

**MINUTES OF THE PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, 17TH OF JANUARY 2024 IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, PORTLAOISE**

RESENT: Ms. Catherine Fitzgerald, Cathaoirleach (In the Chair)
Mr. Barry Walsh, M.C.C.
Ms. Caroline Dwane Stanley, M.C.C.
Mr. John Joe Fennelly, M.C.C.
Ms. Marie Tuohy, M.C.C.
Ms. Thomasina Connell, M.C.C.
Mr. Willie Aird, M.C.C.

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

1. VOTE OF SYMPATHY

On the proposition of Councill Catherine Fitzgerald it was unanimously agreed to extend a vote of sympathy to the Confrey Family, 13 St. Michael's Park, Portarlinton on the recent death of Mrs. Marie Confrey, mother-in-law of Ms. Michelle McCormack, Laois County Council.

2. MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER MEETING OF THE PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT HELD ON THE 6TH OF DECEMBER 2023

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh, the minutes of the December meeting of Portlaoise Municipal District held on the 6th of December 2023 were confirmed as circulated.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE DECEMBER MEETING OF THE PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT HELD ON THE 16TH OF DECEMBER 2023

The Chair sought an update on Notice of Motion **167/2023**, which was considered at the December 2023 Meeting of the Municipal District as follows:-

"That this Council request the upgrade of the Astro Pitch at Portlaoise Leisure Centre"

Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services, advised the Members that, in late 2023, Laois Leisure engaged Sports Lab Scotland, to carry out an inspection of the Astro turf Pitch in Portlaoise. The firm had been booked for December 2023, but,

due to factors outside the Leisure Centre's control, the inspection was carried out in January 2024.

Following on from the inspection, Laois Leisure are pursuing a contractor to undertake decompaction services on the Astroturf Pitch. It is intended that works will be complete before the end of February 2024. Pending completion of the maintenance works, and, following on from the Sports Labs inspection, it was necessary to close Pitch A. Pitches B and C remain available for hire.

Separately, under Matters Arising, Councillor John Joe Fennelly referred to Notice of Motion 164/2023 and highlighted an incident that supports the commencement of re-paving and landscaping agreed for The Square, Ballinakill.

4. Notice of Motions

Notice of Motion No: 01/2024

Councillor Barry Walsh proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council identify the triangular space in the parking area outside the Square Bar as a non-parking spot and review signage/general layout of the parking area"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Thomasina Connell. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, Senior Executive Engineer will make himself available to meet Councillor Barry Walsh to review the location.

Councillor Fitzgerald requested that other Members be advised of the meeting as there are various stakeholders who may be impacted by the matters addressed at the meeting. This was agreed.

Notice of Motion No: 02/2024

Councillor Barry Walsh proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council request from the Minister of Education an updated timeline to completion of the new Kolbe School - regular updates need to be provided in the interim period to completion"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members requested that a letter issue to the Minister of Education as a matter of urgency.

In particular the Members sought an update regarding the following specific issues:-

1. Date for completion of ESB Accommodation/Enabling works on the site,
2. Date of appointment for the main contractor and the intended commencement date for the main contractor,
3. The construction period, from date of commencement.

The Members also requested that the Department provide regular updates setting out progress and key milestone dates for the project.

Notice of Motion No: 03/2024

Councillor Barry Walsh proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Laois County Council provide an update on proposed new Bike Rental Scheme in the Portlaoise MD"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that in Autumn 2023, Laois County Council sought expressions of interest for the introduction of an electric bicycle service (E-Bike Scheme) in Portlaoise. Following on from that, an agreement in principle, is now in place with an established E-Bike Operator. Next steps include a funding package for the construction of the various e-bike stations with a view to the introduction of the service later this year. Once all details are clarified, a further update will issue to Elected Members.

Notice of Motion No: 04/2024

Councillor Marie Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council repair the dip in the road on Bridge Street just past the ramp near the disability parking bay"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD Office will examine this location with a view to carrying out road surface repairs as appropriate.

Notice of Motion No: 05/2024

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

"That this Council give an update on the current progress and cause of delays regards the housing development in 'Radharc Darach' Hepburn Court"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that Lands at Hepburn Court were transferred to Cluid Housing Association in August 2023 following the resolution of a number of issues with the ESB regarding the 38KV substation located on the site. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the contractor appointed for the scheme construction of 54 units, disengaged from the process prior to commencement. Accordingly, as the tender period had expired, Cluid had to re-tender for scheme construction, the closing date for which is 9th February 2024. Cluid envisages appointment of a contractor and commencement on site by the end of Q1 2024. In the meantime, discussions have been ongoing with the ESB regarding cable diversion works on the site. Cluid is targeting mid-February 2024 for both cable diversion and demolition works, which will take 2 weeks to complete. Members will be kept apprised when these works commence and throughout the construction period.

Notice of Motion No: 06/2024

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

"That this Council carry out drainage works along the boundary at St. Brigid's Place and the Leisure Centre/Railway Line to improve the public lighting in the area and give time frame as to when the native trees and shrubbery will be replaced in phase one along the boundary line"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD Office will examine the location along the rail boundary near St. Brigid's Place with a view to carrying out drainage works in Q.1 of 2024. The Public Lighting section of Laois County Council have commenced the installation of public lighting along the footpath adjacent to the Leisure Centre Railway Line. The Portlaoise MD Office will install landscaping and planting along the boundary line at St. Brigid's Place within the next six/eight weeks.

Notice of Motion No: 07/2024

Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley proposed the following Notice of Motion:

"That this Council confirm if the lift in the New Library in Portlaoise is suitable for wheelchair users"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Marie Tuohy. The Members were advised that the lift in Portlaoise library is suitable for wheelchair users and complies with the building regulations, a disability access certificate has been granted for the building.

A long discussion ensued regarding this issue. Councillor Dwane Stanley advised the meeting that the lift is unsuitable for the certain types of wheelchairs, referring specifically to electric wheelchairs, many of which cannot manoeuvre in the lift. Clarity was sought regarding the anomaly presenting whereby the new lift shaft appears to be incompatible with 'new,' electric, wheelchairs.

Notice of Motion No: 08/2024

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council request the Midlands Regional Hospital to install Wi-Fi in Portlaoise Hospital"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. It was noted that a letter would issue to the Midlands Regional Hospital C.E.O., also to be referred to the Broadband Officer of Laois County, Ms. Antoinette Brennan.

Notice of Motion No: 09/2024

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council fill the pot holes in Rathnamanagh and also include the Rathnamanagh Road in our 2024 Roads programme"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that The Portlaoise MD Office will carry out road repairs on the L-6136 in the townland of Rathnamanagh, Portlaoise and we will examine the road at this location for consideration as part of the 2024 Roads Re-surfacing Programme.

Notice of Motion No: 10/2024

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council review the pedestrian crossing at Dunne Stores/ Tesco"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised that Laois County Council Road Design Staff will visit the crossing, assess the need & feasibility of improvements at this location and thereafter make arrangements as appropriate.

Notice of Motion No: 11/2024

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

"That this Council install speed limit markings on the road from Golf Club on the Ballyroan Road, Abbeyleix to the Green Road Junction"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that The Portlaoise MD Office will make arrangements to install road markings on the R425 Ballyroan Road, Abbeyleix between the Golf Club on the Ballyroan Road, Abbeyleix to the Green Road on the L-6720.

Notice of Motion No: 12/2024

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

"That this Council include the road from Ironmills, Ballinakill to the county boundary on the 2024 Roads Programme"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD Office will examine the L-1738 Ironmills for consideration as part of the 2024 Roads Resurfacing Programme.

Notice of Motion No: 13/2024

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

"That Laois County Council clean the drain that runs along the road at Clonking, Abbeyleix Road, Ballinakill"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, Senior Executive Engineer will make himself available to meet Councillor John Joe Fennelly on site to examine the drainage at this location and make arrangements to address the issue as appropriate.

Notice of Motion No: 14/2024

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council consider the installation of new cookers in some of the houses in Triogue Court as the existing cookers are in a poor state of repair"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh. The Members were advised that The Housing Department's Clerk Of Works will carry out an inspection on these 2 units to assess the current cooking facilities in these units.

Notice of Motion No: 15/2024

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council carry out road repairs at Knockbaun Lower in the vicinity of the picnic area"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. The Members were advised that the Portlaoise MD Office will examine the road at this location and carry out road repairs as required.

Notice of Motion No: 16/2024

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council erect a barrier at Cooltoran, Portlaoise on the left hand side of the road at the bend"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that The Portlaoise MD Office has examined the L-2120 at Cooltoran and is currently making arrangements for the installation of a vehicle restraint barrier at this location.

Notice of Motion No: 17/2024

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:

"That this Council undertake footpath Repairs at - Church Avenue, Portlaoise near the Convent site, The Garden Village, Portlaoise opposite No 57A & at Kilminchy Avenue near House No. 12"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh. The Members were advised that The Portlaoise MD will carry out repairs to the footpaths the these location in the coming weeks.

Notice of Motion No: 18/2024

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council provide an update on the Community Recognition Fund Works at the rear of Portlaoise Leisure Centre where the boundary was to be improved, improvements to the path, installation of lighting and landscaping scheme was granted funding"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh. The Members were advised that in relation to the Community Recognition Fund 2023 St Brigid's Place at the rear of the Leisure Centre, the initial clean-up of the walkway adjacent to the rail line boundary has been carried out. It is envisaged that native hedging will be planted in the next 4-5 weeks. The public lighting columns have recently been installed and are awaiting a date for connection to electricity supply.

Notice of Motion No: 19/2023

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council undertake a road safety survey of the junction at Ballytegan/Crookedy where it is unsafe for drivers turning right/left and to repaint the SLOW road markings and provide prompt and practical solutions to improve the safety of this very busy junction"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that The Portlaoise MD Office will refresh the road markings at the junction of the L-2115 Crookedy and the L-2120 Ridge Road at Ballytegan and review the location with a view to making an application for a Safety Improvement Works Scheme.

5. Correspondence

It was noted that no correspondence had been circulated since the last meeting of the Municipal District. It was requested that an update on the Parking Study for Portlaoise be available for the next meeting.

6. Fix Date for Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting will take place on Wednesday, 15th of February 2024.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Director of Services