



Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Offaly County Council

Held on 17 February 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.; Ms. L. Mitchell A/Senior Planner; Ms. O. Martin, Head of Local Enterprise Office; Ms. L. Molloy, A/Senior Enterprise Development Officer; Ms. A. Galvin, A/S.E.O. Meetings Administrator; Ms. AM. Kelly, Administrative Officer; Ms. E. Sutton, C.O.

1. Confirmation of Minutes

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. P. Ormond, the members resolved to adopt Minutes of the ordinary meeting of Offaly County Council held on Monday 20 January 2025.

2. Minutes for Noting

The Members noted the minutes of the Meetings below:

- Minutes of Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on 9th December 2024.

3. Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. H. Egan, the Members resolved to adopt Section 183, Local Government Act 2001, to dispose of lands at 14 Ferbane Business & Technology Park to Mr Brian Kenny Ballyvora, Ferbane for €55,000, Subject to planning permission and conditions of sale.

4. Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001

On the proposal of Cllr. L. Quinn, seconded by Cllr. F. McDonnell, the Members resolved to adopt Section 183, Local Government Act 2001, to dispose of land at Fortyacres, Killaderry, Daingean. Plot 4.11 Acres (1.66Ha) to Daingean GAA Club for €30,000.00 per Acre - €123,300.00 in Total.

5. Reduction of Speed Limit R400

Mr. B. Lennon, A/DOS proposed to members a Special Speed Limit that is to be introduced on the R400, northwest of Rhode, for a distance of approx. 6km, from the Coolville roundabout north of Rhode village to the Westmeath County boundary at the Mongagh River. The speed limit will be made in accordance with Section 9 of the Road Traffic Act 2004.

Discussion arose during which the elected members expressed concerns regarding the reduction of the speed limit on the R400. The members requested that the matter to be raised at the next Edenderry MD meeting to discuss the matter further.

Following discussion, Mr. B. Lennon agreed to bring this item back to the next Edenderry MD meeting.

6. Arts Acts Grants 2025

Ms. A. Dillon updated the members on the Arts Act Grant 2025. She informed the members that the scheme offers assistance to support a range of arts activities within the community and following a call for applications the Arts office received 21 applications with total allocation of €20,000.

On the proposal of Cllr D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr O. Bryant the members resolved to adopt the recommended awards:

	Organisation/Artist	Proposal	MD	Recommended
1	Anam Beo	Visual Art Community Project	Whole County	1347
2	Avista - Ashbrook	Visual Art Project	Birr	800
3	Banagher Brontë Group	Literature / Music Project	Birr	800
4	Birr Stage Guild	Dance Project	Birr	1800
5	Clara Musical Society	Music	Tullamore	500

6	Coláiste Naomh Cormac	Musical Performance	Birr	1,600
7	Croghan Local Development Group	Visual Art Workshops	Edenderry	800
8	Eden Chorale	Choral Music	Edenderry	1,500
9	Irish Midlands Youth Orchestra	Music	Whole County	1,600
10	Irish Wheelchair Association	Music Programme	Whole County	850
11	Midland Strings	Music Support	Whole County	1,218
12	Muiriosa Foundation Offaly Day	Music Project	Whole County	850
13	OLDC Offaly Pride Committee	Visual Art	Whole County	400
14	Rahan Drama Group	Drama	Tullamore	1400
15	St Brendan's PS Birr	Dance	Birr	875
16	St Mary's Youth & Community Centre	Drama	Tullamore	800
17	The Growery	Visual Art	Birr	700
18	Offaly Drama Project	Theatre performance as part of Birr Vintage Festival	Birr	NE
19	Red Embers	Dance	Whole County	360
20	Tullamore Musical Society	Musical Performance	Tullamore	1,800
21	TISOS	Organ Festival	Tullamore	NE
			Total	20,000

7. LEO Offaly Enterprise Supports

Ms. O. Martin Head of Local Enterprise Office brought the members attention to the work of the Local Enterprise Office in Offaly during her introduction she acknowledged her LEO team which included Lisa Molloy, A/Senior Enterprise Development Officer, Colm Kelly, Senior Economic Development Officer and Olive Farrelly, Tourism Officer.

Ms. L. Molloy provided the members with a presentation, giving an overview of the priorities for 2025 and noting the operational needs and future focus areas. She highlighted performance indicators, indicating 55 net jobs created in 2024 in Offaly by LEO Offaly Client Companies. She advised members of successful events including Business Breakfasts, Lunch & Learn, International Women's Day workshop, Evening networking event on sustainability, Student Enterprise programmes.

Cllr. J. Leahy joined with the members in thanking Ms. O. Martin, Ms. L. Molloy and LEO team for their presentation. He encouraged businesses in Offaly to reach out to the LEO Office because

there are supports available. Cllr. A. Hennessy Kennedy encouraged all councillors to share information and to engage with businesses that are setting up or facing challenges.

Ms. A. Delaney acknowledged and thanked the Local Enterprise Office for promoting awareness of the supports available for startups. She highlighted the importance of business monitoring, digital initiatives, and Lean For Business, noting that there are numerous supports available while maintaining confidentiality. Additionally, she mentioned a range of events and commended the valuable work being done by the Local Enterprise Office.

8. Severe Weather Response Plan

Mr. B. Lennon A/DOS provided the members with a presentation, outlining the severe weather response under pinned by Offaly County Councils Safety Statement and Safety Management system, Offaly County Councils Severe Weather Plan and Offaly County Winter Services Plan 2024-2025. He noted the following severe weather response stats: Winter Service Plan – Crews deployed 21 of 42 nights already in 2025. Storm Éowyn – 23 January – removed 160 trees across the County/Assisted ESB crews with traffic management and a number of dangerous trees were removed post the event across all MDs.

He outlined the process of mobilisation of Severe Weather Assessment Team (SWAT) whose function is to formulate the approach, identify risks, engage colleagues in other State Agencies and assist and align approaches.

He summarised preparedness steps implemented across all Departments with an emphasis on Housing, Winter Services, MD crews, IT and Machinery Yard. Where the need arises for example during Storm Éowyn the SWAT team also included reps from An Garda Síochána, ESB, Uisce Éireann, HSE and Social Protection.

Mr. B. Lennon advised that during Storm Éowyn, the situation was manageable due to preparedness and effective communication, which allowed crews to prioritise both low and high-risk locations. He drew the members' attention to photographs taken by crews of fallen trees on powerlines and damage done to the roof of Tullamore Leisure Centre. He highlighted the effects of Storm Éowyn on Offaly's public lighting infrastructure noting that the majority of faults required specialist skills and third-party assistance to repair.

Ms. A. Dillon DOS, outlined the coordination that took place both before and after Storm Éowyn weather event. She acknowledged the members in the Local Coordination Group, which included the work of OCC, Gardaí, HSE, ESB, Uisce Éireann, Department of Social Protection, Municipal Districts, Health & Safety, and all OCC Services & Communications. She informed the members of the work undertaken post the severe weather event. She outlined the stand down of the Local Coordination group and emergency number and debrief meeting held. In total 13 Community Hubs had been available in Offaly in the days following the storm. These provided tea and coffee, charging facilities and shower facilities across arrange of Community halls, Leisure Centres, Primary Care Centres and Libraries. A local debrief meeting of the expanded Offaly Local Coordination Group took place on Thursday, February 06, focusing on critical assessments and sharing learnings for improvements in future events.

All members expressed their gratitude to Ms. A. Dillon and Mr. B. Lennon for their presentation and acknowledged the challenging times faced by staff over the past six weeks. Compliments were given to all staff on the ground, particularly for their efforts. The members acknowledged the exceptional communication facilitated by Ms. AM. Kelly, noting her contributions on social media.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Cllr. J. Leahy and seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey to write to the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage to seek funding to conduct a roadside tree survey for Offaly to assess the health condition of trees and the proximity to power lines.

The members requested to know the costs associated with the losses from the Severe Weather event. In response to the members Ms. F. Millane, D.O.F advised that a submission has been made, she indicated that the costs are estimated to be in the region of €500,000. She noted that funding for some of the losses could potentially come from insurance, but the Department has also requested details of costs and have indicated that there will be funding available.

Ms. A. Delaney acknowledged the efforts made by all agencies and community groups to ensure that vulnerable people were cared for. She noted that communications were effective and expressed hope that the Government and insurance would provide some funding to cover losses.

Cllr. F. McDonnell thanked council staff and acknowledged their work during the recent storm, he raised concerns regards public lighting outages being a recurring and ongoing issue in Edenderry.

In response, Mr. B. Lennon highlighted that the existing public lighting stock is fit for purpose and that the maintenance contractor is carrying out repairs as they arise. He noted that while the contractor is performing their duties there have been delays in repairs due to severe weather conditions, resulting in a loss of 15 to 16 working days since January 1st 2025.

Following discussion from other members about concerns they have regards public lighting it was agreed that this item be brought to the agenda at the Edenderry Municipal District meetings.

9. Monthly Management Report

Ms. A. Delaney brought the Members attention to the January monthly management report. She welcomed the launch of the new publication celebrating 125 Years of Local Government in Offaly, paying tribute to all those who have served the people of Offaly.

She welcomed the positive increase to the roads allocation for 2025 and advised Roads Programme will be brought to the members at the March meeting for formal adoption.

She noted new default speed limits in each of our Municipal District Offices who are working towards the final stages of the implementation of our new Default Speed Limits. The entirety of our Rural Road network will have a new speed limit of 60km/hr. as compared to the previous speed limit of 80km/hr effective on the 07 February 2025.

She noted an overview of the housing update which is included in the report. She highlighted the recent regeneration community engagement with the Town Centre First initiative workshops that were held in Kilmalogue and Daingean. These workshops provided an

opportunity for local residents and stakeholders to discuss the strengths, challenges, and opportunities within their towns, helping to shape future Town Centre First plans.

She welcomed the student enterprise programme initiative that teaches second level students what it's really like to be an entrepreneur and set up and run their own business over the course of the academic year. In 2024/2025 there are over 10 schools from all over County Offaly participating. She advised the final will be held on 04 March 2025 in the Tullamore Court Hotel.

She brought the members attention to the community recognition fund, advising that the LCDC Evaluation committee have assessed applications, and their recommendations were presented for agreement to the LCDC meeting on 13 February 2025. The Department of Rural and Community Development is due to announce the approved projects in May 2025.

10. 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 new application was received from Cllr. A. Masterson and 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. She noted only one more application can be approved this year.

On the proposal of Cllr. F. McDonnell, seconded by Cllr. O. Bryant, the members approved the application in accordance with the Offaly County Council Protocols for Elected Members applying for funding towards educational programme fees.

11. Notices of Motion

Cllr. S. Maher

Cllr. S. Maher proposed Offaly County Council writes to the Government to implement the necessary measures impelling the highly profitable insurance sector, pass on premium reductions to the hard-pressed SME and Transport sector. This was seconded by Cllr. C. Murray.

Cllr. C. Murray

Cllr. C. Murray proposed the following motion; 'the Council condemns corporations that profit from protracted armed conflicts and systematic human rights violations, particularly in relation to Israel's assault on Gaza, escalating settler violence in the West Bank, Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine, and other global conflicts. In response, the Council resolves to adopt a rights-based Ethical Procurement Policy (EPP) that adheres to international standards, ensuring human rights are respected throughout the procurement process. The policy encourages companies to meet their obligations to avoid contributing to human rights abuses and to mitigate any negative impacts linked to their operations'.

In the course of the discussion on the motion the Chief Executive and Director of Finance clarified that public procurement is an executive function and Offaly County Council has an

obligation to comply with statutory procurement legislation. In accordance with the Public Sector Directive 2014/24/EU on Public Procurement, National Guidelines from the OGP and Departmental Circulars, Offaly County Council fulfils its obligations in relation to the notice of motion, by way of the inclusion of Article 57 declarations and through the use to the European Single Procurement Document (ESPD) for all EU threshold tenders.

Following discussion among the members, the motion was withdrawn by Cllr. C. Murray and it was agreed that the members would refer the matter to the of Department of Public Expenditure to seek clarity regarding the national procurement process considering current international conflict.

On the proposal of Cllr. C. Murray, seconded by Cllr. S. Maher, the members agreed to write to the Department to seek clarity.

12. Comhdhálacha / Conferences

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

13. Comhfhreagras / Correspondence

The Members noted the correspondence issued with the agenda from Clare County Council. The Members expressed support for Clare County Council's resolution.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. S. O'Brien, the members agreed to write to the Department requesting that the Government amend the Housing Aid for Older People's grant to include new fossil fuel boilers, including oil and gas.

Members noted and agreed with Clare County Councils resolution to oppose the recent decision by the GAA, whereby children under the age of sixteen will be charged a fee to gain admittance to GAA matches.

14. Any Other Business

Cllr. A. Hennessy Kennedy informed the members that the next Offaly County Council meeting is scheduled for 24 March 2025.

MINUTES CONFIRMED

CATHAOIRLEACH

RUNAÍ

24 March 2025

