrative Officer, Planning and advised that there are currently 14 estates in Portlaoise not taken in charge. It was noted that a full status report on the taking in charge of these estates will be available for the

February/March Meeting of the Municipal District. In approving the Notice of Motion Members welcomed the development of a programme for taking in charge.

Notice of Motion No: 173/2020

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council utilise unused funds from our arts budget to allow for murals and artwork on some of our derelict buildings and electricity boxes"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that during 2021 we will examine various funding streams for the types of works suggested in the Notice of Motion. Obviously the cooperation of the owners of the relevant assets will be required.

Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services indicated that the matter has recently been raised at the Portlaoise Town Meetings and it is intended to continue to enhance local areas with suitable and relevant murals and/or planned graffiti.

Notice of Motion No: 174/2020

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council address with urgency the dim lighting in public areas which has resulted from the installation of LED bulbs"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that details of the Portlaoise Public Lighting Retrofit Programme were outlined to Elected Members in November 2020. In acknowledging the benefits of the Programme from a sustainability perspective, Elected Members outlined specific concerns regarding some housing estates. Where shortcomings in lighting standards arise, Laois County Council will provide additional, infill lighting. There is a programme of works to hand to provide infill lighting in estates where the lighting standards required have not been achieved. This programme will commence on Monday 14th December, 2020.

Notice of Motion No: 175/2020

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council provide an update on the taking in charge of Broomville Close, Portlaoise"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that the Laois County Council Planning Dept are awaiting completion of CCTV for the whole estate i.e Broomville Close, Broomville Court. It is expected to have this completed by end of January 2021 and depending on the results of same taking in charge will be progressed to the next stage.

Notice of Motion No: 176/2020

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Municipal District calls on Laois County Council to install extra lights in Fairgreen"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that following a presentation on the LED Public Lighting Retrofit Programme at the November Meeting I met with the Elected Members and residents on site and discussed issues regarding the inadequate light standards etc. Laois County Council will, initially, replace 10 number lights/standards in Fairgreen during January 2021. Once these lights are installed lighting levels will be tested and verified and, thereafter, once the standard has been achieved, all remaining lights will be replaced.

A discussion ensued regarding public lighting in the town of Portlaoise and in particular Fairgreen & Woodgrove estates. The Members requested a further meeting with Mr. Farhan Nasiem, A/S.E.E., Public Lighting. Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services indicated that a programme to address deficiencies in various areas was commencing on the 14th of December 2020 and would continue until the end of February 2021.

Notice of Motion No: 177/2020

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County look at the junction at Green Mill Lane and the Ridge Road with a view to making it safe for pedestrians"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that the junction of Greenmill Lane and Ridge Road has a footpath located on the eastern side of Ridge Road. There are no pedestrian facilities on the western side of Ridge Road at this junction and there are no pedestrian facilities on Greenmill Lane on the approach to this junction. The narrow road widths and alignment of Greenmill Lane at this location, combined with the presence of private residences bounding the public road create significant challenges to the provision of footpaths. Land acquisition would be required to realise a suitably designed footpath. However, such land acquisition is likely to result in major negative impacts on the affected property owners. As an alternative the Roads Design Section will improve signing and roadmarkings at this location in an effort to improve upon the existing situation.

Notice of Motion No: 178/2020

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That the Portlaoise Municipal District calls on Laois County Council to include Ashton Manor in the roads programme for resurfacing for 2021 and in the meantime fill the potholes as a matter of urgency"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD Office will examine the road at Ashton Manor for consideration as part of the Roadworks Programme for 2021. Road repairs will be carried out where required in the interim.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor Willie Aird raised the matter of the Part VIII in relation to the construction of four no. two bay halting sites at Oak Park, Knockmay which is tabled for consideration at the December meeting of Laois County Council. It was agreed that Mr. Joe Delaney, Director of Services be requested to forward further details to the Members in advance of the meeting.

Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. confirmed that correspondence had been received from Irish Rail in relation to the commencement of the enhanced pedestrian facilities on one side of the road at the Clonminam Rail Crossing. Councillor Aird requested that Irish Rail be requested to attend a meeting in relation to this issue in relation to works being undertaken on both sides.

A meeting with representatives of Foxburrow/Chantier Gate/Block Roiad in connection with the SHD at Foxburrow was noted.

5. FIX DATE & TIME FOR NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place in the Council Chamber on the 20th of January 2021 at 11.00 a.m.

6. SCHEUDLE OF MEETINGS

The schedule of meetings for 2021 was agreed as circulated.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

Thomasina Connell, Cathaoirleach