

Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Offaly County Council

Held on 20 May 2024 at 2.00pm, in St. Brigid's Community Centre, Cloneyhurke, Co. Offaly

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

Present

Cllr. Eddie Fitzpatrick, Cathaoirleach

Cllr. J. Carroll	Cllr. M. Hackett
Cllr. C. Claffey	Cllr. D. Harvey
Cllr. J. Clendennen	Cllr. J. Leahy
Cllr. N. Cribbin	Cllr. T. McCormack
Cllr. E. Dooley	Cllr. R. McDermott
Cllr. S. Feehan Smollen	Cllr. S. O'Brien
Cllr. N. Feighery	Cllr. P. Ormond
Cllr. J. Foley	Cllr. D. Owens

Apologies

Cllrs. F. Moran, L. Quinn

Officials in Attendance

Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive; Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S.; Ms. A. Dillon, D.O.S.; Mr. T. Mawe, A/H.O.F.; Ms. J. Ryan, A/D.O.S.; Ms. E. McGinn, C.L.; Mr. B. Pey, A.O.; Ms. L. Giles, A/S.E.O.; Mr. G. Bruton, Meetings Administrator, Ms. A.M. Kelly, S.O.; Ms. L. Carbery, C.O.

Mr. Seamus Flanagan, Secretary St. Brigid's Community Centre welcomed Offaly County Council to the centre and he thanked them for their ongoing relationship, funding and support, in particular the Pride of Place competition. He suggested training would be beneficial for the Cloneyhurke community to assist them in their Pobal Just Transition application process.

Suspension of Standing Orders

On the proposal of Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, seconded by Cllr D. Harvey, the members resolved to suspend Standing Orders to hold five minutes of silence to commemorate the passing of former Councillor John Flanagan, who was a long standing member of the Tullamore Town Council and Offaly County Council. Cllr. D. Harvey remembered him as his mentor and as one of the founders of Tullamore, through his business, providing employment and in the community.

Councillor Tony McCormack, described Mr Flanagan as a fantastic man, who left an indelible mark on Tullamore that will endure for generations to come. His journey began with a simple vision to build

spaces where people could not only live and thrive, but to grow businesses which could flourish. He looked after his workers and gave huge time to the community. Two of his most important projects were the rebuilding of the church back in the 80s and the Court Hotel, which put Tullamore on the map.

Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive joined with the members in expressing her sympathies to Mr. Flanagan's family.

1. Confirmation of Minutes

- On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll, the members resolved to adopt the Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of Offaly County Council held on Monday 15 April 2024.
- On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the members resolved to adopt the Minutes of the Special meeting of Offaly County Council held on Wednesday 1 May 2024.

2. Minutes for Noting

The members noted the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Policy Group held on Monday 11 March 2024.

3. Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001

Ms. J. Ryan, A/D.O.S. brought the members attention to Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001, in relation to proposed sale of a rural cottage at Ballintemple, Cloughjordan. She advised that the house was erected by Offaly County Council on the Ryan's family land and Mr. and Mrs. Noel and Sarah Ryan became tenants in October 1994. Mrs. Sarah Ryan (predeceased by her husband Noel), passed away in 2020. The house has been vacant since her death. There is no social housing needs in this rural area and following the advertisement of the property by local Auctioneers it is now proposed to dispose of the property (comprising of 0.2057 Hectares (0.51 Acres)) to the highest bidder, Mr. William Webster, Woodville, Ballymackey, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary for a consideration of €169,000.

Cllr. P. Ormond, queried if there is no social demand in this area, can the proceeds be used to purchase another property in Moneygall, where there are social needs.

Cllr. J. Clendennen stressed the need to ensure that all avenues are exhausted to ensure there is no local housing needs regarding sale of council houses in rural areas.

Ms. J. Ryan assured the members that there are no social needs in this area. Ms. A. Delaney informed the members that proceeds from sale of houses goes back into the capital programme.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. E. Dooley, the members resolved to adopt Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001, Offaly County Council to sell a rural cottage (comprising of 0.2057 Hectares (0.51 Acres) in Ballintemple, Cloughjordan to Mr. William Webster, Woodville, Ballymackey, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary in the sum of €169,000.

4. Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended, Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as Amended

On the proposal of Cllr. D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery, the members resolved to adopt the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended, Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as Amended for Proposed Housing Development at Sycamore Drive, Ballycumber, Co. Offaly.

5. Creating Spaces – Offaly Library Development Plan 2024 – 2029 (Draft)

Ms. A. Dillon advised the members that, in accordance with Local Government Act 2001, Offaly Libraries' Development Plan 2024 – 2028 sets out priorities for the development of library services in the county over the next five years. She thanked the members for their approval in the annual budget of €3.5m for the provision of a wide range of Library services and in particular for the increase in the allocation for the book fund. She welcomed the recently announced funding of €4.1m for Edenderry Library & Arts Centre and she acknowledged the work by Ms. E. McGinn, the library and regeneration team and design partners, Sean Harrington Architects.

Cllr. J. Clendennen, Chair of the Community, Cultural and Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee, acknowledged Ms. E. McGinn and the Library Services team for their engagement with the SPC members over the last few years. He welcomed the new plan, Creating Spaces, that will build on the achievements in recent years. He highlighted the extensive engagement with stakeholders and the wide range of new products that the library now provide, broadening the appeal to more people.

Ms. E. McGinn, County Librarian provided the members with an overview of Creating Spaces, Offaly Libraries' Development Plan 2024 – 2028. The plan's name was derived from consultation with the public and focus groups, it builds on the significant achievements of the previous library development plan and complements and aligns with significant local and national policy and the Local Government Act. The vision for the plan is to provide welcoming and accessible spaces and services to support the people of Offaly in their pursuit of knowledge, culture, skills and recreation.

She provided the members with a review of the previous plan Creating Collaborative Communities and the significant achievements that were achieved including library refurbishments, roll out of the open library and the expansion of e-Resources.

She looked forward to the new Edenderry Library and Arts and she highlighted the increase in usage trends. The new plan will facilitate new ways of marketing and communications and more events. She highlighted the success of Comic Con, Steam & Vex, the Parent Support Programme and Sensory Offaly. She noted the Library services commitment to technology, to pursuing grants/funding streams for new connectivity such as 3d printers and VR headsets. On-going work will continue to deliver national programmes, to expand programmes, build on provision to schools and to promote the Library as a sustainable community resource.

The members thanked Ms. E. McGinn and the Library staff for their commitment and dedication. They acknowledged the changes and modernisation that have been implemented to ensure the Library remains an integral part of the community and provide excellent resources that may not be available to some of the public without the Library Services. Cllr. N. Cribbin welcomed the new Library in

Edenderry and he thanked all those involved for bringing this project to fruition. Cllr. J Carroll stressed the importance of promoting the Irish language.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Clendennen, seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery, the members resolved to adopt the Creating Space – Offaly Library Development Plan 2024 – 2029.

Ms. E. McGinn thanked the members for their support and she advised they will continue to provide Irish language supports and the library team have a great desire to learn Irish and to continue to run Seachtain na Gaeilge and Gael Scoillenna. She advised that more attention to Irish language books has been given and she gave her commitment to expand other areas of our Irish language and commitment to our heritage. She acknowledged the success of Library Services with a jump of 15.8% in active membership of population in Offaly.

Ms. A. Delaney, acknowledged the robust programme of products, supports and events that are provided by the Library Services and she thanked the members for their support. She welcomed the progress with Edenderry Library and Arts Centre and she advised that plans are in progress for an Irish Language Officer. The Creating Spaces Offaly Libraries Development Plan 2024 – 2028 will also be available as gaeilge.

6. Offaly Age Friendly Strategy 2024 – 2029 (Draft)

Ms. A. Dillon brought the members attention to the Offaly Age Friendly Strategy 2024 -2029 and it's vision to make Offaly a great place to grow old. She advised members that the plan aligns with the National Age Friendly Programme. She advised Ms. L. Giles is Chair of the Age Friendly Interdepartmental team. Ms. A. Dillon thanked the Age Friendly Alliance for their collaboration and support and acknowledged the work of all lead agencies. She highlighted that 21% of the population of Offaly are over 60 and there is a strong commitment nationally and locally for improvements to the physical and social environment to assist older people in remaining healthy and independent. She thanked the Age Friendly team for their commitment and hard work.

Cllr. J. Clendennen, Chair of Community, Cultural and Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee welcomed the plan and the Age Friendly programme. He stated the importance of engagement with the ageing population and statistics show life expectancy has increased over the years.

Mr. B. Pey Administrative Officer noted the importance of the Offaly Age Friendly Strategy 2024 – 2029 to capture all services that are needed for the older population. He outlined the background to the Age Friendly Programme, a shared service, led by Meath County Council and Ms. Catherine McGuigan, Chief Officer, Age Friendly Ireland. The Age Friendly structure involves a number of key agencies, such as HSE, an Gardai and the Age Friendly Alliance. He noted the importance that services and projects incorporate Age Friendly design from the outset, such as the new library in Edenderry.

The programme draws from eight World Health Organisation themes, including social participation, housing and transportation. He advised that in Offaly, Ms. Karen Conlon is the Age Friendly Officer and a technical advisor has also been assigned in housing to ensure all new or refurbishments are as accessible as possible. There is also a departmental team consisting of staff from each section and including an age friendly home co-ordinator. Michael Duignan is the Offaly Age Friendly Ambassador and a lot of groundwork was through the previous strategy.

He provided the members with samples of various actions incorporated into the plan, including identifying suitable locations for bus shelters, age friendly parking, encourage businesses to make their premises more accessible and digital skills training. A workshop held in Lough Boora provided great feedback. All actions are assessed and reported back to the Management team, Age Friendly Alliance and Age Friendly Ireland, for review and to ensure progress is made.

The members thanked Mr. B. Pey for his presentation and they acknowledged the importance of Age Friendly initiatives and strategies. They raised queries on the problem of gaining access to GP's, inaccessibility issues, lack of transport and housing adaptation grants for older people.

In response Mr. B. Pey advised that to promote the services and get the message out, newsletters are sent out every fortnight through the PPN, which involves 700 community groups. Local workshops and events are held regularly, he acknowledged it is difficult to reach everyone. He advised that the Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme shows potential to solve a lot of issues raised, as it aims to enable older people to continue living in their homes or in a home more suited to their needs, to live with a sense of independence and autonomy, to be a part of their community, and to avoid early or premature admission to long term residential care.

On proposal of Cllr. J. Clendennen, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the members resolved to adopt the Offaly Age Friendly Strategy 2024 – 2029.

7. Section 128C of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 Local Community Development Committee: Change of Membership

Ms. A. Dillon advised the members that Ms. Roisin Lennon has been nominated to replace Mr. Brendan O'Loughlin as representative under Non-Statutory Interests – Local and Community Sector on the LCDC, as Chief Executive Officer.

The members thanked Mr. Brendan O'Loughlin for his significant contribution and they welcomed Ms. Roisin Lennon, noting her experience will be very beneficial.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the members resolved to appoint Ms. Roisin Lennon under Non-Statutory Interests – Local and Community Sector, to the Local Community Development Committee.

8. Annual Report 2023

On the proposal of Cllr. T. McCormack, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin, the members resolved to adopt the Annual Report 2023.

9. Monthly Management Report

Ms. A. Delaney brought the members attention to the monthly management report. She welcomed the launch of the Banagher Marina & Environs Masterplan and the publication of the five year Climate Action Plan. She highlighted the start of the Rás Tailteann taking place in Tullamore in May. She congratulated the tourism team on their collaboration with the very popular show 'Tracks and Trails' last Summer to produce a wonderful episode showcasing Offaly's wonderful outdoors. This aired on RTÉ One in April and featured three very different trails; Croghan Hill, The Grand Canal Greenway and

Kinnitty Forest. Ms. A. Delaney presented the members with a 5 year publication outlining the achievements and events of the Council over their term of office.

10. Corporate Policy Group Report

Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick informed the members that at the Corporate Policy Group meeting the Council meeting agenda was discussed. He thanked management and Corporate Services for facilitating the meeting in the Community Centre and the Centre for providing the venue.

11. Notices of Motion

On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. T. McCormack, the members resolved that this Council calls on the relevant Government Departments to recognise the existing delivery of renewable energy projects on a county by county basis when setting Regional Renewable Electricity Targets. If the existing delivery of renewables is not recognised, I propose that this Council seeks to vary the County Development Plan as provided for in Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to allow for reasonable and proportionate development of other objectives including economic development, community development, amenity and biodiversity development etc. which are not subservient to the energy targets.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Clendennen, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin, the members resolved to write to IDA and Intel to promote the land banks and energy park available in Offaly, for potential commercial development.

12. Comhdhálacha / Conferences

The Conferences/Training were noted.

13. Comhfhreagras / Correspondence

The members noted the correspondence on the agenda.

14. Any Other Business

Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, Cathaoirleach acknowledged the Councillors not running for re-election, Cllr. D. Owens, Cllr. J. Carroll, Cllr. J. Foley and Cllr. E. Dooley. He praised their commitment, hard work and dedication to the Council over the past number of years and wished them well in their retirement and he noted their knowledge and experience will be a huge loss to the Council.

Cllr. Danny Owens was first elected to the County Council at the Local Elections held in June 2004 and served as Fianna Fáil Councillor for 2 decades in Tullamore Municipal District. He was a great hurler with Kilcormac / Killoughey and county level, when he was a member of the All-Ireland senior hurling winning teams which defeated Galway in 1981 and 1985. He captained the Offaly team and was inducted to the Offaly GAA Hall of Fame. He served as Cathaoirleach of Offaly County Council three times and was Cathaoirleach in 2011 when President Barack Obama and First Lady of the United

States, Michelle Obama visited Moneygall. He served on a number of committees, including Esker Arts Board, Irish Sports Council, Association of Irish Local Government, Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly and Housing Strategic Policy Committee.

Cllr. John Carroll was first elected to Offaly County Council in 2004 and has been a public representative for 40 years. He has been an independent councillor since 1997 and served as Cathaoirleach in 2020/2021 during the difficult period of the Covid-19 pandemic. He has worked for his local community and was involved in many local projects including Birr Leisure Centre, Birr Playground, Crinkle Sports and Recreation Centre. John was a founding member of Birr 20:20 Vision - whose ethos in the community will lead to greater social, economic and cultural benefits for Birr. His love of the Irish language is well known, including his promotion of Seachtain na Gaeilge, his role in securing a location for Gaelscoil na Laochra in Birr and Vex Robotics competition for Gael Scoilanna. He served on many committees including the Joint Policing Committee and the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee.

Cllr. John Foley , originally from Kerry, he was first elected to Edenderry Town Council in 1999 and successfully contested each local election since then. He was Cathaoirleach of Edenderry Municipal District when E-denderry digital project launched using smart technology to help manage a range of public services including parking, litter control, air quality. He was first elected to the County Council at the Local Elections held in June 2009 and he served on many committees including the North Offaly Development Fund Ltd and the Climate Action, Environment, Water & Transportation Strategic Policy Committee.

Cllr. Eamon Dooley has been a long serving member of Local Authority since 1993, filling a seat occupied by his late father Eddie who was a member for 43 years. He served as Cathaoirleach three times and on many committees, including Association of Irish Local Government, Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly and as Chair of the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee. Eamon played a vital role in securing recognition for Offaly under the Just Transition in the EU, with many trips to Brussels and he will be missed as a leader in the Fianna Fáil group.

The members thanked them for their service, passion and work over their years as Councillors.

The Chief Executive acknowledged the members on their commitment, the hard decisions that had been made over the last five years and noted that while they represented their areas, they also worked well at county level. She extended to them and their families best wishes in their retirement.

Cllr. John Carroll, thanked the staff saying it was a pleasure to work with them through all the changes and improvements and he thanked the media for their fair coverage over the years. It was a pleasure and an honour to be a public representative on the Council and it has often given great satisfaction seeing projects come to fruition.

Cllr. John Foley said it is not a decision he made lightly but it is the perfect opportunity to call time on his political career and pass the baton on to someone else. He entered politics because he wanted to serve his community and has always endeavoured to work for the people he represented. He wished former Cllr. Ken Smollen the best in overcoming his illness.

Cllr. Danny Owens said it was an interesting 20 years and he really appreciated the support he received especially in the last six years. He wished good luck to the current councillors and best wishes to his fellow retirees and he now looks forward to spend time travelling.

Cllr. Eamon Dooley thanked the Executive and staff for their tremendous assistance through the years. He stated that he is a proud Offaly and Ferbane man and he pushed many issues for the right reasons and urged the new council to keep fighting for their communities and for more jobs.

MINUTES CONFIRMED

CATHAOIRLEACH

RUNAÍ

15 July 2024

