

**MINUTES OF THE MAY MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 31ST OF
MAY 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	Aisling Moran
		Mary Sweeney	Noel Tuohy
		Caroline Dwane Stanley	John King
		Thomasina Connell	Paschal McEvoy
		Ollie Clooney	Conor Bergin
		Ben Brennan	P.J. Kelly

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.

78. Vote of Sympathy

On the proposition of the Cathaoirleach, Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, the Members unanimously extended a vote of sympathy to the following families:-

- ✚ The Keenan Family, Clonminam Road, Portlaoise on the recent death of Mrs. Rita Keenan - mother in law of Bridie Keenan, Arts Department and wife of former Member of Laois County Council, Mr. Tom Keenan
- ✚ The Dunne Family, Clonduff, Rosenallis on the recent death of Mr. Sean Dunne - father of Ms. Pamela Holmes, My-Pay Department, Laois County Council
- ✚ The Hickey Family, Kyle, Rathdowney on the recent death of Mr. John Hickey, brother of Ms. Margaret Cooney, Finance Department, Laois County Council
- ✚ The Smith Family on the recent death of Mr. Leslie John Smith who died in England, father of Mr. Nathan Smith, Executive Planner, Laois County Council

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly, the Members unanimously extended a vote of sympathy to the O' Shea Family, Church Street, Ballinakill on the recent death of Mr. Christy O' Shea

79. Confirmation of the Minutes of the April monthly meeting held on the 26th of April 2021

On the proposition of Councillor John King seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly, the Minutes of the April monthly meeting held on the 26th of April 2021 were confirmed as circulated.

In relation to Notice of Motion 24/2021, the Members acknowledged the allocation of €270,000 received in respect of Local Improvement Schemes for 2021. It was noted that for 2021, schemes will be processed on a county wide basis in date order. Procedures for subsequent years will be considered by the relevant SPC and a recommendation in relation to same will be brought back to Council for consideration in due course.

80. Report on CPG Meeting held on the 19th of April 2021

On the proposition of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald seconded by Councillor John King, the report on the CPG meeting held on the 19th of April 2021 was confirmed as circulated.

81. Report on Municipal District Meetings held in April 2021

On the proposition of Councillor Seamus McDonald seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly, the report on Municipal District Meetings held in April 2021 were confirmed as circulated.

82. Report on Strategic Policy Committee Meetings held in February 2021

On the proposition of Councillor Paschal McEvoy seconded by Councillor John King, the report on Strategic Policy Committee Meetings held in February 2021 were confirmed as circulated.

83. Confirm date and venue for the Annual General Meeting of Laois County Council - Monday, June 28th 2021 at 2.30 p.m. (in accordance with Section 3 (Schedule 10) of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended)

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor Willie Aird, the Members unanimously agreed that the Annual General Meeting of Laois County Council would take place on Monday, June 28th 2021 at 2.30 p.m. in accordance with Section 3(Schedule 10) of the Local Government Act, 2001 as amended.

84. Confirm venue for the June Monthly Meeting of Laois County Council – Monday, June 28th 2021 at 11.00 a.m.

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor Willie Aird, the Members unanimously agreed that the June Monthly Meeting of Laois County Council would take place on the 28th of June 2021 at 11.00 a.m. in the Dunamase Arts Centre & Theatre. It was noted that this meeting will be a hybrid meeting with the option for participants to join remotely. The current Covid-19 public health guidance to be adhered to at the meeting.

85. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001 in respect of DISPOSAL OF FREEHOLD COMPRISING 0.029 HECTARES AT 24 CANAL COURT, PORTARLINGTON, CO. LAOIS.

On the proposition of Councillor Paschal McEvoy seconded by Councillor Pdraig Fleming, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of freehold comprising 0.029 hectares at 24 Canal Court, Portarlington, Co. Laois in the townland of Cooltederry for a consideration of €1.00

86. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001 IN RESPECT OF 0.00206 HECTARES OF LAND AT 29 O' DALY TERRACE, RATHDOWNEY, CO. LAOIS.

On the proposition of Councillor John King seconded by Councillor James Kelly, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of 0.00206 hectares of land at 29 O' Daly Terrace, Rathdowney, Co. Laois in the townland of Rathdowney for a consideration of €300.00.

87. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001 IN RESPECT OF SITE NO. 4 COMPRISING 0.074 HECTARES OF LAND AT CASTLETOWN, CO. LAOIS

On the proposition of Councillor James Kelly seconded by Councillor Paddy Bracken, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of Site No. 4 comprising 0.074 hectares of land at Castletown, Co. Laois in the townland of Churchfield for a consideration of €25,000

88. PRESENTATION BY LAOIS DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICE – DEVELOPMENT OF A REFUGE FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE

Ms. Marna Carroll, Laois Domestic Abuse Service accompanied by Mr. John Scanlan, Chief Superintendent of An Garda Síochana delivered a presentation on the proposals for the provision of a refuge for women and children in Laois who are experiencing domestic abuse. Laois County Council assured Ms. Carroll of their support for the proposal and will assist in the preparation and submission process for funding for same. Support will also be given in identifying a suitable site. The Members commended the Laois Domestic Abuse Service for their work.

89. PRESENTATION BY MR. CHRISTY BANNON, SOSAD – PROPOSED OFFICE OPENING IN PORTLAOISE

Mr. Christy Bannon, SOSAD, Portlaoise delivered a presentation on the proposals for an office opening in Portlaoise. The Members assured Mr. Bannon of their support for the proposals and complimented him on the presentation.

90. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND J17 NATIONAL ENTERPRISE PARK

Mr. John Mulholland, Chief Executive delivered a presentation on the J17 National Enterprise park and Economic Development which included the following:-

- IDA and EI supported job figures;
- Marketing Campaign;
- The Role of Laois County Council;
- The promotion of economic development at J17 Togher;
- Land purchase and development costs;
- Expenditure to date and
- Income from land sales, development levies and contributions to date

Mr. Mulholland responded to the various queries raised by the Members.

91. Monthly Management Report for May 2021

The Members were circulated with the Monthly Management Report for May 2021 and the Director of Services responded to the various queries raised.

92. Correspondence

The following correspondence was circulated which had been received since the last meeting:-

- (i) Correspondence from Monaghan County Council dated the 25th of March 2021 in relation to the support for the World Health Organisation's plea for the equitable global distribution of all vaccines, treatments and therapies developed to combat the coronavirus scourge
- (ii) Correspondence from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council dated the 7th of May 2021 in relation to the protection of native honeybees
- (iii) Correspondence from Leitrim County Council dated the 12th of May 2021 in relation to the Tenant Purchase Scheme
- (iv) Correspondence from Dun Laoighre Rathdown County Council dated the 13th of May 2021 in relation to the immediate termination of the current Planning and Development (Strategic Housing Development) Regulations
- (v) Correspondence from the Minister for Education dated the 6th of May 2021 in relation to a recent Notice of Motion in relation to the commencement date for work on the Kolbe Special School for Children

93. Notice of Motions

Notice of Motion No: 25/2021

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council provide an update on the tourism promotion plans for the County as the Country reopens to domestic tourism”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that Laois County Council is providing the following supports and initiatives to assist the tourism trade in the County and promote the County to visitors:

1. A two month Midlands and County Promotion Campaign, in association with Offaly and Westmeath County Councils commenced on Midlands 103 on Monday 17th May 2021. This joint staycation campaign will promote the Midlands and each County in the region. In Laois, the various tourist attractions will be advertised including the Rock of Dunamaise, Round Tower at Timahoe, The Slieve Bloom Mountains and Bike Trail, the Laois Garden Trail and Emo Court.
2. In collaboration with Fáilte Ireland the Council will be rolling out the “Keep Discovering” domestic marketing campaign aimed at driving domestic holidays for the remainder of the year and helping to reboot and rebuild Ireland's tourism industry. The national advertising campaign went live on Monday 24th May 2021. The campaign is to encourage and remind more Irish people to discover the joy of holidaying in Ireland as they begin to reconnect with each other.
3. In association with Fáilte Ireland, an online training programme “Developing Saleable Experiences” specifically tailored for tourism businesses in the Slieve Blooms was held. The aim is for immediate increased sales and revenues into the domestic market and in time the international market. The initiative is to establish more innovative ways to present and lead out on selling the Slieve Blooms as a new destination in Ireland's Ancient East.
4. Work with Businesses to avail of the Fáilte Ireland “ Weatherproofing & Outdoor Dining Infrastructure Scheme”.

- 5 Avail of the “Additional Outdoor Infrastructure Scheme” administered by the National Transport Authority.
6. Support independent tourism and hospitality business owners to create outdoor dining experiences in a regulated and accessible manner through the “Outdoor Seating & Accessories for Tourism & Hospitality Business Scheme” in association with Fáilte Ireland.

The Laois Local Enterprise Office also supports the Tourism and Business Sectors with the following initiatives:

- One to one expert advice with hospitality specialist, Ms Alva Pearson of Pearson Consulting, to support them in re-opening and re-booting their business.
- 19 tourism/hospitality businesses are currently taking part in a marketing programme specifically aimed at the tourism sector.
- In consultation with Laois Tourism the Council has identified other relevant training that will be delivered to this sector over the coming months. This includes Digital Marketing, Social Media, Promotion of Businesses and ongoing Marketing for Businesses. Mentoring will also be provided.
- The Council are currently in the process of delivering a Start Your Own Tourism Business to 15 individuals who have identified opportunities as part of the Blueway experience.

Notice of Motion No: 26/2021

Councillor Aisling Moran proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council consider the provision of trails throughout Laois for horses. There are very few areas where horses and their riders can safely go. This will also be very important from a tourist perspective”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that Laois County Council does not have any lands available for the provision of horse trails. However, horse trails are provided in some of Coillte’s lands and there is a requirement to obtain a permit before permission is allowed. The Members should note that a submission on this topic was made to the Draft Portarlington Strategy 2030 by Ms Johanna Krois, Three Counties Hacking Club, an Equestrian Club in Portarlington. She indicated that there is an incredible demand for designated horse trekking areas and that they are currently hoping to engage with the Local Development Group to recognise this. She further indicated that Portarlington had vast areas of wood and bog land available to develop into a tranquil and diverse trekking route that will encourage social horse trekking for young and old but also endurance riding and orienteering if developed the right way. She added that it could further future establishments of equestrian centres, horse for hire to add to Portarlington’s tourism portfolio or therapy riding in the Midlands.

Notice of Motion No: 27/2021

Councillor Aisling Moran proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council carry out a comprehensive audit on all the pits and quarries in the County, to include all those on the register of quarries and all others which Laois

County Council have any knowledge of. This must include all Unauthorised Developments since the 261 process and any other that may have had been brought to the attention of Laois County Council”

This Notice of Motion received no seconder.

Notice of Motion No: 28/2021

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

“That this Council contact the Minister for Health, Mr. Stephen Donnelly requesting him to address the absence of any dental care/treatment for medical card patients in County Laois”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Aisling Moran. The Members were advised that a letter would issue to the Minister for Health in this regard and also to request negotiation with the dentists that have withdrawn from the scheme to have them re-instated.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

SIGNED: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

CERTIFIED: _____
DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
CORPORATE AFFAIRS