

**MINUTES OF THE PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY
18th OF NOVEMBER 2020 IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, PORTLAOISE**

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 OCTOBER MEETING OF PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT HELD ON THE 21ST OF OCTOBER 2020

On the proposal of Councillor Willie Aird seconded by Councillor Mary Sweeney, the minutes of the October meeting held on the 21st of October 2020 were confirmed as circulated.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING HELD ON THE 21ST OF OCTOBER OF SEPTEMBER 2020

Following confirmation of agreement from Irish Rail in respect of enhanced pedestrian facilities at the Clonminam Rail Crossing, Councillor Aird raised the matter of works being undertaken on both sides of the road. The Agreement to hand only provides for such works on one side.

Councillor Aird proposed that Laois County Council CPO lands from Irish Rail such that works can be undertaken on both sides. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services acknowledged and shared the concerns expressed in relation to pedestrian safety at this location. Mr. Walton confirmed that the agreement enables 50% of required works to be carried out. These works will commence in early 2021. Laois County Council will re-engage with Irish Rail with a view to ensuring that adequate pedestrian facilities are provided on both sides of the public road at this location.

3. SUPPLEMENTARY STANDING ORDERS

On the proposition of Councillor Mary Sweeney seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, the Members unanimously agreed to the supplementary standing orders as circulated in relation to the holding of remote meetings and in particular the introduction of voting – a vote taken remotely in accordance with these Standing Orders constitutes a valid vote towards the decision of the Municipal District.

4. **PRESENTATION BY MR. BRIAN GAYNOR, GREEN PINE CONSULTANTS & MR. GERRY BROWNE, PORTLAOISE TIDY TOWNS – BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS IN PORTLAOISE TOWN**

Mr. Brian Gaynor, Green Pine Consultants delivered a very comprehensive and detailed presentation on the biodiversity projects around Portlaoise Town. The environmental, sustainability and public realm presentation benefits that accrue were outlined in detail and specific reference made to existing and planned projects throughout Portlaoise Town. In thanking Mr. Gaynor for his presentation Members called for the ongoing and continued roll-out of such projects in Portlaoise and, indeed, throughout the entire Municipal District. Members also lauded the efforts of Portlaoise Tidy Towns, other Tidy Towns Groups, Residents Associations and Laois County Council. Mr. Gerry Browne, Chair of Portlaoise Tidy Towns emphasised that it is the collective approach, in the midst of a ‘pushing an open door’ environment, that gives rise to the progress currently being made in terms of public realm presentation.

5. **NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

Notice of Motion No: 138/2020

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:

"That Laois County Council provide free parking for the Chirstmas period"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that in advising Elected Members on matters framing Laois County Council’s Budget for 2021 details were published illustrating the very significant shortfalls in various income streams to Laois County Council during 2020. Similarly Laois County Council incurred significant additional and unbudgeted costs during 2020 in responding to Covid 19 issues and the Council is developing a package of business supports in the lead in to Christmas 2020. On the specific issue of car parking income, 2020 budgeted income is €549,000 compared to a likely outturn income of circa €300,000. Accordingly, there are no proposals for Laois County Council to provide free parking for the Christmas period.

A lengthy discussed ensued during which the Members sought free parking in Portlaoise for the three Saturdays of December leading up to Christmas for the purpose of increasing footfall and business for the local businesses.

Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services confirmed that he had listened carefully to what Members had requested and he would revert to the Members.

Notice of Motion No: 139/2020

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council repair the road at property at Raheenabrougue, Ballyroan"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that the R425 will be examined at this location and any necessary repairs will be carried out in the coming weeks.

Notice of Motion No: 140/2020

Councillor Mary Sweeney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council provide an update on the pedestrianisation of Main Street "

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that the provisions of 2040 and Beyond – A Vision for Portlaoise together with the Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2018 – 2024 set out an objective for Laois County Council to ‘prevent vehicular traffic on Main Street between the junctions with Railway Street and Church Avenue between 10am and 7pm’. Both Plans were adopted in July 2018 and, in the matter of Main Street specifically are based on a reduction of car dominance along Main Street, removing the through route from Market Square to Bridge Street, promoting greater pedestrian activity on Main Street, introducing increased activity to the space and promoting vibrancy and vitality to the traditional business core of Portlaoise. Implementation of the policies and measures outlined in both Plans remains a statutory objective of Laois County Council.

On the proposition of Councillor Mary Sweeney seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, it was agreed that a special meeting of the MD be scheduled for early in 2021 to discuss this matter in further detail.

Notice of Motion No: 141/2020

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council install double yellow lines at the entrance to Craydon Court"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that arrangements will be made to install double yellow lines at the entrance to Craydon Court and adjacent to the green area

Notice of Motion No: 142/2020

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council give an update on the Triogue Blue Way"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that the Triogue Blue Way extends for approximately 2.6km, from the Portlaoise Southern Circular Road (just east of the Timahoe Road Roundabout) to the Ballyfin Road. Aside from deviations at either end, the route largely follows the line of the River Triogue through Portlaoise Town. In 2019 funding of €650,000 was approved for the Triogue Blue Way, under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, with the aim of providing more sustainable travel patterns within Portlaoise Town. During 2020, in order to comply with statutory obligations, Laois County Council has conducted Screening Statements (Appropriate Assessments) for the Triogue Blue Way. In summary these Assessments conclude the following means to progress delivery; Element 1; Portlaoise Southern Circular to People’s Park via Part 8 Planning Proposal but subject to local agreement on land acquisition i.e. local consent of LCC subject to agreement on land acquisition, Element 2; People’s Park to Green Mill Lane requires a Natura Impact Statement and submission to An Bord Pleanála. Both items 1 and 2 will proceed for planning consents in early 2021.

Notice of Motion No: 143/2020

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council make safe the exit from Ralph's Grove onto the main Ballyroan/Portlaoise Road"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, Senior Executive Engineer will make himself available to meet Councillor Fitzgerald and the residents on site on the L-27153-0 in Ballyroan to examine the issue at this location.

Notice of Motion No: 144/2020

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

"That this Council request the Developer in Clonrooske Abbey to repair the 11 public lights that are not working, plaster and repair the front wall at the entrance to the estate and that Laois County Council give an update on the future plans for the vacant site including ownership of it, request the owner to secure the site and that the Council proceed with the taking in charge of Phase 1 of the Estate"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that the planning section have contacted the developer who has advised that the lights have been repaired. They will also arrange to have the wall re-plastered and secure the vacant site in their ownership. With regard to taking in charge no formal application has been made as an issue relating to wayleaves for sewers requires attention and sign off.

Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley expressed concern in relation to additional houses being built at this location. There are issues with the two vacant sites at the entrance to the estate – there was a proposal in 2019 to take the estate in charge. Councillor Dwane Stanley requested an update on the 2 vacant sites, the front wall and the possible taking in charge of the estate.

Some of the public lighting was outlined as being absent/faulty and it was agreed that specific attention would be given to that matter.

Notice of Motion No: 145/2020

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

"That this Council give an update as to whether the works that were due to be carried out on the pumping station in Woodgrove estate to bring it up to spec were ever completed, install the 2 public lights that were meant to be done per planning conditions and give a report on the ownership and future plans for the vacant site in Woodgrove Lawns"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that tender documents are being finalised at present and tenders will be invited in the first half of December with a view to having the upgrade works completed to the pump station early in 2021. The vacant site has been fenced off from the public by Laois County Council under Dangerous Structures legislation. The vacant site at Woodgrove Lawns has been referred to housing for evaluation and a report will be outlined at the December meeting on its status. The outstanding public lights will be provided in Q1 2021.

Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley indicated that the matter has been ongoing for a number of years. Tenders were advertised previously – it was agreed that the matter be followed up on and also in relation to the provision of the 2 public lights.

Notice of Motion No: 146/2020

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

"That this Council include the Bog Lane, Ballytarsna L16564, in the roads programme for 2021"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that the Bog Lane, Ballytarsna L16564 will be examined for consideration as part of the 2021 Roads Programme.

Notice of Motion No: 147/2020

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

"That this Council take in charge the laneway on Ballinakill Road servicing 3 houses. This laneway is within 120 metres of Main Street"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, Senior Executive Engineer will make himself available to meet Councillor Fennelly at this location.

Notice of Motion No: 148/2020

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

"That this Council re-surface the roadway in front of the bring bank in Ballinakill Village"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that subject to confirmation that this section of road is taken in charge by Laois County Council then the road at this location will be considered for surfacing as part of the 2021 Roads Programme.

Notice of Motion No: 149/2020

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

"That this Council carry out survey on trees on the boundary of Balladine Drive, Abbeyleix as to their safety and also survey tree at Balladine Heights on boundary of Laois County Council estate and Respond Housing"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that an assessment of the trees at this location will be carried out by an Arborist in the coming weeks.

Notice of Motion No: 150/2020

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That the Portlaoise Municipal District calls on Laois County Council to install lights as a matter of urgency in the vicinity of the walking track at the leisure centre in Portlaoise along by the wall at the railway line"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy. The Members were advised that Road Design will review this location for installation of new Street Light. Public lighting section has limited funding allocation which goes on Maintenance of the existing network. There is no funding available for installation of new street lights. Installation of street light will be subject to funding being available.

Councillor Aird and other Members expressed concern in relation to this matter and requested that public lights be provided as a matter of urgency taking account of the public safety issues arising.

Notice of Motion No: 151/2020

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That the Portlaoise Municipal District calls on Laois County Council to clear the gratings and gullies on the Ballyfin Road starting at the roundabout"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that the gullies and surface water pipelines have been cleaned within recent weeks.

Councillor Aird expressed concern in relation to some gullies that were not included in the recent clean up on the Ballyfin Road – it was agreed to check the matter further.

Notice of Motion No: 152/2020

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That the Portlaoise Municipal District calls on the planning office to inform this meeting if there a pedestrian way from Foxburrow through Grenville granted as part of the planning decision and if so where is it located?"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell. The Members were advised that This development decision was made by An Bord Pleanala under ref ABP 307-420-20 and was granted with 24 conditions. In relation to pedestrian movement, Condition No 5 states "The Developer shall comply with all requirements of the Planning Authority in relation to roads, access, cycling infrastructure and parking arrangements.

Notice of Motion No: 153/2020

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois county council approach the owners of the 2 vacant properties on the New Road, Portlaoise with a view to purchasing these and the adjacent site to create accommodation suitable for older people.

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Mary Sweeney. The Members were advised that Laois County Council's Vacant Homes Officer will investigate the status of these 2 sites.

Notice of Motion No: 154/2020

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That an update be provided on the work undertaken on "Portlaoise, A Destination Town" and also the Active Travel Measures"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Mary Sweeney. The Members were advised that Laois County Council secured €500,000 from Failte Ireland under the Developed and Emerging Destination Towns Capital Investment Programme. The overall budget to implement the measures approved is €675,000 when local funding is included. The measures to be funded under the Programme include public realm and public lighting enhancements on Main Street and along Bull Lane, Lyster Lane and Pepper's Lane. In addition the funds make specific provision for smarter travel street furniture, landscape works, interpretation of the Fort Protector and town centre directional signage. A project implementation team is in place and the majority of the measures will be introduced in the first half of 2021. Separately, as part of the July 2020 Stimulus Package (Active Travel Measures), Laois County Council secured €375,000 for Portlaoise Town Centre and these funds will supplement the funds/measures outlined above, to include a specific focus on the enhancement of existing (underutilised) public spaces at Hynd's Square, Lower Square, Pepper's Lane and Lyster Lane/Lyster Square.

It was agreed that this item would be tabled for further discussion and update on the special meeting of the MD which will take place in early 2021.

Councillor Noel Tuohy also expressed concern in relation to the anti-social behaviour outside the Courthouse in Portlaoise and in particular due to Covid-19 restrictions on people in courtrooms whereby there are congregating groups outside on the Main Street whilst the courts are in session. The Members called for additional co-operation from an Garda Síochána to deal with these issues. It was also noted that there is now a Community Policing Team set up in an Garda Síochána and it was proposed to invite them to a meeting to discuss the anti-social behaviour.

It was noted that a site has been acquired for a new Courthouse on the Southern Relief Road and it was requested that an update be sought on the status of the re-location of the Courthouse for the November meeting of the Council.

Notice of Motion No: 155/2020

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council address the boundary between Forest Park and Broomville with a view to alleviating the residents concerns about people gathering late at night"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise Municipal District Office intends to remove trees and vegetation at this location and carry out repairs to the wall/fencing and other landscaping works as necessary in early 2021.

Notice of Motion No: 156/2020

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council put a pedestrian crossing at the end of Summerhill Lane onto the road towards the primary schools facilitating the safe crossing of the large volume of children heading to school"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that the Road Design Office will arrange a site meeting with Elected Member to identify exact location. Road design will review and design the pedestrian crossing with a view to funding in 2021.

Notice of Motion No: 157/2020

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council re-visit the issue of dog foul bins if only on a pilot scheme and place them on the well used pedestrian routes in town”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell. The Members were advised that the Environment Section of Laois County Council has been working with Tidy Towns groups to provide Mutt Mitt Dispensers along popular walking routes in many areas. The scheme was launched and piloted in Mountmellick in 2019 and has proved successful where up to 9 dispensers are now available. Mutt Mitts Dispensers have also been provided to Tidy Towns groups in Abbeyleix, Ballybrittas, Ballacolla, Emo, Errill, Portlaoise and Rathdowney and the Environment Section is now arranging for more dispensers to be provided to other interested groups. Five such dispensers and bags have been provided to Portlaoise Tidy Towns, who are to choose suitable locations for their deployment. As previously advised to Elected Members Laois County Council promotes an ‘any bag any bin’ philosophy and encourages dog walkers to dispose of dog waste to the normal litter bins or to bring the dog waste home and dispose of it in their own household waste. Laois County Council has also purchased some anti-dog fouling stencils, which will be sprayed painted onto footpaths to remind dog owners that they may be issued with Fixed Penalty Notice and fined €150, if they fail to clean up after their dog.

The Members requested that additional bins be provided around the town. Councillor Noel Tuohy suggested a pilot scheme be carried out and this was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

Thomasina Connell, Cathaoirleach