

MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 22ND OF FEBRUARY 2021 BY MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT:

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

APOLOGIES: Councillor Ollie Clooney

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

19. VOTE OF SYMPATHY

On the proposition of the Cathaoirleach, Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, the Members extended a vote of sympathy to Ms. Sheila Dunphy & Mr. Finbarr Dunphy on the recent death of their sister and sister in law, Ms. Ann Crowley, North Main Street, Bandon, Cork.

20. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 25TH OF JANUARY 2021

On the proposition of Councillor Seamus McDonald seconded by Councillor John King, the Members unanimously agreed to the minutes of the January meeting of Laois County Council held on the 25th of January 2021.

21. REPORT ON CPG MEETING HELD ON THE 18TH OF JANUARY 2021

On the proposition of Councillor Paschal McEvoy seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, the Members unanimously agreed to the report on CPG meeting held on the 18th of January 2021.

22. REPORT ON MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETINGS HELD IN JANUARY 2021

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor John King, the Members unanimously agreed to the report on the Portlaoise Municipal District Meeting held in January 2021

23. MATERIAL CONTRAVENTION OF THE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2017-2023 AND THE JOINT SPATIAL PLAN FOR THE GREATER CARLOW GRAIGUECULLEN URBAN AREA 2012-2018 (EXTENDED UNTIL 2022)

Members were circulated with the planning report on this item. On the proposition of Councillor Pádraig Fleming seconded by Councillor Ben Brennan, the Members unanimously agreed to the material contravention of the County Development Plan 2017-2023 and the Joint Spatial Plan for the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Urban Area 2012-2018(extended until 2022) – Planning Application under PL 20/296 for a ‘permission for the continuance of the use on a permanent basis of the industrial unit as a place of worship to facilitate a community group. Temporary permission for 5 years was granted for the above under PL 16/161 and this application for permission is sought to continue this usage on a permanent basis at Unit 5A Barrowside Business Park, Sleaty Road, Graiguecullen, Co. Laois.

24. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001 IN RESPECT OF FREEHOLD AT 41 MELL STREET, KILMINCHY, PORTLAOISE

On the proposition of Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of freehold comprising 0.017 hectares at 41 Mell Street, Kilminchy, Portlaoise, Co. Laois for a consideration of €1.00

25. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001 IN RESPECT OF FREEHOLD AT BALLYEDMOND, RATHDOWNEY

On the proposition of Councillor John King seconded by Councillor James Kelly, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of freehold comprising 0.1686 hectares at Ballyedmond, Rathdowney, Co. Laois in the townland of Greelaugh, Ballyedmond for a consideration of €1.00.

26. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001 IN RESPECT OF FREEHOLD AT 183 WHITEFIELDS, PORTARLINGTON

On the proposition of Councillor Paschal McEvoy seconded by Councillor Ben Brennan, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of freehold comprising 0.0238 hectares at 183 Whitefields, Portarlinton, Co. Laois in the townland of Cooltederry for a consideration of €300.00

27. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001 IN RESPECT OF LEASEHOLD AT 7 COLLEGE COURT, MOUNTRATH ROAD, PORTLAOISE

On the proposition of Councillor Noel Tuohy seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of leasehold at 7 College Court, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois in the townland of Knockmay for a consideration of €300.00

**28. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001
IN RESPECT OF LEASE OF LAND AT NO. 44 MARIAN AVENUE, PORTLAOISE**

On the proposition of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy, the Members unanimously agreed to the lease of 0.0438 hectares (Plot A) at No. 44 Marian Avenue, Portlaoise in the townland of Clonminam for a period of three years for a consideration of €1.00 per annum

**29. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001
IN RESEPECT OF LEASE OF LND AT NO. 46 MARIAN AVENUE, PORTLAOISE**

On the proposition of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy, the Members unanimously agreed to the lease of 0.0418 hectares (Plot B) at No. 46 Marian Avenue, Portlaoise in the townland of Clonminam for a period of three years for a consideration of €1.00 per annum

**30. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001
IN RESPECT OF LEASE OF LAND AT NO. 36 MARIAN AVENUE, PORTLAOISE**

On the proposition of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy, the Members unanimously agreed to the lease of 0.0409 hectares (Plot C) at No. 36 Marian Avenue, Portlaoise in the townland of Clonminam for a period of three years for a consideration of €1.00 per annum

**31. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001
IN RESPECT OF LEASE OF LAND AT NO. 52 MARIAN AVENUE, PORTLAOISE**

On the proposition of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy, the Members unanimously agreed to the lease of 0.0554 hectares (Plot E) at No. 52 Marian Avenue, Portlaoise in the townland of Clonminam for a period of three years for a consideration of €1.00 per annum

**32. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001
IN RESPECT OF LEASE OF LAND AT NO. 53 MARIAN AVENUE, PORTLAOISE**

On the proposition of Councillor Noel Tuohy seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, the Members unanimously agreed to the lease of 0.0373 hectares (Plot F) at No. 53 Marian Avenue, Portlaoise in the townland of Clonminam for a period of three years for a consideration of €1.00 per annum

**33. AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND
STATUTORY AUDIT REPORT 2019**

On the proposition of Councillor Padraig Fleming seconded by Councillor Aisling Moran, the Members unanimously agreed to the Audit Committee Report on the Annual Financial Statement and Statutory Audit Report 2019 as circulated.

34. AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2020

On the proposition of Councillor Pdraig Fleming seconded by Councillor Aisling Moran, the Members unanimously agreed to the Audit Committee Annual Report 2020 as circulated.

35. NOMINATION OF MR. NAEEM IQBAL REPRESENTING THE LAOIS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK ON THE LAOIS LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor John King, the Members unanimously agreed to the nomination of Mr. Naeem Iqbal representing the Laois Public Participation Network on the Laois Local Community Development Committee

36. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT ROAD ALLOCATIONS 2021

The Members were circulated with details of the above allocation for 2021 in the sum of €12,639,322 indicating a total overall increase from 2020 of €300,000.

It was noted that new items of funding include:

- *Specific Improvement Grant Funding (R445 Derrin Cross and Redcastle Junction - €200,000 each)*
- *Active Travel funding in the sum of €709,000*
- *Climate Adaptation funding in the sum of €126,000*

It was noted that preparations are ongoing in relation to the 2021 Roadworks Programme.

37. STRUCTURE FOR RENEWING ARRANGEMENTS FOR TOWN TWINNING

The Members were advised that as there is no Twinning Committee at present, it is recommended that the structure for addressing matters relating to town twinning be incorporated into the role of the Corporate Policy Group.

On the proposition of Councillor James Kelly seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley, the Members agreed that a Twinning Committee be established comprising of the serving Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council together with the Director of Services for Corporate Affairs and a representative from the Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Technical Group parties.

38. ANNUAL DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST PURSUANT TO SECTION 174(1) (b) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001 AS AMENDED

Members were issued with correspondence pursuant to Section 174 (1)(a) of the Local Government 2001 as amended. The Act requires that the issue is tabled on the agenda for the attention of the Members at the next meeting of the Local Authority after such issue. The item was noted.

39. AGREE DATE FOR WORKSHOP ON HOUSING MAINTENANCE

The proposed date for the workshop on Housing Maintenance on the 15th of March 2021 at 2.00 p.m. via Microsoft Teams was noted and agreed by the Members.

40. AGREE DATE FOR MEETING WITH NATIONAL BROADBAND IRELAND

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor Mary Sweeney, the Members unanimously agreed to the holding of a special meeting with National Broadband Ireland. It was agreed that the date and format of the special meeting would be tabled for consideration at the CPG meeting scheduled for the 22nd of March 2021.

41. MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 2021

The Members were circulated with a copy of the Monthly Management Report for February 2021 and the Directors of Service & Head of Finance responded to the various queries raised. The Members were provided with details of 13 social housing schemes which will deliver a total of 141 new homes by the end of March 2021 as follows:

- 22 Units – Ballymorris, Portarlinton
- 18 Units – The Glen, Kilnacourt, Portarlinton
- 10 Units – Lake Drive, Kilminchy, Portlaoise
- 14 Units – Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise
- 10 Units – Holdbrook, Portlaoise
- 9 Units – Bellingham, Portlaoise
- 9 Units - Borris Road, Portlaoise
- 20 Units – Ballickmoyler Road, Graiguecullen
- 7 Units – Clonaslee
- 6 Units – Shannon Street, Mountrath
- 6 Units – Main Street, Borris-in-Ossory
- 6 Units - Doirinn Alainn, Ballylinan
- 4 Units – Rathillian, Killeshin

The Members welcomed the developments and complimented all staff involved.

42. TRAINING & CONFERENCES

It was noted that there were no training/conferences for noting

43. CORRESPONDENCE

The Members were circulated with the following correspondence which had been received since the last Council Meeting as follows:

- (i) Acknowledgment from the Department of Health dated the 4th of February in relation to Notice of Motion No: 06/2021 relating to the Covid-19 vaccine

- (ii) Correspondence from the Department of Health dated the 1st of February in relation to Notice of Motion No: 36/2020 relating to the increase in bed capacity to cater for the needs of people with dementia
- (iii) Acknowledgement from the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications dated the 16th of February 2021 and acknowledgement from the Minister for State at the Department of Finance dated the 5th of February 2021 in relation to Notice of Motion No: 07/2021 relating to funding for roads grants allocated to Laois for national roads in the current year.
- (iv) Correspondence from the Department of Social Protection dated the 10th of February 2021 in relation to Notice of Motion No: 01/2021 relating to the PUP Payment.
- (v) The Cathaoirleach, Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald raised the matter of the new Land Development Agency Bill 2021 which was published on the 5th of February 2021. Following a lengthy discussion and with the unanimous agreement of the Members, it was agreed that an urgent letter in relation to the matter issue to the Minister for Housing, Planning & Local Government expressing Laois County Council's strong opposition to the Bill and requesting that this part of the Bill be dissolved. It was noted that if enacted the Bill will remove the powers from Councillors, in particular the local knowledge and also the reserved functions under Section 183 notices for the disposal of public lands owned by Local Authorities. It was also agreed that the correspondence be forwarded to each Local Authority, each of the local Oireachtas Members and each Senator for their support.

44. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Notice of Motion No: 08/2021

Councillor Conor Bergin proposed the following Notice of Motion: -

"That Laois County Council provide an update on the uptake of the Repair & Leasing Scheme in County Laois since 2016 and undertake a campaign to increase public awareness of the scheme, which could potentially renovate many currently derelict houses in Laois"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell. The Members were advised of the following up to date position in relation to the Repair and Leasing Scheme:

Number of application forms sent to interested property owners	41
Number of Applications received	28
Number of properties deemed to be unsuitable	18
Number of applications where the property was deemed to be suitable but application did not proceed	4

Number of applications currently under consideration	5
Number of active leases	1

The main reason for properties being deemed to be unsuitable is due to the properties being located in areas of low demand. As a result, it was considered that it would not be possible to sustain long term leases. The Repair & Leasing Scheme is promoted on www.laois.ie where the necessary information and application forms are available.

It was noted that Laois County Council will commence a new campaign this year to explain the potential of this scheme and the Buy and Renew alternative to regeneration properties that are in need of repair and renewal.

Notice of Motion No: 09/2021

Councillor Aisling Moran proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council consider using renewable and recyclable materials for buildings and roads instead of the opening of quarries and destroying our countryside”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that Laois County Council operates under the guidance of a Corporate Procurement Plan which requires the Council, in undertaking roads activities directly or in tendering for the undertaking of such activities, to pursue sustainable solutions such as the use of recycled asphalt when resurfacing roads. Re-cycling planed-out materials often forms part of the roadworks methodologies utilised reducing reliance on quarries and providing for the Circular Economy. Green procurement and the awarding of contracts to reflect a bias towards greater sustainability is increasingly an obligation for procuring authorities and Laois County Council continues to integrate those sustainability principles into the various methods of operation and of procurement.

Notice of Motion No: 10/2021

Councillor Aisling Moran proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council consider the planting of wildflowers along the motorways and primary routes in an effort to have a positive impact on the environment in Laois whilst improving the appearance for both residents and visitors to our lovely County”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that Transport Infrastructure Ireland retains responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the Motorway/National Road Network while Laois County Council is responsible for the delivery of ongoing maintenance on the Non-National road network in County Laois. In a previous response

to a similar Notice of Motion in 2019 TII stated that it promotes the use of native planning to enhance and protect our native biodiversity, where possible, given the importance of habitat connectivity to native flora and fauna. TII has been a member of the steering committee for the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan since its inception and has published guidelines “Pollinator friendly management of Transport Corridors” in collaboration with the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

Laois County Council has provided pollinator friendly planting at the N80 Maidenhead Realignment and the Portlaoise Southern Circular. The Council is proactive in seeking the incorporation of similar measures where the opportunity arises as part of the ongoing national and non-national road maintenance and improvement programmes.

Notice of Motion No: 11/2021

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council provide an update on the Age Friendly strategy”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that The Laois Age Friendly Strategy 2016-2021 outlines 66 actions underpinned by the 8 Age Friendly Themes as identified by the World Health Organisation. The Strategy is due to expire at the end of 2021. The COVID19 pandemic has had an impact on achievement of certain actions and at the January meeting of the Age Friendly Alliance it was proposed that the Alliance consider extending the life of the current strategy until 2022. A decision on this matter will be taken at the next Alliance meeting on the 15th April 2021. In the meantime Age Friendly updates will continue as part of the Monthly Management Reports.

Notice of Motion No: 12/2021

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council make funding available for a town and village health check scheme in 2021”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that under the Transitional Leader Programme 2021, Community Groups who wish to undertake a Community Plan for their local area may submit a funding application. These community plans cover many of the features of a “town health check”, including identifying the issues which need to be addressed within the local area, and such plans when completed can then provide a basis to apply for further funding opportunities to address the issues identified. Laois County Council, in conjunction with Laois Partnership Company, will arrange for assistance to group(s) who may need additional support and advice with this process.

In addition, as part of the review of the County Development Plan, a detailed review of the developmental status of a number of larger settlements around the county has also been undertaken, and this will inform the future planning and development of these towns and villages.

Notice of Motion No: 13/2021

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council, as in previous years, liaise with Tourism Ireland, the OPW and other state agencies to turn our heritage and tourism sites in the county green for St Patrick’s Day”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that Laois County Council will liaise with the mentioned State Agencies and local Community Groups to endeavour to achieve such areas lit up in green.

Notice of Motion No: 14/2021

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council call on the Government to introduce more severe legislation to deal with the increasing scourge of illegal dumping”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Aisling Moran. The Members were advised that a letter will issue to the Government in this regard.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

SIGNED:

CATHAOIRLEACH

CERTIFIED:

DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
CORPORATE AFFAIRS

