

**MINUTES OF THE PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY
17th OF FEBRUARY 2021 BY MICROSOFT TEAMS**

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 JANUARY MEETING OF PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT HELD ON THE 21ST OF JANUARY 2021

On the proposal of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy, the minutes of the December meeting held on the 21st of January 2021 were confirmed as circulated.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING HELD ON THE 21ST OF JANUARY 2021

- (i) Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley raised the matter of a recent discontinuation of water supply on the Borris Road. It was agreed that the matter be followed up with Irish Water requesting them to notify residents when there are proposed interruptions to water supplies.
- (ii) Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services referred to the forthcoming works commencing on Bull Lane/Main Street which were discussed at the January meeting of the Municipal District – subject to reviewing current Covid-19 restrictions, insofar as those restrictions apply to construction works, it is hoped that the proposed works will commence on the 8th of March 2021.

3. ADVERTISEMENT OF CONSULTATION RE: CHAFF ROAD

The Members were advised of the proposed introduction of a one-way traffic system along the section of the L27762 at Pass, Cullenagh, Portlaoise known locally as Chaff Road and adjacent to Rockview Walkways from the junction with the R425 to a point 430 m to the south west of the junction. It was noted that the public consultation will be ongoing until the 30th of March 2021.

4. APPROVAL OF 2021 ROAD STRENGTHENING AND SURFACE DRESSING WORKS

The Members were circulated with a copy of the draft Annual Roads Programme 2021 for the Portlaoise Municipal District totalling €344,302.35 subject to confirmation of the 2021 allocations.

On the proposition of Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy, the Members unanimously agreed to the programme as presented.

It is intended to bring the 2021 County Laois Roadworks Programme before the Elected Members for agreement and resolution at the March 2021 Monthly Meeting.

5. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Notice of Motion No: 21/2021

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:

"That Laois County Council provide an update on the change of use requested for the Chaff Road at Cashel, Ballyroan"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that the advertisement for public consultation in relation to the proposed implementation of a one way system on the L-27762 at Pass, Cullenagh, Portlaoise, Co. Laois known locally as the Chaff Road will be published on Tuesday, 23rd of February 2021.

Notice of Motion No: 22/2021

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council provide an update on a plan for the facilitation of public spaces for retail and hospitality businesses in the Portlaoise Municipal District once Covid-19 restrictions are eased"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that Laois County Council is amenable to and supports the reallocation of public spaces insofar as that reallocation of space is in the general public interest and supports local economic activity. As public health restrictions ease Laois County Council will proactively engage with any retail and hospitality businesses that are seeking access to public spaces in support of their business recovery.

Notice of Motion No: 23/2021

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council provide an update on the Wifi4EU vouchers received by Portlaoise Municipal District and the associated rollout of same"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that there are 4 Wifi4EU Vouchers, which will be applied for in the one Tender in the locations set out hereunder. It is hoped to advertise the tender within a few weeks. As regards the Portlaoise Municipal District the vouchers relate to the following specific areas Laois A : Portlaoise town – Market Square Main Street to Library and the Fort Quarter Area . There will be a single indoor access point in the Leisure Centre, Laois C : Municipal Area Central – Abbeyleix Library, Market Square and Main Street.

Notice of Motion No: 24/2021

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

"That Laois County Council install extra safety measures at the Ballymullen Road, Abbeyleix from Grallow Wood back to the junction"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. will make himself available to meet Councillor Fennelly having regard to public health guidance, on site to examine the safety issues at Ballymullen Road, Abbeyleix from Grallow Road back to the Junction.

Notice of Motion No: 25/2021

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

"That this Council carry out drainage works at Rathmoyle, Abbeyleix"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that an initial site visit was carried out regarding the drainage issues at Rathmoyle, Abbeyleix - however Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. indicated that he would arrange to meet Councillor Fennelly having regard to public health guidance at the location for further information on the issue.

Notice of Motion No: 26/2021

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

"That this Council erect signage indicating dangerous bends at Blackhill, Abbeyleix"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. will make himself available to meet Councillor Fennelly, having regard to public health guidance, on site to examine the safety issues at Blackhill, Abbeyleix.

Notice of Motion No: 27/2021

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council provide a walkway/cycle lane on Ballyclider Road from property on the Stradbally Road to the old Dublin Road"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that Road Design will undertake a preliminary design for the development of a walkway/cycle lane on Ballyclider Road and will revert to the Members with the specific details.

Notice of Motion No: 28/2021

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council look review again the pedestrian crossing at the Killeshin Hotel and the roundabout/pedestrian crossing at Colliers Lane"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell. The Members were advised that previously works were carried out to improve pedestrian crossing at Killeshin Hotel by installing an additional pole and flashing beacon on the central Island and installing LED Lights to improve lighting on the pedestrian crossing. Roads section will contact elected member to identify further issues at this pedestrian crossing. Road Design will review pedestrian crossing at Colliers Lane to improve safety.

Mr. Simon Walton DoS outlined that a Topographical Survey is being carried out for a design that will suitably address the issues on the Dublin Road and that there would be a Masterplan developed for implementation over the next number of years.

Notice of Motion No: 29/2021

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council take action to tackle dog litter in our Town and to also address dogs with no leads especially in Pairc an Phobail”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that there are currently 4 no. Sli na Slainte Wlaking routes in Portlaoise town ranging in length from 3.3km to 5.3km. The Portlaoise MD office will be installing 20 Mutt Mitt dog waste bag dispensers across the various Sli na Slainte route i.e 5 no. dispensers per route in the coming weeks. It is also intended to install additional signage in both the Triogue Linear Park and Pairc an Phobail to encourage and remind dogs owners to keep their pets on a leash while using the amenity areas. Control of Dogs Acts prescribe various legal obligations for dog owners. The Acts place responsibilities on dog owners and stipulate that dogs must be kept under effectual control and that, in the case of eleven restricted breeds named in the Control of Dogs (Restriction of Certain Dogs) Regulations, 1991, these breeds of dogs must be led by a strong chain or leash and securely muzzled in public places. Parks and Open Spaces Bye-Laws adopted by Laois County Council in 2006 state that no person shall take into or allow to remain in a park any dog unless it is on a leash and that if a dog defecates in the park, the person in charge of the dog shall remove the faeces and deposit it in a litter bin or other receptable. Any person who shall breach any of the foregoing Bye-Laws may be removed from the park and can, on summary conviction be liable to a penalty not exceeding €1,270.00. One Fixed Penalty Notice has been issued for dog fouling in Portlaoise Town in 2021.

A lengthy discussion ensued on this matter wherein Members requested posters on poles and stencils on the ground and that Laois County Council carry out an active campaign on dog fouling including the installation of dog waste bins. It was also requested that dog muzzling be included in the Notice of Motion.

Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services confirmed that an active campaign in this area will be developed in the short term and communicated to Elected Members.

Notice of Motion No: 30/2021

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

"That this Council give a progress report on the vacant sites in Triogue Manor and repair a section of fencing in the estate"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that Laois County Council (planning department) is preparing Derelict Sites Notices to be served with a view to advancing a satisfactory resolution to the current issues arising in connection with the vacant sites in Triogue Manor. The Portlaoise MD Office will examine this location with a view to cleaning the section of the Triogue as part of the Drainage Programme for 2021 - it is intended to repair the fencing as part of these works.

Notice of Motion No: 31/2021

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

"That this Council request the Roads Department to re-instate the roundabouts at the De Vesci Avenue/Iceland Supermarket and Cosby Avenue in Fairgreen Estate as soon as possible"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that road repairs will be carried out to re-instate the roundabouts at these locations in the coming weeks.

Notice of Motion No: 32/2021

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

"That this Council address the flooding issue on the road at Fatharnagh and the surface water issue in the vicinity of the Pole Bridge Clonadacasey"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that drainage works were carried out within the last week to alleviate the flooding issue at Fatharnagh.

Notice of Motion No: 33/2021

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council re-mark the car parking spaces opposite the cemetery on the Stradbally Road, Portlaoise"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that the line markings at this location will be included in our list of works and will be carried out in the coming weeks subject to appropriate weather conditions.

Notice of Motion No: 34/2021

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council install a yellow box at the exit from Marian Avenue/Clonminam onto the Abbeyleix Road"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that the line markings at this location will be included in our list of works and will be carried out in the coming weeks subject to appropriate weather conditions.

Notice of Motion No: 35/2021

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Portlaoise Municipal District calls on Laois County Council to include the road off the L7797 at Aughnacross, Spink for repairs"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that this location is currently being examined and considered for works as part of the 2021 drainage works programme.

Notice of Motion No: 36/2021

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Portlaoise Municipal District calls on Laois County Council to investigate what safety measures can be put in place on the Rathleague Road from the footpath at the Portlaoise GAA to the junction at Summerhill Lane"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD Office proposes to install traffic delineators in the grass margin between the footpath and the road edge at this location.

Notice of Motion No: 37/2021

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Portlaoise Municipal District calls on Laois County Council to consider making the 'stop sign' more visible and repaint the 'stop sign' on the road at the junction of Green Mill Lane and the Ridge Road"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell. The Members were advised that a hedge cutting notice will be issued to the property owner at this location and the road markings will be included on the list of works for re-painting in the coming weeks.

Notice of Motion No: 38/2021

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council contact the Minister for Climate Action, Communications, Networks & Transport, Mr. Eamon Ryan to enquire why the TII have removed the natural hedgerow along the N80 adjacent to the Rock of Dunamase and installed a concrete post fence. In addition, the Council must now call upon the Minister to replace the hedgerow in sympathy with the area"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that TII Carried out Road Safety Inspections and identified locations where existing roadside concrete fence present significant collision hazards for motorists. TII has a yearly Programme to replace existing Concrete fences with passively safe fencing. The site at N80 adjacent to the Rock of Dunamase is one of the locations where concrete post fence has been replaced to passively safe fencing, all with the agreement of the landowner. Laois County Council will contact TII with a view to replacing the hedgerow at this location.

Notice of Motion No: 39/2021

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council provide a full brief on the Housing Project at The County Hotel, Main Street, Portlaoise: a commencement date, works to be undertaken, position with regard to the engagement of Contractors or otherwise, timeline for the various stages of construction/renovation and timeline for completion. Also, a note in relation to the fact this structure was on the list of Preserved Structures, and the rationale for it being so”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that the Council is working with Cluid Housing Association on the re-development of this site. The Council in 2020 submitted a stage 1 preliminary application for funding under the Capital Assistance Scheme to the Department of Housing for the development of eleven units of accommodation for older persons. This was approved in principle last September by the Department subject to a number of conditions including engagement on the conservation status of the building. This work is currently ongoing and the next stage in the process is the submission of a Stage II application to the Department of Housing. Prior to that submission there will be engagement with the Elected Representatives for Portlaoise Municipal District on the specific proposal. I would expect that the Council will be in a position to meet the Elected Representatives in the next few weeks. Subject to approval of a Stage II application later this year, a Part VIII planning submission will be made. If this is approved, construction on the scheme should commence next year. This is a complex urban regeneration scheme involving a building with protected status and a restricted site area. It is a project that has the full priority of this Council but there are a number of challenges that will have to be addressed in order to ensure a successful scheme is delivered for the town. In terms of its protected status it is recorded as RPS947 in the current record of protected structures. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) Ref. 12507059 identifies that the subject building and adjoining buildings on east and west sides are of regional importance. The Council commissioned a Portlaoise Architectural Inventory Report in 2008, prepared by Lotts Architecture & Urbanism, which analysed structures within the town, including the subject site and made recommendations on them. In respect of the subject property, the inventory identifies it as being of regional importance. The appraisal of the building states that it is a well composed middle sized house, that presents an elegant facade on Main Street on account of the incorporated classically derived proportions with openings diminishing inscale to the upper floor and embellish with moulded architraves. This house has a dominant presence on the streetscape, substantially taller than the adjoining buildings. It marks the transition to the taller scale buildings along Main Street and its gables and chimney stacks contribute to the characteristics steps building roofscapes along the street. Its contribution to the streetscape is considered worthy of protection and it was added to the record in 2010.

Notice of Motion No: 40/2021

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council clean up the rubbish at the field in between Mountain View, Clonrooske View and the rear of Hillview Drive/Parnell Crescent in Knockmay, Portlaoise”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that this site in Knockmay is a black-spot area within the town for illegal dumping activities. The site has been cleared of illegally dumped material numerous times. This area of ground is owned by Laois County Council and is surrounded by housing developments. The site is a secluded site and is only overlooked by the rear first floor windows of adjoining residential properties. The site would benefit from development insofar as that will remove/displace existing illegal dumping practices. A site inspection was carried out and the type of material

being illegally dumped is household waste. The area is badly affected with illegally dumped material. The Environment Section will organise the clean-up of the site.

6. VOTE OF SYMPATHY

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly, the Members unanimously agreed that a vote of sympathy be extended to the Brigidine Sisters in Abbeyleix on the recent death of Sr. Breda Ryan, Brigidine Sister.

7. FIX DATE & TIME FOR NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place via Microsoft Teams on the 10th of March 2021 at 11.00 a.m.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

Thomasina Connell, Cathaoirleach