

**MINUTES OF THE PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY  
19<sup>th</sup> OF MAY 2021 BY MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**PRESENT** Ms. Thomasina Connell, Cathaoirleach (In the Chair)  
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.  
Ms. Mary Sweeney, M.C.C.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services  
Mr. Wes Wilkinson, Senior Executive Engineer  
Mr. Paul McLoughlin, A/Senior Engineer  
Ms. Michelle McCormack, Staff Officer

**1. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THE 21<sup>ST</sup> OF APRIL 2021**

On the proposition of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald seconded by Councillor Mary Sweeney, the minutes of the meeting held on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2021 were confirmed as circulated.

**2. MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING HELD ON THE 10<sup>TH</sup> OF MARCH 2021**

Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley raised the issue of the broken section of fence in Triogue Manor and indicated that since the last discussion on the matter, a further section of the fencing is broken down. Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. confirmed that the repair works would commence the week commencing the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2021.

Councillor Mary Sweeney requested an update on the proposals for outdoor dining. Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services indicated that, in assessing Section 254 Licence applications, Laois County Council will be supportive of the fact that many premises will be reliant on the availability of outdoor, public realm located, spaces to underpin a re-opening of those businesses on 7<sup>th</sup> June in compliance with public health guidelines.

It was also noted that Laois County Council has acquired outdoor dining furniture which would primarily be used at non-vehicular areas in Hynds Square, Lyster Square & Lower Main Street.

Consideration of Section 254 Licence applications will be considered on a case by case basis and may give rise to the temporary suspension of car parking spaces where such spaces are the only reasonable option for the deployment of the outdoor furniture sought under the Licence. It was acknowledged that a balance needs to be reached between the individual needs of businesses and the general availability of car parking in and around town centres.

Councillor Fennelly expressed concern regarding possible reduction in the overall amount of disabled parking bays. Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services confirmed that, where disabled parking is temporarily interrupted, arrangements will be made for replacement disabled parking bays in close proximity.

Councillor Aird emphasized the importance of being mindful of the residents on Main Street, Portlaoise during these proposals and requested a walkabout of the area.

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald raised concerns regarding traffic and pedestrian safety on Fr. Browne Avenue near Glanbia and requested an update regarding the proposed works by Irish Rail. Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. confirmed that Irish Rail had made a commitment to carry out works on the Telfords side and this work is to commence in mid-June.

The Members requested an update as to the commencement of works at the Railway Station in Portlaoise. Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services indicated that discussions are ongoing with Laois County Council and the Developer regarding the allocation of costs, etc., and that process is likely to conclude over the next fortnight. Thereafter a commencement date will be notified to Members once available.

Councillor Thomasina Connell raised the following Notice of Motion that had been agreed at the March meeting of the Municipal District

***“That Laois County Council prepare a schedule of all lands that are in the ownership within the Portlaoise Urban Area in excess of 0.5 acres”***

Councillor Connell was advised that the Property Management Section have compiled a list of all vacant, undeveloped lands in excess of half an acre with potential for development as a sports campus. Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services indicated that an update would issue to Councillor Connell from the Property Section as the data requested was being finalised.

Councillor Connell requested confirmation as to whether the June meeting of the MD would take place in the Council Chamber. Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services indicated that, in general, information to hand indicated the likelihood of a Council Chamber based meeting for June emphasising that the meeting could take the form of a hybrid meeting whereby both in Chamber and remote attendees could be accommodated.

### **3. SAFETY MEASURES ON THE CHAFF ROAD (L27762) – UPDATE**

Mr. Wes Wilkinson, Senior Executive Engineer referred to the recent advertisement and public consultation on the introduction of a one-way system along a section of the L27762 at Pass, Cullenagh, Portlaoise, Co. Laois known locally as the Chaff Road. It was noted that one submission was received following the public consultation period which was held from the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2021 until the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2021. The submission was in support of the proposal.

On the proposition of Councillor Mary Sweeney seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly, the Members unanimously agreed to proceed with the proposed introduction of the one-way system in accordance with Section 38 of the Road Traffic Act, 1994.

### **4. SAFETY MEASURES AT RAHEEN (CLÁR SCHEME) – UPDATE**

Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. referred to the above proposed safety measures and to various meetings held with the Elected Members, Local Stakeholders, Residents, Schools, Agricultural Contractors etc., in relation to same

Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. briefed the members on the consultation and the various concerns raised as follows:-

- Traffic volumes
- Increased pedestrian traffic from primary school to creche where there are a significant number of children crossing from one to the other for various clubs
- Regulation of parking – a number of vehicles parking ad hoc at present in the vicinity of the playschool albeit there is parking facilities
- Speed of traffic through the village – increased ‘through’ traffic and in particular at school start and finish times

The proposals were outlined as follows:-

- The installation of a controlled flat pedestrian crossing between the entrances of the school and playschool
- The installation of a traffic calming ramp to the north west of the school near the entrance to the GAA car park
- The installation of a second ramp to the south east in the vicinity of the old school/community hall

On the proposition of Councillor Thomasina Connell seconded by Councillor Mary Sweeney, the Members unanimously agreed to proceed to public consultation for the above proposals which would be advertised on public display for a period of one month.

It was agreed that drawings showing the proposed works could be inspected at Tobar an Léinn National School, Raheen and also on the Laois County Council website.

## **5. URDF/LOW CARBON TOWN MEASURES – UPDATE BY MR. PAUL MCLOUGHLIN, A/S.E.**

Mr. Paul McLoughlin, A/S.E. gave a comprehensive presentation on the National Transport Agency & URDF Portlaoise Low Carbon Town including the cycle infrastructure upgrade works and outlined the projects which are currently underway. The Members raised some queries on the various locations for cycling routes. There was a suggestion made by Members to have a pilot scheme introduced for bike hire to encourage more people to use bicycles.

## **6. NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

The following two Notice of Motions were taken together:-

### **Notice of Motion No: 82/2021**

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

*"That this Council include Raheen & Ballyroan in their plans for playgrounds into the future"*

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird.

### **Notice of Motion No: 85/2021**

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That Laois County Council support the delivery of playgrounds for the communities of Ballyroan & Raheen"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that in line with Laois County Council's Recreation, Play & Sports Strategy, the Sport & Leisure Section will continue to work with local communities to identify suitable sites and source funding to develop additional play spaces in County Laois where appropriate.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 83/2021**

Councillor John Joe Fennelly proposed the following Notice of Motion:

***"That this Council repair footpaths at Abbey Crescent, Ballyroan Road, Portlaoise and Corran na Nóir, Abbeyleix"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. will make himself available to meet with Councillor Fennelly on site to examine each of the locations.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 84/2021**

Councillor John Joe Fennelly proposed the following Notice of Motion:

***"That this Council request the TII to install biodiversity planting on the large green verge areas on the road N77 to include for example from Bennetts to Talbots House on the left hand side as you exit Abbeyleix"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. would liaise with the TII in relation to the establishment of biodiversity planting areas on National Secondary Routes.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 86/2021**

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That Laois County Council request an update regarding funding and timeline from Irish Water on the upgrade of the Ballyroan Wastewater Treatment Plant"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that the Small Towns & Villages Consultants will be appointed in the next few weeks. However, Ballyroan is one of the first Wastewater Treatment Plants that will be addressed to continue the work already done by LCC.

Councillor Sweeney complimented the investment by Irish Water and Laois County Council. Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services indicated that significant works have been undertaken already under the Capital Maintenance Programme which will facilitate and support local residential deve

### Notice of Motion No: 87/2022

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That Laois County Council provide additional resources to combat illegal dumping and littering for the outdoor summer and ensure we 'leave no trace'***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that the problem of illegal dumping has significantly increased since early 2020. The Waste Enforcement Officers and Litter Wardens are carrying out daily inspections and are cleaning up each of the locations. The annual budget for Clean ups etc. is at present overspent. The Environment Section does not intend to cease carrying out any of the clean up works. Please note that the clean ups are prioritised according to size and location. Local groups are also assisting the Council by organising litter picks/cleanups. The Council continues to provide these groups with gloves/bags/litter pickers etc. and collects and disposes of the collected waste material. This will continue.

Councillor Sweeney requested Laois County Council to ensure that adequate resources be made available and if an awareness campaign could be run on 'bringing home rubbish' with a request also for additional litter bins in rural areas. Councillor Aird requested information on how many signs are available for 'leave no trace'. It was agreed that this information be made available for the next meeting.

### Notice of Motion No: 88/2022

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That the Portlaoise Municipal District call on Laois County Council to erect cycling signs in the Ratheniska area to support the community promoting cycling for children in this area"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. would make himself available to meet with Councillor Aird on site to examine the route, proposed locations for signage and make arrangements to carry out works as appropriate.

### Notice of Motion No: 89/2022

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That the Portlaoise Municipal District calls on Laois County Council to repair the footpaths in Kylebrook"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson will examine the footpaths in Kylebrook estate and make arrangements to carry out repairs where required.

### Notice of Motion No: 90/2022

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That the Portlaoise Municipal District calls on Laois County Council to request that Portlaoise Leisure Centre re-open on June 7th 2021 in line with government guidelines on easing of Covid-19 restrictions"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell. The Members were referred to the email sent to the Cathaoirleach & Members on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May from the Office of the Chief Executive. The Members were advised that planning is currently underway in association with voluntary groups to ensure that Portarlinton and Portlaoise Leisure Centres are open to the public in a timely and safe manner. As members are aware there was work underway at Portlaoise Leisure Centre prior to the last Covid lockdown. Therefore, it was always likely that the Portarlinton centre would be the first to reopen after the lifting of Covid restrictions. Renovation work has now recommenced on the Portlaoise site; however one Contractors have recently informed us of potential delays in the delivery in some of their materials and the execution of works. The potential reopening date is being kept under review but as matters stand it is likely to be July before the centre reopens.

Councillor Aird requested that the grass be cut at the Portlaoise Leisure Centre and that repairs be carried out to the damage that has been done to the all-weather perimeter fence. In addition, Councillor Aird supported by Councillor Dwane Stanley requested that the all-weather pitches be opened to the community and a comprehensive update be given to the Members as to when the swimming pool will open. Councillor Dwane Stanley requested that a 'litter-pick' be carried out also at the Leisure Centre. Furthermore, Councillor Aird requested that Councillor Fitzgerald & Connell make arrangements to discuss the matter with the Chief Executive over the coming days. This was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly and agreed.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 91/2021**

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That this Council examine the requirements for ramps to assist with traffic calming and safety in Bluebell Way, Esker Hills"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E will make himself available to meet with Councillor Tuohy on site to examine the location at Bluebell Way, Esker Hills, Portlaoise.

Councillor Connell requested that cobble repairs be carried out near Bluebell Way also.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 92/2021**

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That this Council examine the inclusion of wheelchair accessibility into all public seating in the area and that this be included in future planning"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that the Council will ensure that public seating to be provided in the Portlaoise MD will be accessible to all potential users.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 93/2021**

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That this Council look at the provision of more bicycle parking/securing areas given the increased amount of bicycles now being used"***

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

advised that Laois County Council have identified locations, developed proposals and purchased equipment for the provision of 45 additional & 5 improved bicycle parking facilities within Portlaoise town. Details of same were outlined in the presentation made by Mr. Paul McLoughlin, A/S.E. in relation to the proposed cycling infrastructure improvements.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 94/2021**

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

***"That Laois County Council progress with plans to provide a refuge for victims of domestic abuse in Laois and outline progress made to date"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that Laois County Council are in regular contact with Laois Domestic Abuse Service regarding their plans to construct a refuge. The Housing Department has given advice to the Service on their proposed development and engaged the assistance of the Irish Council for Social Housing to advise the service further. Any refuge will have to be constructed through funding provided by the Capital Assistance Scheme and the Council will actively assist the Service through the preparation and submission process for such a funding application. In the first instance a site will have to be obtained by the Service and the Council will support the Service in identifying and selecting a suitable site.

A discussion ensued during which Councillor Dwane Stanley indicated that she had been in regular contact with Laois Domestic Abuse service in relation to the issue and had serious concerns in relation to the impact the current situation is having on women and children in the County. Members emphasised the importance of having a local refuge where women would not be forced to leave the County for refuge.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 95/2021**

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

***"That Laois County Council be given an update on progress to provide a premises and facilities for Civil Defence in Portlaoise"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that in approving the 2021 Revenue Budget Elected Members will have noted a commitment in the Chief Executive's Report that 'taking account of logistical and operational requirements, a Central Facility in Portlaoise will enable Laois Civil Defence to locate all assets in one centrally located facility and to thereby deliver consistent, centralised training, to expand recruitment and deliver an enhanced service to the people of County Laois.' Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services confirmed that Laois County Council is actively engaged in the pursuit of premises, Portlaoise located, suited to the needs of Laois Civil Defence preferably on a long term basis, with short term to be considered in the current circumstances whereby the accommodation needs of Civil Defence are not being met.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 96/2021**

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

***"That Laois County Council contact the National Transport Authority requesting***

***that bus shelters be provided at Kilminchy, Portlaoise"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Mary Sweeney. The Members were advised that Laois County Council are currently engaging with the NTA for the provision of a Town Bus Service for Portlaoise. Subject to a successful outcome of this work it is envisaged that the bus stops at this location will be upgraded to reflect the anticipated service demand. Laois County Council will be pursuing the provision of Bus shelter(s) at this location.

**Notice of Motion No: 97/2021**

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That this Council resurface the Car Road in St. John's Square"***

The Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. will examine the Car Road in St. John's Square with a view to carrying out necessary repairs in the short term. The road at this location will be considered for resurfacing as part of the 2022 Roads Programme

**Notice of Motion No: 98/2021**

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That this Council make safe the Shane Road at Rathevan/Rathnamanagh junction"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. would make himself available to meet with Councillor Fitzgerald on site at Shaen to examine the issues at this location.

**Notice of Motion No: 99/2021**

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That this Council install decorative lighting on the bridges over The Triogue"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that the Road Design section will review possible design options for lighting at Triogue Bridges with Area Engineer.

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald queried funding streams that might be brought to bear on this proposal and it was agreed that further advices would be provided once the extent of the lighting proposals was confirmed.

Councillor Connell raised the issue of the €25,000 (Portlaoise MD) fund, notified as Municipal District Funding in the 2021 Revenue Budget Pack and stated her intention to convene a meeting of the Members to discuss the spending preferences for this fund.

**Notice of Motion No: 100/2021**

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-



***"That Laois County Council review the signage on the Mountmellick Road adjacent to property which is blocking drivers viewing pedestrians at the pedestrian crossing, with a view to making same safe"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that the signage at this location will be reviewed and modified where possible.

Councillor Connell requested a meeting with Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. to examine the matter, Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald requested that she be invited to attend said meeting and, while doing so, that the roundabout beside the Garda Station be reviewed.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 101/2021**

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That Laois County Council prepare a plan for additional lighting at the area adjacent to Portlaoise Leisure Centre and the Ridge Road to enhance the natural security so people can feel safe walking from and to the town centre after dark"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that this matter was the subject of a previous Notice of Motion and it was agreed that the area would be surveyed and an estimate provided for the suitable provision of public lighting. Following the relaxation of public health restrictions an appropriate design will be to hand shortly, will be advised to Elected Members following which funds will be sought to enable delivery.

Councillor Connell indicated that the area referred to in her Notice of Motion is separate to the previous Motion and is focussed on the Ridge Road adjacent to the Leisure Centre when you are walking from the Leisure Centre to Esker Hills. It was agreed that an overview of existing lighting standards together with required/recommended enhancements would be developed.

#### **Notice of Motion No: 102/2021**

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

***"That Laois County Council carry out cleaning of the River Triogue from where the river enters the Town Park through to the Triogue Linear Park to remove rubbish and debris"***

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that arrangements are being made to carry out the removal of debris and litter from the River Triogue in Pairc an Phobail and the Triogue Linear Park.

### **7. CORRESPONDENCE**

It was noted that no correspondence had been received since the last meeting.

### **8. FIX DATE & TIME FOR NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2021 at 11.00 a.m. It was noted that the A.G.M. would also take place on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June following the monthly meeting.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

Thomasina Connell, Cathaoirleach