

**MINUTES OF THE JUNE MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 31ST OF
JULY 2023 IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE**

PRESENT:	Councillor	Paschal McEvoy	In The Chair
	Councillors	Willie Aird John Joe Fennelly James Kelly Caroline Dwane Stanley Aidan Mullins Catherine Fitzgerald Aisling Moran Ben Brennan	Paddy Bracken Marie Tuohy P.J. Kelly John King Thomasina Connell Seamus McDonald Conor Bergin Barry Walsh
APOLOGIES:	Councillor	Ollie Clooney	Padraig Fleming

IN ATTENDANCE:

Messrs John Mulholland, Chief Executive, Donal Brennan, Director of Services, Gerry Murphy, Head of Finance, Ms. Angela McEvoy, Director of Services, Mr. Adrian Barrett, A/ Director of Services, Ms. Carmel McNicholl, A/Director of Service, & Ms. Michelle McCormack, S.O.,

103. VOTES OF SYMPATHIES

The following Votes of Sympathies were agreed:

- The Freeman family, Durrow, Co. Laois on the recent death of Mr. John Freeman
- The Townsend family, Swan Road, Durrow on the recent death of Ms. Mary Townsend
- The Dunne family, Pembroke Terrace, Abbeyleix on the recent death of Ms. Emily Dunne
- The O' Neill family, Parkavilla, Mountrath on the recent death of Monsignor Caoimhín O' Neill
- The Fitzpatrick & Dowling families, Ballytegan, Borris Road & Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise on the recent death of Dylan Fitzpatrick and his father Eoin Fitzpatrick
- The Moran family, Ballinagar, Ballylinan, on the recent death of Mr. John Moran, former Member of Laois County Council and father of Councillor Aisling Moran
- The Deevy family, Jenkinstown Park, Jenkinstown, Kilkenny on the recent death of Mr. Michael Deevy, father of Mr. Larry Deevy with the Finance Department, Laois County Council
- The McEvoy family, Kilteale, Stradbally, & St. Brigid's Place, Portlaoise on the recent death of Mr. Keith McEvoy
- Ms. Kay Breen, Oaklawn, Portlaoise on the recent death of her husband Donal
- Mr. Noel Scully, 5 Marian Avenue, Portlaoise on the recent death of his brother Thomas
- Mr. John Styles, New Road, Portlaoise on the recent death of his brother Liam
- Ms. Maude Quigley, Kilminchy, Dublin Road, Portlaoise on the recent death of her husband Jim

- Mary & Tony Dunne, Knocknagroagh, Portlaoise on the death of their brother Oliver
- Betty & Har Ramsbottom, Moore Valley, Timahoe, Portlaoise on the death of their brother Oliver
- Ms. Aileen Browne, Killone, The Heath, Portlaoise on the death of her brother Oliver

104. MINUTES OF THE JUNE MONTHLY MEETING HELD THE 26TH OF JUNE 2023

On the proposition of Councillor Willie Aird seconded by Councillor Paddy Bracken, the Members unanimously agreed the minutes of the June meeting held on the 26th of June 2023.

105. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 26TH OF JUNE 2023

On the proposition of Councillor Paddy Bracken seconded by Councillor James Kelly, the Members unanimously agreed the minutes of the Annual General meeting held on the 26th of June 2023.

106. REPORT ON CPG MEETING HELD ON THE 19TH OF JUNE 2023

On the proposition of Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly, the Members unanimously agreed the report on CPG meeting held on the 19th of June 2023.

107. TAKING IN CHARGE OF MEADOWS WAY (PART), GRAIGUECULLEN

On the proposition of Councillor Ben Brennan seconded by Councillor Paschal McEvoy, the Members unanimously agreed to the taking in charge of Meadows Way (Part), Graiguecullen.

108. TAKING IN CHARGE OF MARIAN GROVE, MOUNTMELICK

On the proposition of Councillor Seamus McDonald seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald, the Members unanimously agreed to the taking in charge of Marian Grove, Mountmellick.

109. TAKING IN CHARGE OF FEATHERBED LANE, BORRIS-IN-OSSORY

On the proposition of Councillor Conor Bergin seconded by Councillor James Kelly, the Members unanimously agreed to the taking in charge of Featherbed Lane, Borris-in-Ossory.

110. NOMINATION OF MS. ROSEMARY KUNENE REPRESENTING YOUTH WORK IRELAND TO THE LAOIS LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

On the proposition of Councillor Wilie Aird seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald , the Members unanimously agreed to nominate Ms. Rosemary Kunene representing Youth Work Ireland to the Laois Local Community Development Committee

111. NOMINATION OF MS. YVONNE MCKEON TO REPLACE MR. BOBBY FITZPATRICK TO THE HOUSING, REGENERATION AND PLANNING STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

On the proposition of Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley the Members unanimously agreed to nominate Ms. Yvonne McKeon to replace Mr. Bobby Fitzpatrick to the Hosing, Regeneration and Planning Strategic Planning Committee.

112. AGREE A DATE FOR THE CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTION SCHEME BEFORE THE 10TH OF SEPTEMBER 2023

The Members unanimously agreed that the meeting for the consideration and adoption of the Development Contribution Scheme would take place on the 6th of September 2023 at 11.00 a.m. This meeting to be held in the Council Chamber with a remote option also available.

113. MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR JULY 2023

The Members were circulated with a copy of the Monthly Management report for July 2023. The Director of Services responded to the various queries raised by the Members.

114. TRAINING AND CONFERENCES

The Members were circulated with a copy of the conferences and training for ratification and same was agreed on the proposition of Councillor John King seconded by Councillor Ben Brennan.

115. CORRESPONDENCE

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

- (i) Correspondence dated the 27th of June 2023 from the Department of Rural & Community Development in relation to Local Improvement Schemes
- (ii) Correspondence dated the 4th of July 2023 from ESB Networks in response to Notice of Motion No: 33/2023
- (iii) Correspondence dated the 4th of July 2023 in relation to housing related matters
- (iv) Correspondence dated the 6th of July 2023 from Minister Ryan in relation to Notice of Motion No: 12/2023
- (v) Correspondence dated the 7th of July 2023 from the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage in relation to Notice of Motion No: 32/2023

- (vi) Correspondence dated the 18th of July 2023 from the Department of Rural & Community Development in relation to illegal dumping
- (vii) Correspondence dated the 18th of July 2023 from the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage in relation to the Multi-Annual Footpath Restoration Programme
- (viii) Correspondence dated the 20th of July 2023 from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in relation to Notice of Motion No: 45/2022
- (ix) Correspondence dated the 24th of July 2023 from the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage in relation to Notice of Motion No: 28/2023
- (x) Correspondence dated the 20th of July 2023 from the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine in relation to Notice of Motion No: 45/2022
- (xi) Correspondence dated the 29th of June 2023 from Wexford Council in relation to a Notice of Motion passed in relation to the use of the term ‘Halting Site’
- (xii) Correspondence dated the 5th of July 2023 from Cork County Council in relation to a Notice of Motion passed in relation to raising the awareness of Lyme disease
- (xiii) Correspondence dated the 7th of July 2023 from Leitrim County Council in relation to a Notice of Motion passed in relation to a call on Bus Eireann for employment of additional bus drivers
- (xiv) Correspondence dated the 11th of July 2023 from Clare County Council in relation to a Notice of Motion passed in relation to the having the stained glass image of St. Brigid created by a prominent County Clare female artist adopted as the official image of the saint in the context of the new St. Brigids Day public holiday which commenced on the 1st of February 2023
- (xv) Correspondence from South Dublin County Council adopted on the 12th of June 2023 in relation to a call and support for Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty

116. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Notice of Motion No: 37/2023

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council write to Minister Darragh O’ Brien T.D. at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage seeking that both the thresholds and the amount of the grant be increased for both the Housing Adaptation Grant for Older and People with a Disability”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that correspondence would issue to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in this regard.

Notice of Motion No: 38/2023 – Councillor Marie Tuohy

Councillor Marie Tuohy in her absence gave written consent to Councillor James Kelly to propose the following Notice of Motion in her name:

“That this Council commend the ongoing effort of the Management Team and affiliated bodies such as the Laois Chamber Alliance on the ongoing promotion of Laois as a tourist destination and request an update on the current Laois Tourism Strategy and status report on tourism related infrastructure projects such as the facilities at the Rock of Dunamaise and Glenbarrow in the Slieve Blooms”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that a Strategic Plan for Tourism in Laois 2018 -2023 was prepared by the Laois Tourism Company CLG. The structure of the strategy is built on capitalising on new tourism opportunities for Laois and aligning the County with emerging tourism trends, national policy and an ambition throughout the County to develop tourism to become a buoyant economic sector. The objectives of the Strategic Plan range from developing a competitive tourism industry base that becomes attractive to overseas and domestic visitors to capitalising on the outdoor pursuits potential of Laois and the creation of areas of standout and unique appeal within Ireland's Ancient East. The plan has various actions and an implementation plan to promote Laois and the many facilities it has to offer.

Laois Tourism has:

1. Established a new brand for the County, a website and a suite of promotional material and has
2. Engaged the services of a Marketing and PR Company to work on the promotion of the County and on the Festivals and Events that take place annually.
- 3.

The Laois Chamber Alliance now acts as an umbrella body for Laois Chamber and Laois Tourism, strengthening networking opportunities, collaborating with events and sharing of resources. A Tourism Development Executive was appointed on the 8th February 2023.

The following is an update on some of the tourism related projects in the County:

Parking Facilities at the Rock of Dunamase: A site has been purchased for the development of parking facilities and the Part VIII planning process was approved by the elected members of this Council at its June meeting. The immediate development of these facilities is a priority for the Council.

Car Park facilities in Glenbarrow: an extended car park has been developed by the Council at Glenbarrow, adding 66 extra carpark spaces to the original 30 spaces that were already available.

Portlaoise Destination Town Project : Funding of €500,000 was secured for Portlaoise to provide a suite of new wayfinding and interpretation signage and map boards highlighting the history of the town and the surrounding areas. Lighting on the three laneways has been completed. Work relating to the installation of the new signposting and map boards, etc will take place during the coming weeks.

The Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trail is near completion and offers cycle trails of various levels as well as walking trails. A Mountain Bike Festival took place in the Slieve Blooms on the weekend of April 28th to 30th.

Emo House and Gardens: A new carpark has been completed to enhance the offering visitors get when travelling to Emo Court to enjoy the lake and woodland walks or a meander through the gardens before relaxing in the tearooms.

The Barrow Blueway is set to be completed later this year offering 46 km of track along the Canal. This will run from Lowtown in Kildare, through the towns of Rathangan, Monasterevin and Vicarstown to Athy.

Ras na mBan will take place in Laois on Friday 8th September 2023, with a stage of the race concluding in the Square, Mountrath. Midlands 103 will have a broadcast unit in the square that afternoon from 12 noon to 3pm.

A wide range of Festivals take place annually in the County and these are supported by the Council.

Fáilte Ireland is working to finalise its €68million Regenerative Tourism Scheme which is expected to launch in August this year. A briefing was given to the elected members by Mr Brian O' Flynn Head of Ireland's Ancient East on Tuesday 2nd May 2023. This Scheme and Failte Ireland's Regional Tourism Strategy for Ireland's Ancient East 2023 – 2027 will form part of the Laois Strategy review.

Notice of Motion No: 39/2023 – Councillor Aisling Moran

Councillor Aisling Moran confirmed that she would not be in attendance at the meeting and requested that her Notice of Motion be deferred to the September meeting of Laois County Council.

Notice of Motion No: 40/2023

Councillor Barry Walsh proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council engage with the ESB requesting a central point of contact for Councillors. Currently parts of the Ballyroan area and other areas within the Portlaoise MD are experiencing intermittent power outages for short periods which can have a negative impact on people working from home and plant and equipment commercially and domestically”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that a letter would issue to the ESB in this regard.

Notice of Motion No: 41/2023

Councillor Barry Walsh proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council consider using an alert app such as Map Alerter to communicate with local residents about service disruptions, public safety messages and important updates”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor James Kelly. The Members were advised that the Council, at the moment uses a range of social media and its own website to publish public messages related to the work of the Council. Next year the Council intends to launch a redesign of its website which will further improve communications with the public. We are aware of some companies who claim to offer additional geographical targeting; however these proprietary systems typically demand that people subscribe to their service and are not available to non-subscribers. It is considered that the needs of

the Council and the general public are better served by using more standard platforms and the website.

Notice of Motion No: 42/2023

Councillor Conor Bergin proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council hold a workshop to help local clubs and organisers who wish to apply for the Sports Capital Programme 2023”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Paschal McEvoy. The Members were advised that it is common when such national sports grants are made available, staff from the Sports/Community section will once again work closely with clubs and organisations to help optimise grant applications from Laois.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

SIGNED: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

CERTIFIED: _____
DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
CORPORATE AFFAIRS