

Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Offaly County Council
Held on 19th June 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. R. McDermott
Cllr. Noel Cribbin	Cllr. T. McCormack
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	

Apologies

Cllr. K. Smollen

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.; Mr. Hugh Coughlan, Regional Co-Ordinator Eastern-Midlands Region Waste Management Planning Office; Mr. E. Fennell, S.E.O.; Mr. G. Bruton, Meetings Administrator and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O.

Suspension of Standing Orders

Cllr. D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. D. Owens, the members suspended standing orders to congratulate Cllr. Tony McCormack on his recent marriage.

Votes of Sympathy

Votes of sympathy were unanimously extended to the following:

Mr. Tom Canty and the Canty Family, Pallas, Listowel, Co. Kerry, on death of his wife Teresa.

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

1. Confirmation of Minutes

On the proposal of Cllr L. Quinn., seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery, the members resolved to adopt the Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of Offaly County Council held on Monday 15 May 2023.

2. Minutes for Noting

The members noted the following minutes:

- Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on 14 April 2023
- Minutes of the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee held on 7 February 2023

3. Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001

Cllr. N. Feighery excused himself from the meeting in accordance with the provisions of Part 15 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended.

On the proposal of Cllr. D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. D. Owens, the members resolved to adopt Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001, to sell 0.0298 hectares of land at Clara Road, Tullamore in the townland of Srah to Tommy and Natalie Conway for the sum of €2,500.00 plus legal fees.

4. Draft Annual Report 2022

On the proposal of Cllr. L. Quinn, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy, the members resolved to adopt the Annual Report 2022.

5. Draft National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy

Mr. T. Shanahan introduced Mr. Hugh Coughlan, Regional Co-Ordinator, Eastern-Midlands Region Waste Management Planning Office to deliver a presentation on the draft National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy.

Mr. H. Coughlan provided the members with an overview of the plan, co-ordinated by the the three Regional Waste Management Planning Offices. He advised that in 2020 the Government produced this new waste policy document to work with the Local Authority Sector and the Regional Waste Management Planning Offices. This replaces the existing regional waste management plans with a new national waste management plan for a circular economy.

He outlined the main changes arising from the evaluation of the existing plans and the national policy:

- A move to a single national waste management plan with one unified message around waste planning and the circular economy.
- The recognition of circularity as a key driver for change in the waste area and the acceptance of the circularity rate as a measure of progress.

- The importance of collaboration in the development of the plan and that collaboration is embedded in the delivery of the new plan. The identification of owners or co-owners of priority actions to include key stakeholders in the implementation of the plan.

He informed the members that the development of the plan was overseen by a National Oversight Group, who reviewed each volume of the plan and considered each of the target policies and actions. They made recommendations that were incorporated into the plan, they reviewed each of the key deliverables and they recommended to the CCMA to proceed to public consultation.

He brought the members attention to Volume II of the Plan that sets out the ambition of 0% total waste growth per person over the lifetime of the plan, meaning that no additional waste will be produced for each person during the plan period which if achieved eliminates all the additional waste that would otherwise have been produced. He brought the members attention to some of the current statistics with recycling at 41%, which is below the target of 55-60% and 2.7 ton of waste per person.

He updated the members on the targets set out in the plan:

- Improved or changed consumption behaviours will result in reduced waste- therefore a target of 1% reduction in residual or black bin waste per person is set.
- Improved practices and significant decisions regarding the designation of construction and demolition type wastes will result in less waste- therefore a target of 2% reduction is set for these materials.
- The contamination of recyclable material by wet or other inappropriately placed materials reduces the circular potential of materials- therefore a target of 90% compliance for materials in recycling and food waste bins is set.
- The reuse of objects or materials is fundamentally circular- therefore a target of 10kg of materials reused is set for each person.
- The repair of objects prevents them from becoming waste and prolongs their useful life- therefore the plan presents a road map to determine an appropriate target for repair.

He outlined the core policies and focus area groups and highlighted the accessibility of the plan for users. He advised that 83 priority actions have been identified across the 16 focus areas chosen in the plan. One third of the priority actions identified are owned directly by the local authority sector, with the remaining two thirds of the priority actions owned or shared with other key partners or stakeholders such as DECC, EPA, Industry or others.

He advised the members that Volume III of the Plan looks at the impact of national policy interventions and sets out potential organisational responses to the challenges identified together with implementation arrangements. It also outlines the resources required to maintain existing services and to accelerate the transition to a more circular economy. This introduces the concept of key deliverables which are the significant interventions that will unlock the potential of the plan policies and priority actions. Key deliverables are aligned with key partners building on the collaborative approach to the development of the plan. An example of a key area is communication and engagement at regional and local level. Increased regulatory action will be necessary and investment in existing public infrastructure to facilitate circular activities will be needed.

Cllr. T. McCormack, chair of the Climate Action, Environment, Water and Transportation SPC thanked Mr. Hugh Coughlan and he welcomed the plan as a way to move forward to meet the targets set out. He called on the members to get involved and make submissions.

Cllr. J. Leahy sought clarity on the issues of packaging and clear separation of waste. Cllr. M. Hackett welcomed the deposit return scheme due to be introduced in February 2024.

In response to the member's queries, Mr. H. Coughlan advised that waste collectors are required to have incentivised system, charging more for general waste than recycling. He agreed more transparency is required and a body is being set up to monitor prices. In order to reduce packaging waste, policies are required to work with producers and Repak are currently working on an equalisation model. He agreed compartmentalised trucks are more beneficial and that byelaws need to be reviewed as they are an important enforcement tool for Local Authority staff.

Mr. T. Shanahan thanked Mr. Coughlan for his presentation and the members for their input. He directed them to the website for public consultation and welcomed any of their comments or submissions.

6. Appointment to Dublin Mid Leinster Regional Forum

This item was deferred to the July 2023 meeting.

7. Just Transition

Ms. A. Dillon provided the members with an overview of the EU Just Transition fund and the breakdown of the three strands. She updated the members on the implementing bodies and the priority areas of job creation, bog restoration and transportation. She informed the members that Action 1.1 Offaly County Council will be advertising for the role of Tourism Animator, a 3 year contract to work with the tourism trade and Fáilte Ireland funded through the Just transition Fund. She confirmed that Offaly County Council will work with Fáilte Ireland on closed call for Local Authority projects and that engagement with Failte Ireland to scope out eligible projects was ongoing.

She noted that under Action 1.2 €29m of the fund will be managed by Pobal and funded projects must align with the Local Economic and Community Plan and the Regional Enterprise Plan. She advised that the first call for applications under this action is scheduled for Q3 2023, for Local Authorities/ETBs / Local Development Companies and such organisations to fund projects between €200k to €1m. There will also be a call for flagship projects in the amount of €1-5m and later this year a call for community groups for projects in the range of €200k-500k.

She noted that under Action 2.3 Fáilte Ireland are working closely with Bord na Mona to develop a network of trails consisting of funding of €30m. She advised the members that further details of the areas to be developed will be provided, with a number of suitable areas expected to be identified in Offaly. She brought to their attention to the announcement by Minister Humphreys on funding of €50k from DRCD for Bord na Mona to develop their outdoor recreation strategy as part of a strategic partnership similar to that between DRCD and Coillte.

Cllr. E. Dooley encouraged the members to attend a meeting on 22 June with Oireachtas members to focus on employment in Offaly. While agreeing the Just Transition funding might eventually deliver walking and cycle routes and rewetted bogs, he said that, so far, it has not produced the level of job creation that is needed in the county. Cllr Dooley suggested that community owned energy projects could administer an Enterprise Fund which could be used to kick-start new businesses in the area.

Similarly following the closure of the power station in Ferbane, an Enterprise Fund which was used to kick-start new businesses, leading to the Ferbane Business Park now employing 126 people.

On the proposal of Cllr. N. Feighery seconded Cllr. J. Clendennen the members resolved to write to the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment to visit Offaly, to see the level of investment needed to deliver jobs in the county.

The members expressed their disappointment at the recent closure of Derrinlough Briquette Factory and the loss to employees and local retailers. They highlighted the lack of factory-type employment in the region compelling people to travel further afield for work.

In responding to the members concerns, Ms. A. Dillon clarified that the criteria for funding is set by EU commission and de-carbonisation is about the ending of peat power, which will involve Bord na Mona in much of the operation programme for the Fund. She advised that diversification of the economy will focus strongly on tourism and the provision of cycling and walking trails. In addition to investment in tourism/trails other programmes for job creation are being developed with Pobal through the JTF and DETE/ Enterprise Ireland around ERDF. She confirmed that EMRA are the overall managing authority, but further details on Pobal eligible projects will be provided in the coming weeks. She agreed to inform the members on details of tracks and trails when notified by Fáilte Ireland and Bord na Mona.

She agreed that quality applications are required in order to maximise the benefits of the funding and that the complexity of the application process has been stressed with EMRA with the hope of simplifying the process. She confirmed that no match funding will be required for community projects unless there is some economic displacement or competition element that may be assessed in a case by case basis. The funding for Bord na Mona outdoor recreation strategy is similar to government funding provided to Coillte in the past. She confirmed that the role of Tourism Animator falls under Action 1.1 strategic partnership with Fáilte Ireland and is fully funded under this strand.

Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive acknowledged the work by Ms. A. Dillon and her team on their continuous engagement with Bord na Mona and Fáilte Ireland and she advised they will continue to work across all areas and with the various stakeholders.

On the proposal of Cllr. D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin, the members resolved to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting to continue past 3.30pm.

8. Monthly Management Report

Ms. A. Delaney brought the members attention to the May monthly management report and she acknowledged the various initiatives and events including the Civic Reception for the Offaly boxers and the visit by Minister Humphreys. She welcomed the visit by Minister O'Donnell to Tullamore Library and to housing initiatives and URDF funded projects in Tullamore and Birr.

She updated the members on regeneration projects and the progress of the Croi Connaithe schemes. She congratulated Gretchen Donovan and the team from Glass Innovations Ltd on their regional award win at the National Enterprise Awards 2023.

She welcomed the success of the jobs fair held by the Tullamore and District Chamber, supported by the Local Enterprise Office Offaly, Offaly Local Development Company, LOETB, the Technical University of the Shannon and Tullamore and District Rotary Club.

She noted the Housing report is set out for their information and there is on-going engagement by the Community and Culture team. The Library, Arts, Finance and Chief Executive orders are included in the report also.

9. Corporate Policy Group Report

Cllr. F. Moran informed the members that the agenda was discussed at the Corporate Policy Group meeting. He expressed concern with the housing grants application and sought engagement with the Department to review the practitioner requirements.

10. Notices of Motion

On the proposal of Cllr. M. Hackett, seconded by Cllr. C. Claffey the members resolved that, in recognition of the marginalised position of members of the LGBT+ community and to coincide with Pride Month, Offaly County Council will introduce a rainbow crossing in the county, at an appropriate location.

Following a discussion Cllr. J. Clendennen suggested the introduction of a policy for requests from various groups or communities in the future.

Mr. T. Shanahan agreed the crossing will be provided in an appropriate location in compliance with road safety standards.

On the proposal of Cllr. M. Hackett, seconded by Cllr. O'Brien, the members resolved that Offaly County Council will request that those contracted to undertake outdoor work on their behalf undertake Nature Skills Training pilot where possible, attendance at this training will form part of the selection criteria when awarding contracts.

In response, Mr. M. Connolly advised the members that Offaly County Council endeavours to seek value for money and cannot exclude a contractor as this could be seen as breach of procurement procedures. He pointed out that Green public procurement is not currently mandatory but is encouraged and he agreed that Offaly County Council will work with members to ensure all procurement follow green guidelines where possible. He confirmed that the one day training provided by LOETB has been undertaken by 8 staff members and will be extended to more staff.

He advised that green procurement is a complex issue and there is no specific training requirement.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Clendennen, seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery, the members resolved that in light of the closure of Ireland's last peat briquette production facility at Derrinlough and the ongoing challenge of higher electricity charges, Offaly County Council call on the Ministers with responsibility for Housing and Planning, to introduce a policy that all public interest housing developments include the installation of solar PV panels as standard. They requested the motion to be circulated to the 8 Local Authorities in the Just Transition Region.

Ms. S. Kennedy confirmed that the building regulations require new houses must generate energy from renewable resources and the Department provide funding in the form of heat pumps and they do not

currently provide funding for fitting of solar panels. She agreed to further engage with the Department on the funding for solar panels for new social housing.

11. Comhdhálacha /Conferences

No Conferences/Training

12. Comhfhreagras / Correspondence

Correspondence that issued with the agenda was noted.

Cllr. N. Feighery sought support from the members for the resolution from Clare County Council to support the recent Macra na Feirme campaign entitled The Rural Revival, Steps for our Future.

13. Any Other Business

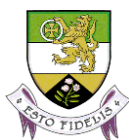
Cllr. F. Moran advised the members that the Fire Services is an executive function and that the ongoing Fire Services Industrial dispute will be dealt with at a National level.

Ms. S. Kennedy agreed to provide the members with an update on the LCDC funding that was announced earlier in the year.

MINUTES CONFIRMED

CATHAOIRLEACH

RUNAÍ



17 July 2023