

Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Offaly County Council

Held on 18 December 2023 at 3.30pm, 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

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| 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. S. O'Brien |
| Cllr. S. Feehan Smollen | Cllr. Peter Ormond |
| Cllr. N. Feighery | Cllr. Danny Owens |
| Cllr. Mark Hackett | Cllr. L. Quinn |
| Cllr. Declan Harvey | |

Apologies

Cllr. J. Foley

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.; Mr. A. Murray, A/D.O.S.; Ms. A. Pedlow, H.O.; Ms. K. Gray, C.C.O.; Ms. L. Giles, A/S.E.O.; Mr. G. Bruton, Meetings Administrator and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O.

Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick welcomed Ms. J. Ryan, Mr. A. Murray and Ms. L. Giles to their new roles.

Suspension of Standing Orders

On the proposal of Cllr. F. Moran, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the members resolved to suspend standing orders to complete discussion from earlier In Committee meeting.

Votes of Sympathy

On behalf of the members Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick extended sympathies to the family of Brigid Emerson former council member, the family of Jack Kenna, former O'Dempseys and Laois footballer, Cllr. Peter Ormond and the family of his Aunt Mairead Feighery and to the family of Josie Oakley.

On behalf of the members Cllr. J. Clendennen extended sympathies to the Enright family on the passing of Eddie Enright, to the family of Ignatius O'Neill and the family of John Harte, former Birr Town Council member.

On the proposal of Cllr. L. Quinn, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin the members resolved to suspend Standing Orders for 5 minutes in respect of the former council members.

Votes of sympathy were unanimously extended to the following:

The Emerson family, Bishopswood Road, Portarlington on the passing of their mother Brigid;

Mrs. Mary Kenna and family, St. Marys Road, Daingean on the passing her husband Jack;

Mr. James Feighery and family, Dunkerrin, Birr on the passing of his wife Mairead;

The Oakley family, Clonlisk, Shinrone on the passing of their mother Josie;

Mrs. Antoinette Enright and family, Ormond House, Birr on the passing of her husband Eddie;

Mrs. Bernie O'Neill and family, Clareen, Birr on the passing of her husband Ignatius;

The Harte Family, Emmet Square, Birr on the passing their father John;

The Daly Family, 2 O'Molloy Street, Tullamore on the passing of their mother Margaret;

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. J. Carroll seconded by Cllr. F. Moran, the members resolved to adopt the Minutes of the In Committee meeting of Offaly County Council held on Monday 13 November 2023.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Carroll seconded by Cllr. F. Moran, the members resolved to adopt the Minutes of the Statutory Budget meeting of Offaly County Council held on Monday 20 November 2023.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Carroll seconded by Cllr. F. Moran, the members resolved to adopt the Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of Offaly County Council held on Monday 20 November 2023.

2. Minutes for Noting

The members noted the minutes of the meetings listed below:

- Minutes of the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 5 September 2023
- Minutes of the Housing Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 28 September 2023
- Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on 9 October 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 land at Clonoghill, Birr to Leonard Feehan and Mairead Breathnach for €10,000

4. Creative Ireland Programme Update

Ms. A. Dillon, D.O.S. informed the members that Creative Ireland was established in 2017 following the centenary of the Easter Rising, commemorated by Ireland 2016. This is a cross government cultural and well being programme. The Creative Ireland Committee in Offaly is chaired by Ms. Amanda Pedlow and Ms. Karen Gray has been appointed Creative Communities Engagement Officer.

Ms. A. Pedlow provided the members with an overview of the programme and the strategic priorities including enabling and empowering communities, building capacity, focussing on art, science and industry. There is also focus on climate and biodiversity and providing a sense of place. She outlined the Offaly Culture and Creativity Team and welcomed the appointment of Ms. K. Gray to liaise with the communities and groups and assist them with their applications. The budget for 2023 totals €191,290, including €30,000 for Cruinniú na nÓg. This is 100% grant funding and the budget will increase in 2024 by €15,000.

Ms. A. Pedlow welcomed that Creative Ireland recently funded publications telling the stories of Irish Mist and Public Art throughout the county. She acknowledged the work of the very dynamic Offaly Historical Society.

Ms. K. Gray provided the members with an update on the various successful community projects that had taken place in 2023, including the Brosna River Literary & Music Festival and the Kilcormac Development Association recording of local stories. She outlined the success of the Birr Theatre & Arts Centre in conjunction with Hazel Greene and the Mothers Union on their *The Social* project. These projects provide a sense of belonging and connectedness among communities. She highlighted the collaboration between Geashill Tidy Towns, Ciaran Byrne (sculptor) & Luke Carson (weld artist) in their production of a piece inspired by a local cauldron, the largest brewing pan in Ireland. She also updated the members on the Edenderry Historical Society Footings project and the Birr Swift survey. She highlighted Cruinniú nan Óg, a one day event for free creativity and the hosting of many events across the libraries. She advised there will be a call for applications in January 2024, but interested groups can get in contact at anytime for advice or additional information.

The members thanked the team for their work and they welcomed the Creative Ireland funding as a great collaborative effort across communities. They agreed the work of the Offaly Historical Society is fantastic. They expressed their hopes that more communities/groups in Edenderry and Tullamore would get involved and avail of funding. They raised concerns about the current location of the Turf Man Sculpture in Blackwater Bog and the need for Bord Na Móna to source an appropriate and permanent location in Offaly. It was agreed to write to the Minister for Arts to ask that an appropriate and permanent location be identified for this sculpture.

Ms. A. Dillon thanked the members for their kind words.

5. Monthly Management Report

Ms. A. Delaney brought the members attention to the monthly management report. She noted the planning report is outlined including a comprehensive update on Architecture, Conservation and Regeneration. She highlighted the positive review of the Planning Function, from the Office of the Planning Regulator and she acknowledged the work of the planning team in completing the review.

She advised the members of the relevant dates outlined in the report for the Economic Support Strategies Scheme. She acknowledged the Local Enterprise Office work in supporting the business sector. She informed the members that a full report from the Housing Team will be presented to them in the February monthly meeting and the CE report in relation to the Edenderry Library Part 8 Planning will be presented at the January monthly meeting.

She noted that the Arts, Libraries and Community events and initiatives are all outlined in the report for information and the Climate Action Plan is due to be adopted before 23rd February 2024.

6. Corporate Policy Group Report

Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, Cathaoirleach advised the members that the CPG met on the previous Monday and discussed the monthly council agenda.

7. Notices of Motion

On the proposal of Cllr. S. O'Brien, seconded by Cllr. C. Claffey, the members resolved *"that Offaly County Council calls on the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O' Brien, to rescind approval of Statutory Instrument 306 of 2022 which gives emergency powers to the Government and overrules the authority of our Council Management and Members in relation to Planning and Development. We also call on the Minister and the Government to recognise that our community has provided its fair share of quality accommodation for people fleeing the war in Ukraine and those seeking asylum and that any future provision must be after full consultation with and consent of the local community"*.

A discussion took place among the members and it was agreed to write to the Minister to request a review of the Statutory Instrument 306 of 2022 which gives emergency powers to the Government and overrules the authority of Council Management and Members in relation to Planning and Development. They further resolved to call on the Government to ensure that any future accommodation provision under this instrument requires improved communication and consultation with the local community.

On the proposal of Cllr. M. Hackett, seconded by Cllr. S. O'Brien, the members resolved *"that OCC identifies land in each MD for the Forestry on Public Land scheme"*

Cllr. M. Hackett clarified that this motion referred to just council land, not zoned building land. He stressed that his motion refers to Offaly County Council lands only.

Mr. T. Shanahan advised that Offaly County Council has old landfills and any development would require consultation with the EPA. There is approximately 40ha in county, some may have beneficial use in time, following initial screening to assess what is feasible.

Following discussion among the members it was agreed to write to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to request that the government identifies land in wider state ownership such as Bord na Mona in addition to public lands such as Local Authority lands for the Woodlands Creation on Public Lands Scheme.

On the proposal of Cllr. L. Quinn, seconded by Cllr. E. Dooley, the members resolved *“to write to the Minister for the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, requesting that in light of the fact that 12% of the land in Co Offaly is under the ownership of semi state companies such as Bord na Móna, to ensure that State Lands where renewable energy projects have been developed cannot be sold. They further requested that any state lands to be considered for sale must receive the approval of the Government”*.

Further to Cllr. L. Quinn motion, Cllr. E. Dooley sought to write to Minister Hackett to seek support in obtaining a Land Use Plan from Bord na Mona to include its plans for forestry, tracks and trails and renewable energy on its lands.

The members agreed a priority list should be compiled in relation to their issues with Bord na Móna and they requested this motion be circulated to all Local Authorities.

8. Comhdhálacha /Conferences

No conferences or training were recorded.

9. Comhfhreagras / Correspondence

The members noted the correspondence on the agenda.

10. Any Other Business

Cllr. J. Carroll raised concerns about the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Cllr. S. O Brien welcomed the Palestinian support group in Tullamore to the meeting, and he requested that in support of the people of Gaza the Palestine flag should be flown on all council buildings and he called for support for a permanent cease fire. Cllr. S. Feehan Smollen voiced her support and highlighted the suffering of the people of Gaza.

Ms. A. Dillon advised the protocols will be checked in relation to flying flags, the possibility of a peace flag and flying our national flag at half mast.

MINUTES CONFIRMED

CATHAOIRLEACH

RUNAÍ

15 January 2024

