

**MINUTES OF THE PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, 20th OF MARCH 2024 IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, PORTLAOISE**

PRESENT: 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 Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald it was unanimously agreed to extend a vote of sympathy to the Mulhall Family, Cappakeel, Emo, Co. Laois on the recent death of Mr. Tom Mulhall, former Member of Laois County Council. The Director of Services associated himself with the Vote of Sympathy and a minutes silence was observed as a mark of respect to the Mulhall family.

2. MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY MEETING OF THE PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT HELD ON THE 21ST OF FEBRUARY 2024

On the proposition of Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly, the minutes of the February meeting of Portlaoise Municipal District held on the 21st of February 2024 were confirmed as circulated.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE JANUARY MEETING OF THE PORTLAOISE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT HELD ON THE 21ST OF FEBRUARY 2024

There were no matters arising from the meeting of the 21st of February 2024

4. Schedule of Municipal District Works 2024

The Members were circulated with the Schedule of Municipal District Works for 2024. Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services briefed the Members on same. On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor Willie Aird, the Members unanimously agreed the schedule of Municipal District Works for 2024 as presented.

5. Portlaoise Parking Study

Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services briefed the Members on the Parking Study for Portlaoise which had been carried out by Roadplan Consulting. The Members noted the findings and generally welcomed the recommendations of the Study.

Members agreed that consideration be given to additional, specific, mother and child, age friendly, parking bays and that, at least some, disabled parking bays be a little wider to facilitate those with mini-buses, larger vehicles, etc. The methods for payment were discussed (i.e. contactless/cash/parking app). As new parking meters are introduced, they will include an option for both cash and credit card payments. In the meantime, it was confirmed, the most efficient means of paying for parking is via the Parking Tag App and patrons are encouraged to download the App.

Separately, regarding means by which local car journeys to the town centre could be reduced, Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services, advised that the procurement process, for the appointment of an operator for the Portlaoise Town Bus Service, would commence in the next couple of weeks.

6. Notice of Motions

Notice of Motion No: 40/2024

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:

"That the Portlaoise Municipal District carry out maintenance at the Portlaoise Leisure Centre Playground to include fence repairs, re-surfacing under the swings, slides and other equipment and carry out maintenance on the grass edges as required"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that The Sport & Leisure Section have scheduled annual maintenance and repairs for all playgrounds from Feb to July 2024. Subject to weather conditions Portlaoise Leisure Centre's maintenance and repair programme is scheduled for the week of 15th April 2024. The work will include surfacing and fencing works.

Councillor Aird requested that the adjacent grass area be examined with a view to carrying out some maintenance work.

Notice of Motion No: 41/2024

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That the Portlaoise Municipal District reduce the speed limit at the Rock of Dunamaise to 30 kph to reduce risk of further road accidents at this location"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh. The Members were advised that the Department of Transport advise that there is legislation due for changes to default speed limits. In parallel, the Department are to publish a National Speed Limit review guidance document. Pending publication of these documents, it is premature to commence a speed limit review, noting that individual speed limit zones cannot be revised in isolation.

Notice of Motion No: 42/2024

Councillor Thomasina Connell proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That the Portlaoise Municipal District install a STOP sign at the junction on Lime Tree Avenue, Kilminchy and carry out required repairs to the ramps where potholes have appeared and also have these re-painted"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh. The Members were advised that The Portlaoise MD office will examine these location at Lime Tree Avenue and will make arrangements to install signage to carry out maintenance and repairs as required.

Notice of Motion No: 43/2024

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council contact Bord na Mona to retain all the existing narrow gauge railway trackway associated with the Portlaoise Cul na Mona works and turn them into a greenway"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that a letter will issue to Bord na Mona in this regard and if

possible if the CEO could be requested to meet the Members in relation to this project.

Notice of Motion No: 44/2024

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That this Council install cat's eyes on the small roundabouts"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. will make himself available to meet with Councillor Fitzgerald to examine any priority locations of concern. The existing roundabouts were installed to the relevant design standards at the time of construction. The Portlaoise MD Office will examine roundabouts in Portlaoise town with a view to refreshing road markings where required.

Councillor Fitzgerald requested a review of pedestrian crossings in particular the Stradbally Road/Dublin Road and at the Parochial House in Portlaoise.

Notice of Motion No: 45/2024

Councillor Barry Walsh proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That the Portlaoise Municipal District contact EIR regarding a service pole causing a traffic hazard at the entrance to a haulage lorry yard in Colt, Ballyroan as per issued photographic report and also arrange for a removal or re-location"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that The Portlaoise MD Office will examine the location at R32 NTX4 on the Bog Road, Colt, Ballyroan and will contact EIR and the property owner regarding making arrangements to move the pole at this location as appropriate.

Notice of Motion No: 46/2024

Councillor Barry Walsh proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That the Portlaoise Municipal District carry out safety and sight line works at both ends of road L-6140-0 (Old Road) Ballydavis, Portlaoise - both junctions with Coolbanager Road and Derrygarren Road are difficult to exit and have poor sight lines"

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 Councillor Walsh on site on the L6140-0 (Old Road) Ballydavis, Portlaoise to investigate any improvements that might be made in the short term and the Portlaoise MD Office will include this location on an application for safety improvement works funding.

Notice of Motion No: 47/2024

Councillor Barry Walsh proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That the Portlaoise Municipal District request an update on previously sent Notice of Motion in December 2022 for the Department of Transport zone to consider Portlaoise as a commuter zone to Dublin and in turn apply commuter zone fares for public transport including railway services in the form of a Leap Card or similar. There was a recent announcement on the extension of this to other commuter towns but excluded Portlaoise. Can it be clarified the reasons it was not extended to Portlaoise and the criteria for selecting other towns. Portlaoise/Laois has a significant commuter population which deserves a serious consideration to the above proposal"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Caroline Dwane Stanley. The Members were advised of the following reply that had been received from the Department of Transport:-

On the 27th of April 2023, the National Transport Authority (NTA) published a new National Fares Strategy. The Fares Strategy followed the previous implementation of a simplified fares structure for Dublin, which combined elements of distance and equitability between routes, and proposes an approach for the rest of Ireland aimed at providing better value, greater transparency, and equality in respect of journey distance. Subsequently, on the 18th of January 2024, the NTA published its fare determination which introduces a number of specific changes to fares, including the formalisation of new 'Dublin City' and 'Dublin Commuter' Zone boundaries, simplified Leap capping, as well as changes to some Intercity Rail and town bus fares. This year's fares determination will see the implementation of the first phase of the National Fares Strategy, and the introduction of a new national fare structure on Dublin Commuter Rail services. This will deliver more consistent and equitable fares and reduce historic boundary issues between Short Hop Zone and Intercity fare levels. The new Dublin City Zone will extend to approximately 23km from Dublin city centre. This zone will formalise the recent simplification of the Dublin fare structure with the

implementation of the TFI 90 minute fare area. The new Dublin Commuter Area will comprise of a number of zones extending to approximately 50km from Dublin city centre. This area was selected based on a review of future public transport network proposals (e.g. the implementation of DART+) along with analysis of ticket sales information to determine the majority of commuter travel demand to Dublin. The NTA intends to publish plans for the second phase of implementation of the National Fares Strategy later in 2024, which will extend to areas beyond the new Dublin Commuter Area, including Portlaoise, where a revised system of fares will be introduced for Intercity rail and national bus services. In relation to fares more generally, the 2022 fares determination implemented the government's 20% cost of living fares reduction, which will continue to apply in 2024 on all subsidised public transport services. In addition, the eligibility of the Young Adult Leap Card, which provides young people with fares discounted by approximately 50% of the equivalent Adult fare, has been extended to include those aged up to 25 (including mature students enrolled in fulltime third level education) in 2024. The combination of these measures has ensured that significant reductions continue to apply on all forms of subsidised public transport.

It is the intention of the NTA to announce proposals for the future rollout of the National Fares Strategy later this year, which will introduce new fares structures on Intercity Rail and national Bus services beyond the Dublin area.

Notice of Motion No: 48/2024

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

"That this Council give an update on when the remaining social/Council houses in Clonrooske Abbey will be tenanted, the public lights repaired and give an update on the taking in charge of Phase 1"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that Clonrooske Abbey, Portlaoise (Phases 2 and 3) – 18 units. It is expected that the 6 units in Phase 2 shall be ready by the end of March 2024, with tenanting commencing thereafter. It is anticipated that a further 12 units in Phase 3 shall be completed by the end of Q2 2024. It is the responsibility of the developer to repair public lighting within the estate as it is not in the charge of the Council. No application has been received from the developer to have Clonrooske Abbey taken in charge.

Councillor Dwane Stanley indicated that a light repaired by Laois County Council in Clonrooske Abbey is now not working. It was agreed that the matter be referred to the Public Lighting Section for their attention.

Notice of Motion No: 49/2024

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

"That this Council give an update on the taking in charge of Broomville Close, Portlaoise"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that the Council is amenable to taking in charge Broomville Close, Portlaoise.

Following a discussion on the matter, Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services advised that he will arrange for a map of the various areas in Broomville, already taken in charge, together with the areas proposed for taking in charge i.e. all areas not taken in charge to date. This matter is to be clarified in advance of the next Meeting.

Notice of Motion No: 50/2024

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

'That this Council have the speed radar sign at the Rock School activated and erect lights at Knightstown Cross"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that Laois County Council Road Design Dept, will arrange for the public lighting Engineer to meet Councillor Stanley at this location to establish the lighting requirements at Knightstown Cross. Laois County Council Road Design Dept have assessed the speed radar sign and it is gone beyond economical repair and have arranged for the replacement of the speed radar sign.

Councillor Fitzgerald requested that a letter issue to An Garda Síochana regarding speed check points to be carried out at this location.

Notice of Motion No: 51/2024

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

"That this Council seek to extend the 50 kph speed limit on the Portlaoise Road, Abbeyleix to include all houses up to the island lane junction"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Willie Aird. The Members were advised that the Department of Transport advised that there is legislation due for changes to default speed limits. In parallel the Department are to publish a National Speed Limit Review guidance document. Pending publication of these documents, it is premature to commence a speed limit review, noting that individual speed limit zones cannot be revised in isolation.

Notice of Motion No: 52/2024

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

"That this Council carry out drainage works on Lower Road, Ballinakill in front of 3 dwellings(R32 D8N8) at Drimaterrill, Lower Road, Ballinakill"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. will make himself available to meet Councillor Fennelly at Drimaterrill on the L-5731 to examine the issues at this location.

Notice of Motion No: 53/2024

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

"That this Council install anti-slip road surface at the exit from Fairway's Housing Estate in Abbeyleix"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Barry Walsh. The Members were advised that Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. will make himself available to meet Councillor Fennelly on site to examine the entrance and exit at the Fairway's Housing Estate, Ballyroan Road, Abbeyleix with a view to carrying out works as appropriate

Notice of Motion No: 54/2024

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Portlaoise Municipal District calls on Laois County Council to carry out drainage works on the Portlaoise side of the junction at Ross to avoid flooding at entrances to homes in the vicinity"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that The Portlaoise MD Office will arrange to carry out drainage works on the L-2112 Ballyfin Road on the Portlaoise side of Ross Junction at Pallas Little in the vicinity of R32 RXX4.

Notice of Motion No: 55/2024

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Portlaoise Municipal District calls on Laois County Council to carry out improvement works on the following roads: L6772 at Dysart, L66955 at Byrnes Lane, Clonkeen and the L2113 at Boughlone"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that in relation to the L-6772 at Dysart, the Portlaoise MD Office has met Councillor Aird and residents on site and will make arrangements to address the issues as required. In relation to the L66955 Byrnes Lane & the L2113 at Boughlone, Mr. Wes Wilkinson, S.E.E. will make himself available to meet Councillor Aird on site to agree the works to be carried out at these locations. Please note that a section of the L2113 is included on the 2024 Restoration Improvement Roadworks Programme.

Notice of Motion No: 56/2024

Councillor Willie Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

"That Portlaoise Municipal District calls on Laois County Council to give an update regarding progress on the completion of the orbital route linking the Stradbally Road with the Dublin road at Fielbrook"

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald. The Members were advised that as development in Portlaoise Town progresses, Laois County Council has completed the preliminary design for an urban link road, connecting the Stradbally and Dublin Roads. There is a defined line prescribed for the route and this will be set out in the Draft Portlaoise Local Area Plan to be published in the coming weeks. Prior to any completion the proposed road will be subject to statutory planning processes in the normal way.

7. Correspondence

The Members were advised that no correspondence had been received since the last meeting of the Municipal District.

8. Fix Date for Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting will take place on Wednesday, 17th of April 2024.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Director of Services