

MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 13TH
OF DECEMBER 2021 IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE

PRESENT:	Councillor	Conor Bergin	In The Chair
	Councillors	Willie Aird John Joe Fennelly James Kelly Aisling Moran John King Paschal McEvoy Catherine Fitzgerald Ben Brennan Mary Sweeney	Paddy Bracken Aidan Mullins P.J. Kelly Caroline Dwane Stanley Thomasina Connell Padraig Fleming Seamus McDonald Ollie Clooney Noel Tuohy

IN ATTENDANCE:

Messers John Mulholland, Chief Executive, Donal Brennan, Director of Services, Simon Walton, Director of Services, Ms. Angela McEvoy, A/Director of Services, Mr. Gerry Murphy, Head of Finance, Ms. Irene Delaney, A.O., & Ms. Michelle McCormack, S.O.

171. VOTE OF CONGRATULATIONS

On the proposition of Councillor John King, the Members unanimously extended a vote of congratulations to the Clough Ballacolla Senior Hurling Team on winning the Leinster Senior Club Hurling Final recently.

On the proposition of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, the Members unanimously extended good luck to the Portarlinton Senior Football Team on their forthcoming Leinster Final Championship.

172. STATEMENT FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE REGARDING HOUSING GRANTS

Mr. John Mulholland, Chief Executive read a statement to the Members in relation to articles released on two local digital media regarding the performance of Laois County Council on the delivery of the 2021 Disabled Persons Grants and Works in Lieu programme. In the course of the statement the he strongly rejected the contentions contained in both articles and expressed his acute disappointment at the statements directed towards the Council and by implication the performance of the housing department.

The Chief Executive advised the Members of the following significant achievements made by Laois County Council, reflective of the work of the housing team, and that are notified to each Member on a monthly basis in the monthly management report:-

- the construction of 226 houses by Laois County Council on 20 sites around the county,
- the construction of 273 houses through partnerships with approved housing bodies on 8 sites,
- the close out of 2,534 maintenance tasks on local authority houses,
- the ongoing retrofitting of 160 local authority houses ,
- the refurbishment of 74 vacant council houses and newly acquired homes,
- the commencement of work on improved Traveller accommodation,

- the provision of accommodation for families under the refugee programme,

Mr. Mulholland advised members that 255 applications to value of €1.4million (an all-time high figure) will have been processed under the housing adaptation grant scheme in 2021, that over 60 applicants for small scale DPG works in value of €566,000 (more than twice the normal expenditure) will have been processed under the DPG scheme for 2021 and that 9 extensions are currently at various stages of design and procurement. The Chief Executive concluded in assuring the Members that work would continue under the DPG programme on LA houses over the winter/spring period and that members will be appraised on a monthly basis on future progress.

173. RETIREMENT OF MS. MARY SWEENEY, M.C.C.

It was noted that this was Councillor Mary Sweeney's last meeting and a presentation was made to Councillor Sweeney in recognition of same. Members and officials paid tribute to Councillor Sweeney on her contribution to public life since her election and thanked her for her valued contribution.

174. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 29TH OF NOVEMBER 2021

On the proposition of Councillor Padraig Fleming seconded by Councillor Paddy Bracken, the Minutes of the November meeting held on the 29th of November 2021 were confirmed.

175. REPORT ON C.P.G. MEETING HELD ON THE 22ND OF NOVEMBER 2021

On the proposition of Councillor John King seconded by Councillor Paschal McEvoy, the report on the CPG meeting held on the 22nd of November 2021 was confirmed as circulated.

174. REPORT ON MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETINGS HELD IN NOVEMBER 2021

On the proposition of Councillor Ollie Clooney seconded by Councillor Ben Brennan, the report on Municipal District Meetings were confirmed.

Councillor Padraig Fleming raised the matter of the inspection report which was due to issue to the R.T.S. Group in relation to the development being carried out at Ratheniska and in relation to planning compliance. A discussion ensued during which the Chief Executive indicated that he would schedule a meeting with Eirgrid on the matter as requested by the Members. As the issue related to a live enforcement case, the Chief Executive excused himself from the meeting and advised that it would be inappropriate in the circumstances for him to remain at the meeting. Mr. Donal Brennan, Director of Services & Ms. Angela McEvoy, A/Director of Services also excused themselves from the meeting. The Members discussed the issue at length and subsequently Mr. Conor Bergin, M.C.C. Cathaoirleach indicated that he would follow up with the Chief Executive, Mr. John Mulholland on the matter.

175. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001 in respect of

DISPOSAL OF 0.14 HECTARES OF LAND AT 1 DOONANE TERRACE, CRETTYARD, CO. LAOIS.

On the proposition of Councillor Ben Brennan seconded by Councillor Padraig Fleming, the Members unanimously agreed to disposal of 0.14 hectares of land at 1 Doonane Terrace, Crettyard, Co. Laois in the townland of Doonane for a consideration of €70,000

176. APPROVAL OF THE TRANSFER OF €75,000 FROM MEMBERS TRAINING/ CONFERENCES BUDGET

The Members were circulated with the details of the monies to transfer from the Training & Conference budget in the sum of in the sum of €75,000 and this was unanimously agreed on the proposition of Councillor Paschal McEvoy seconded by Councillor Aidan Mullins.

177. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT BYE-LAWS IN REALTION TO CEMETERIES

The Members were circulated with a copy of the draft bye-laws in relation to cemeteries. On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor Padraig Fleming, the Members unanimously agreed the draft bye-laws in relation to cemeteries as circulated. The Members were advised that this is now proceeding to the public consultation stage. Various queries were raised which were responded to by Mr. Donal Brennan, Director of Services.

178. CONSIDERATION OF THE 3RD CE REPORT AND ADOPTION OF THE LAOIS COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor Ailsing Moran, the Members unanimously agreed that a special meeting of Laois County Council be scheduled for Thursday, January 6th 2022 at 11.00 a.m.

179. CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE LAOIS HERITAGE AND BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY 2021-2026

The Members were circulated with a copy of the Laois Heritage & Biodiversity Strategy Strategy for 2021-2026. On the proposition of Councillor Padraig Fleming seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell, the Members unanimously agreed to the Laois Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy 2021-2026 as circulated.

180. CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT STRATEGIC HOUSING PLAN FOR -PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Fionnuala Daly, Senior Social Worker delivered a comprehensive presentation to the Members on the draft Strategic Housing Plan for People with Disabilities 2021-2026 and responded to the various queries raised by the Members. The adoption of the draft

Strategic Housing Plan for People with Disabilities was proposed by Councillor Thomasina Connell and seconded by Councillor Willie Aird.

181. ADOPTION OF THE ANNUAL SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2022

The Members were circulated with a copy of the Annual Service Delivery Plan for 2000 and was agreed on the proposition of Councillor Paschal McEvoy and seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly.

182. RATIFICATION OF CONFERENCES & TRAINING

The Members were circulated with a copy of the conferences and training for ratification and same was agreed on the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor Paschal McEvoy.

183. CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence dated the 4th of November 2021 from the Department of Social Protection, the 11th of November from Deputy Charles Flanagan, the 8th of November 2021 from Deputy Brian Stanley and the 9th of November from Minister Sean Fleming in relation to the Community Welfare Service in Mountmellick was circulated.

184. Notice of Motions

Notice of Motion No: 45/2021

Councillor Aisling Moran proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council give a breakdown of the full costings to date on the new Library in Portlaoise, the original tender price and what was included in that and the required funds to finish the project. Also to baseline it from the original costings put forward by management in the first instance”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley.

The Members were advised as follows:

The original tender price for the construction of the new Library in Portlaoise was €4,350,627 excluding VAT or €4,937,962 including VAT.

The tender price included for the construction of the new library as described in the tender documentation. The payments to date and funds required for the balance of the project are outlined in the following table:

	Payments planned to end 2021 excl VAT	Future payments excl VAT	Total Project Excl Vat
A Construction related costs	€1,320,983	€3,360,987	€4,681,971
B Design, tender assessment and supervision Fees	€323,753	€79,115	€402,753
C Fitout and new book stock		€664,000	€664,000
	-----	-----	-----
sub total	€1,644,736	€4,104,102	€5,748,724
VAT			€724,610
Total incl VAT			€6,473,335

Table 1

Within the above table it is useful to note:

- Contracts under headings A and B above have been the subject of open tender processes
- The items under heading C above have not yet gone to tender.
- Within item A above are costs of €150,571 in respect of contaminated ground.
- Construction costs are eligible for 75% funding from DRCD and URDF
- Costs in relation to Fitout and new book stock are eligible for grants up to €332k from DRCD

It is important to acknowledge the support given by the Department of Rural and Community Development (circa €3m) and the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (a fund up to €2.787m subject to the co-funding percentages listed above), and to acknowledge those who have assisted in securing these funds.

The new Library in Portlaoise has been included in the Indicative Capital programmes presented to the council over the last decade.

The original figure mentioned for the library construction was €2.5m for a library over two floors. During the design phase it was recognised that the building needed to be over three floors to meet the design parameters for the building. The initial estimate compares to a tender price for the final project of €4.35m excl VAT.

The need for the new library in Portlaoise has been noted in Development Plans adopted by the Council. For example, under 2017-2023 County Development Plan it was stated as

policy CUL2 Provide new library facilities in the Principal Town of Portlaoise during the life time of the Plan

The Development of the new Library in Portlaoise was also mentioned in the adopted Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 under Goal 10.

The Part 8 for the Library was endorsed by the Council at the Council meeting of 31st July 2017.

At the November 2019 Council meeting the Council were informed that DRCD had formally approved the tender and that contracts for the new library would be signed shortly.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

SIGNED: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

CERTIFIED: _____
DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
CORPORATE AFFAIRS