

**Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Offaly County Council**  
Held on 20 February 2023 at 2pm, in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road,  
Tullamore and via Zoom

The Meetings Administrator carried out a roll call to confirm attendance

**Present**

Cllr. Frank Moran, Cathaoirleach

Cllr. John Carroll	Cllr. Declan Harvey
Cllr. Clare Claffey	Cllr. John Leahy
Cllr. John Clendennen	Cllr. Tony McCormack
Cllr. Noel Cribbin	Cllr. Robert McDermott
Cllr. Eamon Dooley	Cllr. Sean O'Brien
Cllr. Neil Feighery	Cllr. Peter Ormond
Cllr. Eddie Fitzpatrick	Cllr. Danny Owens
Cllr. John Foley	Cllr. Liam Quinn
Cllr. Mark Hackett	Cllr. Ken Smollen

**Apologies**

All Present

**Officials in Attendance**

Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive; Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S.; Ms. S. Kennedy, D.O.S.; Ms. A. Dillon, D.O.S.; Mr. M. Connolly, H.O.F.; Ms. M. Cleary, S.E.O; Mr. J. Cunningham, S.E.; Ms. L. Giles, A.O.; Mr. P. Scully, Chairman of Audit Committee; Mr. G. Bruton, Meetings Administrator; Mr. C. Kelly, S.O. and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O.

**Vote of Sympathy**

A Vote of Sympathy were unanimously extended to the following:

Mr. Paul McDonald and Family, Annaghmore, Blueball, on the death of their father James McDonald.

The Chief Executive, on her own behalf and on behalf of the staff of Offaly County Council, joined with the members in this vote of sympathy.

**1. Confirmation of Minutes**

On the proposal of Cllr. N. Cribbin, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll, the members resolved to adopt the Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of Offaly County Council held on Monday 16 January 2023;

On the proposal of Cllr. N. Cribbin, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll, the members resolved to adopt the Minutes of the Special meeting of Offaly County Council held on Monday 23 January 2023.

## 2. Minutes for Noting

The members noted the following minutes:

- Minutes of the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee meeting held on 6 December 2022;
- Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on 9 December 2022

## 3. Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Clendennen, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy, the members resolved to adopt Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 to dispose of 0.4401 hectares at Ferbane Business and Technology Park in the amount of €57,213 and 0.47 hectares, in the amount of €61,100 to Euram Air Leases (IRE) Ltd.

## 4. Audit Committee Annual Report 2022

Mr. M. Connolly thanked the Chairman Mr. Peter Scully and the Audit Committee for their guidance through the current challenges faced by the Council and for their constructive and positive engagement.

Mr. P. Scully advised the members that the Committee met on 4 occasions in 2022. As per legislative requirements the Audit Committee Meetings in 2022 were attended by the Chief Executive, Head of Finance, Directors of Service, Local Government Auditor, Procurement Officer and SEO Corporate Services. They considered and received briefings on Offaly County Council's Annual Financial Statement 2021, Offaly County Council's Annual Report 2021, Local Government Audit Service Statutory Auditor's Reports, quarterly finance reports and quarterly updates on the Internal Audit Plan progression.

He advised that the Audit Committee were further briefed on follow up reports from the Audit Recommendation Tracking System. Also, Internal Audit staff prepared the Internal Audit Charter 2022, Internal Audit Risk register, Internal Audit Draft Strategic Plan, Internal Audit Plan for 2022/2023 and Audit Committee Work Plan 2022/23 which were approved by the Audit Committee as part of their duties throughout the year.

He advised the members on the Internal Audit Reports / Reviews in 2022 as listed below:

- GDPR Review
- SICAP 2021 Review
- Town and Village Renewal Scheme
- Motor Tax stock Review
- Disability Access Grants review
- Development Contributions Review
- Follow up audits ( Burial Grounds, Cash audit & Machinery Yard )
- Public Spending Code Quality Assurance Report 2021

- Public Spending Code Quality Assurance In-depth Check Reports:
  - Revenue Programme – Roads - Local Improvement Scheme
  - Capital Project – Bog Road Portarlington Turn Key Housing

He welcomed the progress made in recent years in reducing the revenue deficit and he acknowledged the achievement in 2022 of continuing the annual reduction of the deficit in spite of the macroeconomic challenges the Council currently faces, and he urged continuation of this process to its conclusion. He expressed concern on the long term financing of Esker Arts Centre and future running cost to Offaly County Council. He advised the members that a review of Development Contributions flagged some weaknesses and relevant staff will be invited to their June meeting for an update.

Mr. P. Scully thanked the Chief Executive and Cathaoirleach for their support. He thanked Mr Mark Connolly Head of Finance, Mr Evan Fennell SEO, Mr Barry Loughlin Internal Auditor and Mr Colm Kelly Staff Officer for their invaluable support to the Audit Committee and he acknowledged the keen interest, commitment and valuable contributions of all members of the Committee. He commended their adaptability to virtual platforms throughout the year and he looked forward to continuing to fulfil their work programme in 2023.

Cllr. F. Moran, Cathaoirleach acknowledged the inroads that have been made in the last number of years to reducing the deficit and he noted the huge work in reducing housing rent arrears.

Cllr. E. Dooley queried if the final cert for planning could be withheld to ensure the payment of Development Contributions.

In response, Ms. S. Kennedy advised that the Building Control Certificate is operated as per legislation and cannot be withheld.

Mr. M. Connolly advised that a full review of the collection process is underway within the Planning and Finance Departments and that there is continuous engagement with developers on payment plans and agreements.

Ms. A. Delaney acknowledged the work of staff on the Development Contributions and she advised that further resources may be considered in this area.

On the proposal of Cllr. N. Feighery, seconded by Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick the members resolved to adopt the Audit Committee Annual Report 2022.

On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the members resolved to adopt the Audit Committee Report to Council on the 2021 Annual Financial Statement and Local Government Auditor's Statutory Report.

On the proposal of Cllr. M. Hackett, seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery, the members resolved to adopt the Audit Committee Charter 2023.

On the proposal of Cllr. N. Cribbin, seconded by Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, the members resolved to adopt the Audit Committee Work Plan 2023.

## 5. Arts Act Grant 2023

Ms. S. Kennedy updated the members on the Arts Act Grant 2023. She informed the members that the scheme offers assistance to support a range of arts activities within the community. She highlighted the importance of Arts in the community. She advised that 21 applications were assessed in accordance with the criteria and €20k grants funding is available for a wide variety of projects in each Municipal District. She noted the low uptake in Edenderry and she advised that there is on-going engagement with Creative Edenderry to promote grants in this area.

On the proposal of Cllr. P. Ormond seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the members resolved to adopt the Arts Act Grants 2022 as below:

	<b>Organisation/Artist</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>MD</b>	<b>Recommended</b>
1	Avista - Ashbrook	Visual Art Project	Birr	1400
2	Ballycommon Ballinagar Geashill Town Twinning	Visual Art Project	Tullamore	1400
3	Clara Musical Society	Musical Performance	Tullamore	400
4	Co Offaly Federation ICA	Art Workshops		670
5	Colaiste Naomh Cormac	Musical Performance	Birr	1400
6	Coolderry Central School	Art Workshops	Birr	1260
7	Crinkill N.S.	Art Workshops	Birr	1400
8	Dochas Offaly	Art Workshops	Tullamore	1050
9	EdenChorale	Choral Performances	Edenderry	1092
10	High Street Belmont Active Retirement Group:	Visual Art Project	Birr	640
11	Irish Midlands Youth Orchestra	Musical Performance	All	1400
12	Irish Wheelchair Association	Visual Art Project	Tullamore	560
13	Muiriosa Foundation	Music Project	Tullamore	970
14	Portarlington Concert Band	Music Project	Edenderry	770
15	Red Embers	Dance Project	Tullamore	300
16	St Brendan's PS Birr	Dance Project	Birr	788
17	Tullamore College	Visual Art Project	Tullamore	490
18	Tullamore ETNS	Music Project	Tullamore	700
19	Tullamore Gramophone Society	Music Concert	Tullamore	700
20	Tullamore Musical Society	Musical Performance	Tullamore	1600
21	Wordsmiths Tullamore	Poetry Project	Tullamore	1200

## 6. Part 4 of the Public Health Amendment Act 1890

Ms. S. Kennedy informed the members that it is a requirement for Esker Arts Centre to seek a licence from court, to provide a coffee shop and wine / bottle beer bar. Expressions of interest were advertised for providers to operate the coffee shop and bar for 1 hour before performances. A soft opening of Esker Arts is scheduled for April 2023.

The members agreed the Esker Arts building is magnificent and they look forward to the opening. They requested a presentation from the manager of Esker Arts and Ms. S. Kennedy agreed to invite the Centre manager to the meeting of Offaly County Council in March.

On the proposal of Cllr. D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. S. O'Brien, the members resolved to adopt Part 4 of the Public Health Amendment Act 1890 for the purpose of allowing the District Court duly issue "Music and Singing Licence to Theatres operating within Urban areas within the County of Offaly".

## 7. Housing Presentation

Ms. S. Kennedy brought the members attention to the housing presentation and she stressed the complexity of societal and building issues in providing social housing. She acknowledged the exemplary work of staff and the progress that has been achieved to date.

Ms. M. Cleary provided the members with an overview of social housing and capital programme as below:

### **Social Housing at 31 January 2023**

- Social Housing Support List 451
- Housing Assistance Payments 677
- Leasing RAS 246
- Mortgage To Rent 76

### **2022 Allocations Total 193**

- Local Authority homes 113
- Approved Housing Bodies 65
- Social Leasing homes 5
- Mortgage to Rent 10

She noted the difficulties in providing accommodation for homeless people and families and that there is on- going support provided by Offaly County, the HSE and the Simon Community. Further updates on homeless services were as follows:

- Family - 14
- Single People- 25
- Sophia acquisition Clonamore Hotel – 17 professionally supported beds – Refurbishment Works Ongoing
- A number of individuals are now being supported under the Housing First with Peter McVerry Trust
- Homeless HAP Place Finder

### **Traveller Accommodation**

- Progressing Traveller Accommodation Plan
- Traveller Tenancy Support Officer appointed
- Traveller Interagency Group Established & LTACC continues to meet

### **Estate Management**

- ASB Strategy adopted, September 2020, number of cases being progressed through the Courts
- JPC Estate Management Interagency Committee established and continues to meet

She provided the members with an update on the **National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027**, launched in January 2022 comprising of 6 Strands:

1. Accessible Housing & Communities
2. Interagency Collaboration & the Provision of Supports – now established
3. Affordability of Housing
4. Communication and Access to Information
5. Knowledge, Capacity and Expertise
6. Strategy Alignment
  - Disability Steering Group Meetings - Report to Housing SPC & CE
  - Offaly Disability Strategy Adopted - align with above strands
  - Interagency Sub Committee, reporting to the Housing Disability Steering Group, established

### **Domestic Violence Support**

- Meetings with ODVSS & TUSLA
- Progressing delivery of Safe Homes in line with the Tusla report

She advised that Tusla have provided funding for a support worker and 2 of 3 units will become operational in next few weeks.

She updated the members on Offaly County Council Social Housing comprising of:

### **Housing Stock 2,031**

#### **Acquisitions 2022 (Total 26 Houses)**

- OCC Acquisitions 18
- Part V 8

### **Pre- Letting / Voids**

- 2022 60 Vacant Properties Completed (45 Pre Lets & 15 Acquisitions)
- Voids on hand January 2023
  - 13 Construction Works in Progress
  - 4 Contract Documents Complete & Out To Tender
  - 17 Surveys & Contract Documents Preparation

She informed the members on the Housing Loans and grants and she noted the changes to come into effect from 1 March that have increased the threshold for single applicants to €75k, joint applicants to €85k and increased loan amount to €275k.

### **Local Authority Home Loans 2022:**

- Loan Applications 19
- Loans Approved in Principal 7
- Loans Paid Out To Date €2,059,000

### **Tenant Purchase Scheme 2022**

- Revised Scheme enacted where the Eligibility Criteria changed
- Minimum reckonable income reduced €15,000 to €12,500
- In receipt of social housing supports increased from 1 to 10 yrs.

### **2022 Housing Grants (Private) – 153 Grants Approved (€1,600,000)**

- Housing Adaptation Grants 57
- Mobility Aid Grants 13
- Housing Aid for the Older Person 83

### **2022 Disabled Persons Grants (Social Housing) (€615,915)**

- Council Properties Completed 24 (4 extensions & 20 Adaptions)

Ms. M. Cleary provided the members with the statistics for the **Housing for All Delivery Plan 2022-2026**, with a projected target of 463 units to be provided from various schemes including Part V, Construction, Turnkey., Acquisitions and Approved Housing Bodies. She advised the members that updates on construction will be provided to them at Municipal meetings and in the monthly reports.

### She updated the members on the **Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme (EERP)**

- EERP runs to 2030 and represents significant upscaling from ‘shallow’ to ‘deeper retrofit’ on what has been completed by Local Authorities to date
- Funding covers the installation of a Heat Pump and insulation, windows and doors only
- Insulation, windows and doors are only permitted if calculations show that the Heat Pump requires fabric upgrades
- Average Spend must be €33,333. LA will need to carefully consider a blend of houses to achieve the approved average spend
- 15 units progressing under this programme and they will inform the selection of further units in 2023

She thanked members for their support and welcomed queries.

Cllr. F. Moran, Cathaoirleach thanked Ms. M. Cleary for her presentation and he noted the housing staff are in the process of completing a rent review, which is a huge undertaking that requires significant resources. He welcomed the progress on the planned estates in Clara and Ballycumber. He queried the requirement for sign-off of two healthcare professionals for the social housing adaptation grants.

The members acknowledged the challenges faced in providing social housing. They welcomed the focus on the Tenant Purchase Scheme. They raised queries on the waiting time on the housing list, the lack of tenure security for HAP tenants, maintenance issue on estates, the Retrofit programme, the condition of private rented accommodation and the need for inspections.

They sought more information on the provision of home loans, better consultation with the HAP place finder and the estate agents and the possibility of Offaly County Council employing trades directly to carry out construction and repairs.

The members sought clarity on the discretionary fund increase, DPGs, installation of solar panels and the 4 stage process for construction. They expressed concerns on availability of turn-key houses, land, lack of contractors and affordable housing. They welcomed the Croí Connaithe scheme and queried if the stipulation to live in the property could be removed to allow developers to avail of scheme to increase houses available for sale and the possibility of developing modular housing.

Ms. S. Kennedy agreed that provision of housing nationally is difficult and best efforts are being made to meet demand. She highlighted the improvements that have been made since 2019, with a reduction in the social housing list, HAP tenants and increase in Offaly County Council housing stock. She advised the members that HAP is not a permanent housing option, but that many HAP tenants are satisfied with their arrangement. She stressed the need to continue with a multiplicity of options and that the housing list is reviewed in accordance with legislation and in line with the criteria for fair and reasonable considerations. She noted the importance for tenants to take responsibility for the upkeep of their estates with support from the council and she thanked the members for their huge support in this area. She advised the members that Retrofit funding is complex as each house is different and requires varying funding amounts to update. She agreed that the tenant purchase scheme had been operated on a strict limited basis previously and to engage further with SPC on this issue. She informed the members that housing targets are set in the Housing For All Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026 and that these targets are likely to be exceeded. She advised it would not be possible for the HAP finder to maintain list of rental properties, as the properties change on daily basis. She acknowledged the backlog in inspections due to Covid-19 in the last few years, but that inspections have begun again and are now progressing. She advised the members that Housing Loan applications are complex, eligibility and ability to repay have to be considered in each case. She noted the issue with getting trades to carry out works, but she also stressed the importance of private sector construction and trades for the economy.

Ms. S. Kennedy pointed out that the current 15 retrofit projects are just the start of the programme for this year and there has been a lot of progress over the past few years. She also noted that pre-let and void properties are often identified for deep retrofit to bring the properties up to at least C BER ratings and that new builds are completed to A BER rating standard. She informed the members that some old rural properties may be sold as they are too costly to retrofit and the funding they provide could be allocated to more retrofit projects.

Mr. J. Cunningham highlighted the increase in funding for DPGs to €2m in the last few years. He advised that solar panels are not currently funded under retrofit by Department and therefore Offaly County Council would not receive any grants for installing solar panels. He updated the members on the issue with single stage and 4 stage process for construction projects, noting that there is far more protection under the 4 stage process, as there is revision and approval at each stage. The single stage may suit larger Local Authorities.

Ms. M. Cleary updated the members on HAP notice of terminations, noting that each case is managed individually, on some occasions Offaly County Council seek to purchase the property and there is an embargo on notice of terminations at this time. She advised that the current housing programme is constantly reviewed, expressions of interest for land will be sought and inspections on Offaly County Council housing has re-commenced last week with a target of 330 inspections to be carried out.

Ms. S. Kennedy agreed that homelessness is a difficult issue and professional supports may be required as some issues are very complex. She agreed the tenant purchase scheme was restrictive but she



stressed the importance of retaining some units to maintain stock levels. She advised that Tullamore could be considered under the review of affordable houses thresholds review at national level. She advised that acquisitions are sought for specific needs and Local Authorities are prohibited from going into competition with private developers. She confirmed that reffit grants will not be provided for properties that cannot improve on their BER rating and all works have to be completed to the best standards.

Ms. S. Kennedy informed the members that a bundle of funding measures are utilised for voids and they are upgraded to a high standard in order to reduce future maintenance budgets. In regard to Traveller accommodation a number of different options are considered and the target under the current plan is for 56 units with 55 already delivered. Further progress on group housing options will be investigated.

Mr. J. Cunningham informed the members that expression of interest for land or properties in Birr will be sought. Approved Housing Bodies have expressed interest in looking for lands in Edenderry. He advised that the Mountlucas modular building scheme is at an early stage, but should provide good information on modular housing for housing options.

Ms. M. Cleary welcomed the significant changes in thresholds for housing loans and agreed to look at the medical requirement for social housing adaptation grants and she called on the members to encourage any potential landlords to get in touch with housing in relation to HAP and private rented accommodation.

## **8. Report of the Subgroup of the JPC on Safety of Women and Girls and all at risk of Gender Based Violence in Public Spaces**

Mr. M. Connolly informed the members that a sub committee was formed from JPC last year with aim to have dialogue with the public on gender-based violence in public spaces and the report has been circulated to all members.

Cllr. M. Hackett provided the members with a presentation on the subgroup report. Following the Aisling Murphy tragedy last year the subgroup was set up and Offaly Safe Day surveys were carried out in the three Municipal Districts with great support from an Garda Siochana, mounted units, coverage by media and Cllr. Clare Claffey in Birr, Cllr. N. Feighery in Tullamore and Offaly County Council staff. On the day 198 people were surveyed and an online survey was carried out for 6 weeks resulting in a further 136 responses. The survey showed that there is less concern about safety in public realms during the day and that more respondents do not feel safe at night. He welcomed the engagement of the stakeholders including Offaly Domestic Violence Support, Midland LGBT and Children and Young People's Services Committees. He noted the report has 13 recommendations, some outside the remit of Offaly County Council and 8 have been identified relevant to the council as outlined below:

- 1 That existing collaboration between stakeholders (lead CYPSC), on the development of healthy relationship workshops, is supported through to delivery in 2023 to schools and to reach young people not in formal education and to pursue funding for this.
- 2 That Offaly County Council design and planning teams consult with AGS at design stage to 'design out crime' both directly when planning public amenities and when working with developers. Recommendations contd.
- 3 That a Brochure / Leaflet on the above survey results, recommendations and actions is created and distributed within 6 months of finalisation of report, or by next Offaly Safe Day Celebration. Plain English format.

- 4 That the JPC and Offaly County Council continue with Offaly Safe Day in June of each year to promote safety from risk of violence based on perceived 'difference' in all public spaces. Stakeholders from minority groups and all community groups to be invited to participate in their local event in 3 main towns. This to be promoted as a celebration of public spaces in Offaly as safe spaces.
- 5 That Domestic Violence (DV) awareness training And Traveller Culture awareness training is provided for and undertaken by all OCC staff, all elected representatives and all members of the JPC as one step towards an increased general awareness. Lapel pin idea, signifying 'I am DV aware' is pursued.
- 6 That Offaly County Council pursues all options to support the Night-Time economy, Town Centre First policies and mixed planning projects in order to encourage footfall in our towns at night-time.
- 7 That the National Transport Authority and Dept of Transport accelerate rural mobility plans for County Offaly.
- 8 That all venues, festivals and events supported by Offaly County Council sign up to the Safe Gigs Charter ( in partnership with Cork Sexual Violence Centre)

Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, Chair of the JPC, thanked Cllr. M. Hackett for presenting the findings of survey and the subgroup, the Chief Executive and Management Team for supporting the recommendations and he thanked the stakeholders for their engagement.

Cllr. C. Claffey acknowledged the months of work by the subgroup and noted that everyone has interest in communities being safe for women and girls. She called on men to call out violence and she voiced her disappointment the resolution was not adopted at the last meeting, which delayed implementing the recommendations. She outlined some of the issues women in Birr had raised in relation to safety at night-time, including lack of lighting, damaged footpaths, blind spots, lack of CCTV and overgrown trees and bushes.

In response, Cllr. T. McCormack welcomed the presentation and he clarified that the resolution was not previously adopted as the members had sought detailed information on the recommendations before they could adopt the resolution.

The members noted planning and funding will be required to implement the recommendations.

On the proposal of Cllr. M. Hackett, seconded by Cllr. C. Claffey, the members resolved that Offaly County Councils accepts all of the recommendations of the Report of the Subgroup of the JPC on Safety of Women and Girls and all at risk of Gender Based Violence in Public Spaces and acts on those recommendations under their remit.

## **9. 2022 Annual Report of the Offaly Local Community Development Committee LCDC**

Ms. S. Kennedy acknowledged the remarkable work of the LCDC. She thanked the Chairmen Cllr. D. Harvey and Cllr. J. Leahy and Ms. A. Dillon, D.O.S. for her role as LCDC Officer and the current Officer Ms. L. Giles for their work. She highlighted the breadth and width of services covered by LCDC for Offaly in partner with other agencies and the community to provide small enterprise and community supports.

Ms. L. Giles acknowledged the co-operation and contribution of all parties in relation to the delivery of LCDC services and programmes which have led to many successful achievements. She provided the members with the highlights of the report:

## **LEADER RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

Offaly LCDC is the designated Local Action Group and has responsibility for the delivery of LEADER 2014-2020 and the Transitional Leader Programme 2021 -2022 in the County and the approval of all LEADER funding. The Implementing Partner is Offaly Local Development Company. During the period 2016-2022 in excess of €8.2 million LEADER funding was invested in innovative community and private enterprise projects throughout Offaly. In 2022, Offaly LCDC approved 61 LEADER Programme projects in excess of €1.7 million and LEADER claim expenditure in the sum of €1.36 million was paid to project promoters.

## **Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme 2018-2023 (SICAP)**

The LCDC is responsible for the monitoring, review, and annual planning of the nationally-funded SICAP Programme which is delivered by Offaly Local Development Company across the County with a budget of €900,768 for 2022. The SICAP Programme delivered a strong and focused programme engaging with local community groups and individuals from disadvantaged communities with key performance indicator targets exceeded. All programmes were delivered and key performance targets exceeded in addition to the delivery of Ukrainian response programmes.

## **Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2022-2027**

New Guidelines on the LECP process were issued by DRCD in November 2021 and an Advisory Steering Group, was established in May 2022. The new Plan involves a Framework LECP coupled with Implementation Plans. The Advisory Steering Group (ASG) assists in preparing, drafting, adopting, implementing and monitoring the LECP. A Terms of Reference was agreed by the members along with High level goals. Following completion of a Socio Economic Profile of Offaly, consultation on the LECP will be completed and the LECP will be adopted in 2023.

## **Offaly Community Response Forum (Ukraine)**

The Community Response Forum reconvened in March 2022 to coordinate the community-led response in the provision of assistance and support to Ukrainian refugees as they are accommodated around the country. The meetings provide useful sharing of information and invaluable co-ordination of communication of support services between agencies.

## **Community Enhancement Programme**

In 2022 there were two funds launched under the Community Enhancement Programme. Community Activities Fund (CAF) 2022. The CAF was approved by Offaly LCDC in early 2022. This was a once-off fund of €277,102 which was used to support not for profit community and voluntary groups in Offaly with non-pay running costs A total of €64,557 of the fund was ring fenced to help support community playgrounds for upgrades and maintenance costs. A total of 136 groups across the county were approved for funding by the LCDC.

## **Community Support Fund (CSF) 2022-23**

On 24th November 2022, the Department of Rural and Community Development announced a new fund called the Community Support Fund (CSF) which was managed by Offaly LCDC. Offaly received a fund totalling €298,782. The funding will be provided in 2023 to support groups such as Parish Halls, Community Centres, Local Development Associations, Social Clubs, Senior Citizen Groups, Men's and Women's Sheds.

## **Offaly Public Participation Network**

The PPN continues to focus on supporting the Community and Voluntary sector and provides a voice through the Network. There are currently 605 groups members of the PPN. The PPN also engaged in

national campaigns such as Make Way Day and Volunteer Week. Their county- wide activities included Social Inclusion Week, engagement in Positive Ageing Week and there was a high focus on social inclusion during 2022 due to the impact of Covid on communities. Preparation is now underway for a 3 year Strategic Plan 2023-2026.

### **Offaly Healthy Ireland**

In November, the preparation work for Round 4 (2022 – 2025) commenced with a stakeholders meeting to identify the barriers to positive physical and mental health and to use feedback from the meeting to inform a Healthy Offaly Survey which was distributed countywide to determine how to tackle health inequalities in the County. The results of this survey and the subsequent consultation with representative of disadvantaged groups will shape the direction of Health & Wellbeing interventions by Healthy Offaly for the next three years.

### **Offaly Sports Partnership**

2022 saw Offaly Sports Partnership secure over half a million (582,508) in funding to deliver a range of inclusive measures to increase and sustain participation in sport in Offaly.

Some of the key activities delivered throughout 2022 included;

- Programmes delivered to support the integration of asylum seekers and refugees into the sporting community in Offaly
- Sports Inclusion - 20 programmes were designed to increase the participation of people with disabilities reaching over 750 people
- Delivery of Offaly's Sport Partnership inaugural women in sport week and HER outdoors week. 700 women and girls participated across the range of events
- The ACE (assisting with children excel) programme was delivered to 21 schools with 3,528 primary school pupils participating in the programme
- Sport funding supports for 53 clubs and organisations throughout Offaly totalling €71,278 in 2022.

Ms. L. Giles expressed her thanks to the Chair, Vice Chair and members of Offaly LCDC, Offaly Local Development Company, all members of the working groups and sub committees and to all staff in the Community section for the commitment, dedication and diligent work of all involved. She also thanked the wider community for their engagement and participation at all times. She acknowledged the contribution of the past 3 years of outgoing Chair, Cllr Declan Harvey and outgoing Vice Chair Sinead McDonagh and she extended her best wishes to Ann Dillon in her new role as Director of Services and acknowledged her contribution as Chief Officer in the Community Section.

Cllr. J. Leahy, Chairperson LCDC highlighted that LCDC is a one-stop shop for delivery of national funding and was awarded for their performance in the top 10 in the country for delivery of programmes. He acknowledged that 2022 had been very busy with direct grant applications, match funded by applicants. He noted LCDC contribution to the economy and he acknowledged the experience brought by the wide range of partners and state agencies. In particular, he brought the members attention to the SICAP, in their exceedance of their targets for 2022. He welcomed the delivery of community enhancement programme as an Offaly County Council initiative and he called on the members to refer any organisations that may need support.

Cllr. D. Harvey expressed his pleasure to have chaired the LCDC. The members agreed it is a great voluntary committee and they thanked Ms. L. Giles for her update and noted the details of the 2022 Annual LCDC Report.

## 10. Nomination for Sectoral Representative to the Climate Action, Environment and Transportation SPC

Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S. advised the members that due to a vacancy on the Climate Action, Environment and Transportation SPC, Chambers Ireland have nominated Mr. Philip Glover for this committee.

On the proposal of Cllr. N. Feighery, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll the members agreed to elect Mr. Philip Glover to the Climate Action, Environment and Transportation SPC.

## 11. Just Transition

Ms. A. Dillon, D.O.S. updated the members on the EU Just Transition Fund , advising that Fáilte Ireland are responsible for €68m of the funding and they hosted information workshops in Lough Boora in January. All 8 Local Authorities attended along with Bord na Mona, Coillte, Waterways Ireland and the National Parks and Wildlife Services. They are focussing on a Strategic Network of Trails plan to utilise €30m to develop 100k of trails in the midland region. They are using a network development toolkit and confirmation of the network of routes is anticipated in the few next weeks. The remaining €38m is earmarked for economic diversification and they projected that 100 jobs and 500 enterprises will be supported through this funding. She advised the member of the €29m funding for REP and LECF actions.

Ms. A. Dillon further advised that applications for technical assistance for START in capacity building and project development supports and a second application for Rural Energy Communities have been submitted to the EU.

She advised the members that following a report to the SPC in January, objectives are being progressed, firstly to seek a land use plan from Bord na Mona, secondly to develop wilderness corridors as per the County Development Plan and thirdly to investigate pooling community benefit funds from energy projects. She invited the members to an online presentation of a recently completed study on the Offaly Transmission Grid. This study was funded by the 3 Municipal Districts.

Cllr. E. Dooley thanked Ms. A. Dillon and for her work on the technical support applications and Mr. A. Murray on the wilderness corridors. He stressed that bog rehabilitation requires planning and he highlighted the work that communities require on submitting applications compared to state agencies. He proposed to invite Fáilte Ireland and Bord na Mona to the next council meeting.

Cllr. L. Quinn highlighted the benefit of meeting with Minister Ryan and he stressed the need for a national strategy for renewable energy. He noted that a link to the greenways from Croghan Hill and Derryounce would be very beneficial.

Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick sought clarity on the application for retention by Bord na Mona at Garryhinch.

Ms. A. Dillon noted the wilderness corridors are included in our County Development Plan and Fáilte Ireland are aware of our proposed routes for the network of trails. Fáilte Irelands plans for the trails are at an early stage and will be developed over a 20 year period. She agreed to invite Fáilte Ireland and Bord na Mona to a future meeting of Offaly County Council.

## 12. Monthly Management Report

Ms. A. Delaney brought the members attention to the monthly management report. She highlighted the upcoming Local Enterprise Week and the Student Enterprise Awards. She acknowledged the success of the Pride of Place winners and advised they will be invited to a future meeting. She noted that staff are working on the application for Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and she updated the members on the Croí Connaithe Scheme with 8 applications progressing and 5 successfully approved. She advised the members that the Roads Programme 2023 will be presented to them at the March meeting. She updated the members on the Local Enterprise Office Offaly supporting over 204 small businesses and 1,196 jobs according to new figures announced recently by Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Simon Coveney TD, resulting in a rise of 60% in 2022

## 13. Corporate Policy Group Report

Cllr. F. Moran advised the members that at the Corporate Group Policy meeting, the agenda for the council meeting was reviewed and they discussed the ministerial visit by Minister Eamon Ryan on Friday 17 February, noting it was a good opportunity to consult with the Minister.

## 14. Notices of Motion

On the proposal of Cllr Peter Ormond, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll, the members agreed, that Offaly County Council write to the Minister for Agriculture to review the Dangerous Dogs Act and to strengthen the Control of Dogs Act Legislation in Ireland.

## 15. Comhdhálacha / Conferences

The members were advised of upcoming training events as approved at the Corporate Policy Group Meeting:

- LAMA Spring Seminar 2-4 March 2023, West Lodge Hotel, Bantry, Co. Cork
- AILG Module 1 A briefing on the Electoral Reform Act, 23-25 February, Tullamore Court Hotel
- AILG Annual Training Conference 19-20 April 2023, Hotel Kilkenny

## 16. Comhfhreagras / Correspondence

The members noted the correspondence issued with the agenda.

## 17. Any Other Business

On the proposal of Cllr. D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, the members approved the Cathaoirleachs travel to New York to attend the St. Patrick's Day celebrations as a guest of the Offaly Men's Association.

Cllr. F. Moran advised the members that due to the upcoming New York trip the next meeting of Offaly County Council is scheduled for 27 March 2023.

On the proposal of Cllr. F. Moran, seconded by Cllr. E. Dooley the members agreed to host a Civic Honour for the Offaly boxers Grainne Walsh, Nicole Buckley and Paul Loonam to celebrate their success at the National Elite Championships and to put a programme of events in place to recognise all sporting contribution in Offaly in recent years.

**MINUTES CONFIRMED:**

---

**CATHAOIRLEACH**

---

**RUNAÍ**



**27 March 2023**