

Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Offaly County Council
Held on 16 October 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. Eddie Fitzpatrick, Cathaoirleach

Cllr. John Carroll	Cllr. John Leahy
Cllr. Clare Claffey	Cllr. T. McCormack
Cllr. John Clendennen	Cllr. R. McDermott
Cllr. Noel Cribbin	Cllr. F. Moran
Cllr. Eamon Dooley	Cllr. Sean O'Brien
Cllr. Neil Feighery	Cllr. Peter Ormond
Cllr. Mark Hackett	Cllr. Danny Owens
Cllr. Declan Harvey	Cllr. S. Feehan Smollen
Cllr. J. Foley	Cllr. L. Quinn

Apologies

No apologies recorded.

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. T. Mawe, A/H.O.F.; Mr. J. Cunningham, S.E.; Mr. J. McNally, C.A.C.; Ms. A. Lambe, C.A.O.; Ms. S. McEvoy, C.C.A.O.; Mr. M. Mahon, S.E.; Ms. M. Cleary, S.E.O.; Mr. A. Murray, S.P.; Mr. E. Kelly A/S.E.P., Ms. D. Hunt, A.O.; Ms. C. Dempsey, S.E.O.; Mr. E. Fennell, S.E.O.; Mr. G. Bruton, Meetings Administrator and Ms. A. Kelly, A.S.O.

Votes of Sympathy

Votes of sympathy were unanimously extended to the following:

The Woodnutt family on the tragic passing of Lorna Woodnutt

The Cooper family on the tragic passing of Kim Damti in Israel.

On the proposal of Cllr. D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. M. Hackett the members agreed to suspend Standing Orders to hold a minutes silence as a mark of respect to these individuals.

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. M. Hackett, the members resolved to adopt the Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of Offaly County Council held on Monday 18 September 2023.

2. Minutes for Noting

The members noted the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 10 July 2023.

3. Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Carroll, seconded by Cllr. J. Clendennen the members resolved to adopt Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001, to dispose of 0.171Ha (0.422Acres) of land at Syngfield, Birr, in the townland of Clonohill Upper to Leonard and Margaret Feehan for the sum of €10,000 plus legal costs.

4. Material Contravention of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 and Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan 2018-2024

Ms. A. Dillon brought the members attention to a presentation on the above by Mr. E. Kelly for consideration. Sophia Housing seek planning permission for a residential development on 1.26ha site at the former Presentation Convent/School, Patrick Street and the adjoining parish land.

Ms. A. Dillon advised that a Material Contravention change was part of planning process and a Variant change was a different process. Same can be given consideration as a planning application without prejudice.

The Material Contravention of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 and Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan 2018-2024 is required as the proposed development of housing on lands zoned 'Public/Community/Educational' is not normally permitted.

All members voted in favour of the resolution and Cathaoirleach Eddie Fitzpatrick declared the resolution passed.

5. AFS 2022

Mr. T. Mawe, A/H.O.F. advised the members that there have been no changes from the draft as presented to the members previously. The members noted the Annual Financial Statement 2022.

6. Local Government Auditor Statutory Audit Report 2022

The members noted the Local Government Auditor Statutory Audit Report 2022.

7. Bank Overdraft Facility 2024

On the proposal of Cllr L. Quinn., seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy, the members approved the Overdraft Accommodation 2024, in the amount of €15m.

8. Expenditure on Development Contribution Scheme

Ms. A. Dillon, brought the following to the attention of the members for their consideration and for public display by the end of 2024 early 2025.

Scheme	Development Contributions Required	Development Contributions (adjustment 2023)
Midland Cycling Destination - Offaly	€1,500,000	€400,000
Total	€1,500,000	€400,000
Tullamore Living River Project	€50,000	€100,000
Cemetery extensions	€330,000	€380,000
Total	€380,000	€480,000
Library, Arts and Innovation Space, Edenderry	€2,000,000	€2,000,000
Tullamore Arts Centre	€1,000,000	€2,000,000
Clara Swimming Pool	€100,000	€100,000
Edenderry Swimming Pool	€1,000,000	€1,000,000
Total	€4,100,000	€5,100,000
OVERALL TOTAL	€23,495,223	Unchanged

Members highlighted the requirement to revisit the contribution scheme in light of energy companies and wind farms contributing to amenities in these local areas. National guidance on same should be sought.

Ms. A. Dillon, advised that the Development Contribution Scheme requires review to ensure that funding is allocated to schemes that are progressing while ensuring that funding will be available for projects that are yet to commence.

Members extended compliments to all who worked on the Esker Arts Centre. The Chief Executive advised that fund raising efforts are ongoing and that this is progressing well.

9. Draft Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

Mr. T. Shanahan welcomed Mr. J. McNally to present the Climate Action Plan update.

Mr. McNally gave the presentation outlining that the draft Climate Action Plan was progressing well and the timeframe for completion of same. The period from July – October involved the Publication of the Draft Plan, public consultation and invitation of written submissions.

The process is now entering stage 3 which involves completion of the Climate Action Plan and consideration and adoption by the members by the 23rd February 2024. Final publication must occur within 30 days of adoption by the Members. Implementation and reporting on the plan must be carried out for 5 years following final publication.

Members highlighted various issues including farming sector statistics and policies regarding farming enterprise. Members encouraged all involved to engage in the in public consultation to have their say on the final plan.

The Draft Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 was proposed by Cllr. T. McCormack and seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery.

10. Housing Presentation

Ms. S. Kenndy, welcomed Ms. M. Cleary and Mr. J. Cunningham to update members with regard to Housing services. Ms. Cleary advised the Members of the following Housing Statistics:

Social Housing to 30th September 2023:

Social Housing Support List	543
Housing Assistance Payment	639
Leasing/RAS	244
Mortgage to Rent	78
2023 Allocations to Date	113 – further 37 in progress
Local Authority purchases	45
Approved Housing Body	66
Mortgage to Rent	2

Ms. Cleary and Mr. Cunningham proceeded to provide an update on the following:

1. Homeless Services
2. Traveller Accommodation
3. Estate Management
4. National Housing Strategy for Disabled People
5. Domestic Violence Support
6. Housing Loans and Grants
7. Local Authority Housing Stock
8. Housing Programmes in the pipeline
9. Housing For All Delivery Action plan 2022-2026
10. Planning & Construction Process Improvements.
11. Future Pipeline
12. Energy Retrofit Programme

Members raised various queries in relation to the above and Ms. Kennedy, Ms. Cleary and Mr. Cunningham provided responses to same.

Members acknowledged the great work done by the Housing Department Staff

It was then agreed that the following motion on the issue from Cllr. T. McCormack would be dealt with at this stage of the meeting.

Cllr McCormack proposed the motion which read as follows:

"As our nation is in the middle of a housing crisis, with the support of all the councillors, I would like Offaly County Council, to write to the Minister for Housing, Darragh O'Brien T.D. and ask for emergency legislation to be brought in to allow local authorities to build emergency housing units in their areas and that these units would be funded by his department."

Cllr Frank Moran seconded this motion.

11. Just Transition Presentation

Ms. A. Dillon welcomed Ms. C. Dempsey to present an update on Just Transition.

Ms. Dempsey outlined her presentation as follows:

- Just Transition is the transition to a climate-neutral economy while securing the future and livelihoods of workers and their communities.
- The Just Transition Fund shall contribute to the single specific objective of **enabling regions and people to address the social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the transition towards** the Union's 2030 targets for energy and climate and a **climate-neutral economy** of the Union by 2050, based on the Paris Agreement.
- Funding of €169m available
- 5 fulltime and 3 part-time counties
- 3 Funding streams broken down into 3 categories – Priority 1 -Jobs €87m, Priority 2- Bogs €57m and Priority 3 - Wheels €18m.

Ms. Dempsey continued to give a further detailed breakdown of the 3 priorities.

Ms. Dempsey then detailed the following in relation to the **Secretariat for Technical Assistance for Regions in Transition (START)**

- Offaly partnership led by OCC was awarded 72 days of technical assistance from the Secretariat for Technical Assistance for Regions in Transition.
- **Goal?** To build sustainable communities and to enhance local capacity in County Offaly through Partnership Working.
- The partners consist of:
 - *Offaly County Council*
 - *Technological University of the Shannon*
 - *Laois / Offaly Education and Training Board*
 - *Offaly Local Development Company*

Education Pathways

Identified need exists for partners to work together to map opportunities and clear educational pathways which would:

- assist the local communities in achieving higher educational attainment.
- Provide more defined routes into third level education.
- Provide courses that are relevant to both the emerging and changing economies.

Members raised concern with regards to employment figures following previous announcements on same and sought further clarification at a future meeting. Issues in relation to trails were raised and when the completion of the Grand and Royal Canal greenways would occur. Members also sought clarification on recently made funding announcements on Just Transition.

12. Monthly Management Report

Ms. A. Delaney brought the members attention to the September monthly management report noting that Members had already received updates in relation to the Housing Department and Just Transition. Ms. Delaney noted ongoing programmes across a variety of the Council's services including Regeneration, the Local Enterprise Office, Library Services, the upcoming Pride of Place Awards, Arts Programmes, Sports Programmes and Healthy Offaly initiatives.

13. Corporate Policy Group Report

The Cathaoirleach informed the members that at the CPG meeting on the previous Monday the agenda for the council meeting was discussed.

The Cathaoirleach noted the recent success of Offaly Community Groups in the National Tidy Towns Competition. He noted that Geashill was nominated as Irelands Tidiest Village, for a second year, and Tullamore and Birr Tidy Towns Groups winning a Gold and Silver medal in the Competition. He proposed that the Council would hold a Civic Reception for these groups and this was agreed by the members.

14. Notices of Motion

Cllr. L. Quinn

1. That this council clarifies the process for adjudicating planning applications for rural houses where high voltage electricity cables (connecting renewable energy projects to ESB substations) are installed under the public roadway in tandem with a public water supply or GWS. Will applicants be conditioned to join the public water network/GWS where this connection would mean crossing these cables.

Mr. T. Shanahan advised that Uisce Éireann fees remain standard fees and anticipated no additional charge.

2. That this council write to the Minister for the Environment to seek clarification on the Departments plans to deal with roadside trees affected by Ash Dieback Disease. Will a fund be made available to local Authorities and landowners to carry out the necessary felling where it is required?

Proposed by Cllr. L. Quinn and seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery

Cllr. T. McCormack

3. *"As our nation is in the middle of a housing crisis, with the support of all the councillors, I would like Offaly County Council, to write to the Minister for Housing, Darragh O'Brien T.D. and ask for emergency legislation to be brought in to allow local authorities to build emergency housing units in their areas and that these units would be funded by his department".*

This motion had been dealt with earlier in the meeting.

4. *That Offaly County Council, write to the Minister for Justice Helen McEntee T.D. and invite her to our chamber to discuss the anti-social behaviour, violence, theft and overall law and order in our area and in every town and village in the country"*

Proposed by Cllr. Tony McCormack and seconded by Cllr. Declan Harvey

Members agreed to invite Minister McEntee to a J.P.C. meeting and separate In-Committee meeting. On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. T. McCormack the members agreed to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting continue beyond 6.00 pm.

15. Comhdhálacha /Conferences

There were no conferences or training to approve.

16. Comhfhreagras / Correspondence

Correspondence that issued with the agenda was noted.

17. Any Other Business

Cllr. M. Hackett advised that he is awaiting feedback on a previous motion in relation to the Taking in Charge of Estates. Ms. A. Dillon agreed to raise the issue at December's Planning SPC in conjunction with the Transport SPC.

Cllr. S. Feehan-Smollen requesting an update of Clara School and Dreyton Villas.

The Cathaoirleach agreed to contact Midland Regional Health Forum on behalf of Cllr Feehan-Smollen with regards to the Oncology Unit at Midland Regional Hospital.

Cllr. R. McDermott raised issues regarding the R400 road and surrounding roads due to heavy traffic being experienced. Mr. T. Shanahan advised that extra funding had been allocated to service the R400 and surrounding roads once the increased traffic being experienced had decreased by the end of the year.

MINUTES CONFIRMED

CATHAOIRLEACH

RUNAÍ



20 November 2023