

Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Offaly County Council
Held on 20 January 2025 at 2.00pm, in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road,
Tullamore and via Teams

The Meetings Administrator carried out a roll call to confirm attendance.

Present

Cllr. Audrey Hennessy Kennedy, Cathaoirleach

Bryant, Ollie	Masterson, Aoife
Clendennen, Eleanor	McDonnell, Fergus
Cribbin, Noel	Moran, Frank
Egan, Hugh	Murray, Claire (SF)
Feighery, Neil	Murray, Shane
Fitzpatrick, Eddie	Murray-Smale, Claire (FF)
Harvey, Declan	O'Brien, Sean
Leahy, John	Ormond, Peter
Maher, Sean	Quinn, Liam

Apologies

None

Officials in Attendance

Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive; Ms. F. Millane, D.O.F.; Ms. A. Dillon, D.O.S.; Mr. B. Lennon, A/D.O.S.; Mr. N. Gorman, D.O.S.; Mr. A. Murray, A/D.O.S.; Mr. R. Whelan, Biodiversity Officer; Ms. L. Giles, A/S.E.O. Meetings Administrator; Ms. L. Carbery, C.O; Ms. E. Sutton, C.O.

1. Confirmation of Minutes

On the proposal of Cllr. P Ormond, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the members resolved to adopt Minutes of the ordinary meeting of Offaly County Council held on Monday 16 December 2024.

2. Minutes for Noting

The Members noted the minutes of the Meetings below:

- Minutes of the Community, Culture and Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee meeting held on 24 October 2024
- Minutes of the Community, Culture and Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee meeting held on 11 December 2024
- Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group budget meeting held on 4 November 2024

- Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 11 November 2024

3. Taking In Charge of Estates -Section 11 of the Roads Act 1993 and Section 180 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. H. Egan in accordance with Section 11 of the Roads Act 1993 and Section 180 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended the members resolved to take in Charge of Estate Cois Callow, Banagher.

On the proposal of Cllr. S. O'Brien, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, in accordance with Section 11 of the Roads Act 1993 and Section 180 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended the members resolved to take in Charge of Estate Church Hill, Tullamore.

4. Draft Schedule of Meetings 2025

Ms. A. Dillon brought the members attention to the Draft Schedule of Meetings 2025 and she advised that the meetings in March and April have been forwarded to the last Monday of the month due to Bank Holidays. The members noted and agreed to the Schedule of meetings for 2025.

5. Annual Service Delivery Plan 2025 - S134 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by S50 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014

Cllr. A. Hennessy Kennedy read the resolution into the record of the meeting.

Offaly County Council is required by Section 134A of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended by the Local Government Act 2014) to prepare an Annual Service Delivery Plan (ASDP).

The Annual Service Delivery Plan sets out the services intended to be provided to the public in the year ahead. It is consistent with the provisions of Offaly County Council's adopted budget for 2025 in setting out the expenditure estimated to be necessary for the Council to carry out its functions in the coming year. The Service Delivery Plan is required to take account of best practice in service delivery including having regard to o the scrutiny of performance by the National Oversight and Audit Commission. The adoption of the Plan is a Reserved Function.

Therefore, the following resolution should be passed to adopt the plan: "In accordance with Section 134A of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended, the Annual Service Delivery Plan 2025 as recommended by the Chief Executive is hereby adopted".

On the proposal of Cllr. D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery, in accordance with S134 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by S50 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 the members resolved to adopt the Annual Service Delivery Plan 2025.

6. Election/Nomination/Appointment - Local Government Act 2001, as amended, Schedule 10 P. 4(4) in accordance with Schedule 10 P.18

Cllr. P. Ormond nominated Cllr. D. Harvey to the Local Traveller Consultative Committee, seconded by Cllr. L. Quinn. There being no further nominations and in accordance with Local Government Act 2001,

as amended, Schedule 10 P. 4(4) in accordance with Schedule 10 P.18, Cllr. D. Harvey was appointed to the Local Traveller Consultative Committee.

7. Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 - 2030 - as per action 1C6 of "The 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 – 2030"

Mr. A. Murray brought the members attention to the Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 – 2030.

Mr. R. Whelan, Biodiversity Officer provided the members with a presentation, outlining the action plan stages. He noted the budget for the plan came in at half the estimated cost of €13,310.31. He informed the members on the consultation process, and he acknowledged the engagement resulting in 30 submissions from a wide range of stakeholders and covering a broad range of issues. He outlined the objectives and actions, including surveys, monitoring, establishing flagship biodiversity sites, continuing to control invasive flora and fauna, building resilience and improving awareness and engagement. He noted the Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 – 2030 has been developed in line with the EU, National, County Development Plan and the Offaly Climate Action Plan.

Cllr. O. Bryant joined with the members in thanking Mr. R. Whelan for his presentation and his work as Biodiversity Officer. He acknowledged the role farmers and the community, in particular Tidy Towns are playing in improving biodiversity in the county.

On the proposal of Cllr. O. Bryant, seconded by Cllr. S O'Brien, the members resolved to adopt the Offaly Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 - 2030.

Discussion arose regarding the role of the National Park and Wildlife Services and other agencies in biodiversity.

Ms. A. Delaney, C.E., acknowledged Mr. R Whelan's work and she welcomed the plan as the first biodiversity plan for Offaly. She also acknowledged Ms. A. Pedlow and the funding received from the Heritage Council.

8. Monthly Management Report

Ms. A. Delaney brought the Members attention to the December monthly management report. She welcomed the launch by Peter Burke, Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Employment of a new EnergyCloud project in Offaly with Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Offaly County Council. This program will enable 300 families in the Midlands to receive free tanks of hot water from surplus renewable energy via the installation of an EnergyCloud enabled smart device. The device uses surplus renewable energy, which would otherwise be wasted to heat immersion tanks.

She highlighted the issue of litter and illegal dumping, noting that there were 17 litter picks carried out by local voluntary groups, facilitated by Offaly County Council in the month of December 2024. A total of 1,140kg of litter was collected and processed. She expressed her support to continue to promote awareness on social media and she thanked the public for all their hard work and co-operation in managing litter in their area.

She welcomed the signing of contracts for the the construction of the Birr North Distributor Road and the opening of the R400 Peat Pilot project providing approximately 1.8km of fully reconstructed

Regional Road Network across Peatlands. Phase 2 of the Peat Pilot will commence onsite in early Q3 of 2025 subject to Department of Transport approvals.

She informed the members that 37 units were completed under the Retrofit Programme in 2024 at an overall average cost of €34,000 per property. She noted the Draft Joint Portarlington Local Area Plan and accompanying documents were on public display throughout December with submissions accepted online or to the offices of Offaly or Laois County Councils.

She advised that Local Enterprise Office continue to promote digitisation to encourage businesses to transform a business their internal processes and provide new opportunities to improve competitiveness, customer service provision, and efficiency.

She welcomed the Community Recognition Fund of €300,542 launched in December and she advised that proposals from the Portarlington, Clara and Daingean will be prioritised. She noted that Arts and Sports grants applications are available to assist in the development and promotion of the arts and sports across the county.

She acknowledged the success of the Civic Reception held by Offaly County Council, supported by the Offaly Sports Partnership honouring the outstanding sporting achievements of Offaly athletes at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris.

She advised the members of the changes in Corporate Services staff and the members acknowledged the work of Ms. L. Giles, Mr. G. Bruton and Ms. L. Carbery.

9. Corporate Policy Group Report

Cllr. A. Hennessy Kennedy informed the Members that at the Corporate Policy Group meeting the council meeting agenda was discussed. She advised that under the Education Programme one application has been approved by CPG in accordance with the Offaly County Council Protocols for Elected Members applying for funding towards educational programme fees. The protocol allows 3 applications to be approved per year and full Council approval is required. A second application has been received from another elected member and will be discussed at the February CPG meeting.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. P. Ormond, the members approved the application in accordance with the Offaly County Council Protocols for Elected Members applying for funding towards educational programme fees.

She noted the CPG agreed that a delegation will travel to New York in March 2025 and the delegation will arrange meetings with senior officials from IDA, Tourism Ireland, and Enterprise Ireland in New York to discuss projects which build on Offaly's connection with America.

On the proposal of Cllr. P. Ormond, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy, the members approved the delegation to travel to New York in March 2025.

She advised the members that it is proposed to hold a workshop with Uisce Éireann on the morning of the February Council meeting from 12 noon -1.30pm. This is an annual in person update provided by Uisce Éireann to elected members and she strongly encouraged members to attend. Uisce Éireann will arrange an online update for members. The members raised concerns regarding previous issues with

Uisce Eireann in Tullamore and Edenderry and requested an email be provided to communicate their concerns with Uisce Eireann prior to the workshop.

She informed the members that following a recent request for Bord na Móna to attend a Council meeting, Bord na Móna have extended an invitation for Members to visit their Mount Lucas site. The CPG agreed to reissue the invite to Bord na Móna to attend the February or March Council meeting. This invitation was proposed by Cllr. J. Leahy and seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey.

The members expressed their disappointment that again Bord na Móna are not engaging with the elected members on important issues such as decarbonisation and RESS funding and they stressed the importance of Bord na Móna attending a council meeting to discuss their concerns.

She advised the members that an application has been received from Offaly Comhairle na nÓg to observe a Council meeting and this has been accepted. The CPG acknowledged the excellent work conducted by the staff during the recent severe cold weather alert and the updates and communication that was circulated in relation to the severe weather warnings. The CPG thanked the community groups for their work throughout the County in relation to the National Spring Week Litter Clean event and their work throughout the year.

10. Notices of Motion

Cllr. C. Murray proposed that all Offaly, Birr and Edenderry council buildings fly the Palestinian Flag in solidarity with the Palestinian people for the month of February, the importance of expressing our solidarity with the tens of thousands who have died and the hundreds of thousands that have been injured, orphaned, displaced and starved is more important than ever.

This was seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy and supported by the Offaly County Council members.

Ms. A. Dillon advised that there is only a protocol for flying the National Flag. She agreed that a protocol for flying flags on Offaly County council buildings is needed and will be brought to the members for their consideration.

Cllr. C. Murray thanked the members for their cross-party support for this motion.

Cllr. A. Masterson

"That Offaly County Council resolves to commence a 'Purchase a Salt Bin Programme' in line with those already operating in other counties"

Following discussion, the members agreed to refer this proposal to the Climate Action, Environment and Transport Strategic Policy Committee for their consideration and to prepare a report for the Winter Maintenance Programme.

Ms. A. Delaney, C.E. agreed to engage with the local authorities in the counties that use this system and to refer to the SPC policy structure. She noted there would be Budget and safety implications to consider.

11. Comhdhálacha / Conferences

The members noted the training and conferences as approved at CPG.

12. Comhfhreagras / Correspondence

The members noted the correspondence issued with the agenda. Cllrs. F. McDonnell and N. Cribbin expressed their disappointment on the response from Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, that there is no funding to take in charge Clonmullen Hall, Edenderry. Cllr. N. Cribbin highlighted the funding announced in 2024 for indoor improvements to housing schemes.

13. Any Other Business

No other business.

MINUTES CONFIRMED

CATHAOIRLEACH

17 February 2025

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