

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

**MINUTES OF FEBRUARY MONTHLY MEETING
OF OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE
ON MONDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY 2020 AT 2.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:	Cllr. P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach, Cllrs. J. Carroll, C. Claffey, J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, E. Dooley, N. Feighery, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, M. Hackett, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, T. McCormack, R. McDermott, S. O'Brien, D. Owens, L. Quinn and K. Smollen
APOLOGIES	Cllr. F. Moran
IN ATTENDANCE:	Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive; Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S.; Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S.; Ms. S. Kennedy, D.O.S.; Mr. T. Mawe, A/H.O.F.; Ms. A. Dillon, Meetings Administrator, Ms. O. Martin, Head of LEO, Mr. R. Grenell, C&M Director Design Works, Mr. M. Gafney, S&D Management, Design Works, Ms. M. Cleary, S.E.O., Mr. J. Cunningham, S.E.E. and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O.
VOTES OF SYMPATHY:	<p>Votes of sympathy were unanimously extended to the following: -</p> <p>Mr. Sean Dunne, Francis Street, Edenderry, on the death of his wife Phyllis Dunne;</p> <p>Mrs. Sheila Donegan, Clonmel Road, Clonbullogue, on the death of her brother Michael O'Sullivan;</p> <p>Mrs. Delia Mulkern, Urney, Cloneygowan, on the death of her husband Tommy Mulkern.</p> <p>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.</p>
CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES:	On the proposal of Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the members resolved to adopt the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Offaly County Council held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on Monday 17 th January 2020.
MINUTES FOR NOTING:	<p>The members noted the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Minutes of Corporate Policy Group Meeting held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on Monday 16th December 2019.

<p>SECTION 85, LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001, AS AMENDED - AGREEMENT BETWEEN LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL AND OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL FOR THE PORTARLINGTON FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME</p>	<p>Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S. advised the members on OPW funding to develop Flood Relief in Portarlington with Laois County Council as the lead going forward to the design stage.</p> <p>On the proposal of E. Fitzpatrick, seconded by Cllr. L. Quinn the members resolved to adopt the Section 85, Local Government Act 2001, as amended - Agreement between Laois County Council and Offaly County Council for the Portarlington Flood Relief Scheme.</p>
<p>2019 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OFFALY LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</p>	<p>Ms. S. Kennedy drew the members' attention to the 2019 Annual Report of the Offaly Local Community Development Committee. She highlighted its work on social inclusion, poverty reduction and community development and highlighted their top 10 performance in the country which resulted in €500k in additional funding last year. She outlined the various programmes, such as SICAP, Healthy Offaly and many others facilitating inter-generational inclusion and diversity. She advised that a review of the Local Economic and Community Plan would take place in 2020. She noted the strong environmental considerations required in the new plan.</p> <p>The members thanked her for her update and praised the achievements of the LCDC and their comprehensive report. Cllr. M. Hackett queried if two renewable energy projects will proceed.</p> <p>Ms. S. Kennedy acknowledged the members' support. She confirmed that both renewable energy projects are only recently approved.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. J. Clendennen the members resolved to adopt the 2019 Annual Report of the Offaly Local Community Development Committee.</p>
<p>ARTS ACT GRANT SCHEME 2020</p>	<p>Ms. S. Kennedy outlined the Arts Act Grant Scheme 2020 advising the members that 19 applications had been received with 18 meeting the criteria. She informed the members that €13.2k had been allocated to the 18 projects with the residual funding earmarked to reach out to communities to allow an equitable spread of funding.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin the members resolved to adopt the Arts Act Grant Scheme 2020.</p>
<p>BRANDING PRESENTATION</p>	<p>Mr. F. Heslin invited Ms. O. Martin to provide the members with a presentation on the proposed new branding design for Offaly County Council. Ms. Martin informed the members that consultation on the brand had been facilitated through workshops and meetings with a brand strategy committee over 7-8 months. She advised members that Design Works had won the tender to develop a new brand to sell Offaly's unique identity and noted their experience having worked on Offaly's tourism branding. She introduced Mr. R. Grenell and Mr. M. Gaffney, Design Works to give the members a presentation on the proposed new branding.</p>

	<p>Mr. M. Gaffney advised the members on the online surveys and workshops carried out to develop the Brand Strategy and the visual identity design. Mr. R. Grenell unveiled the new brand encompassing air, water, land and the selling point “Space to Grow – translating to “Spás le fás”. He outlined the various uses of the new brand, including Corporate Communications, vehicles, buildings and publications.</p> <p>The members thanked Design Works for their presentation and a discussion followed raising issues such as costs, the need to include people, the importance of the bog and some members expressed concerns that the original crest would be removed. The members acknowledged the importance of moving to the digital age, selling the county and promoting quality of life, and Offaly as a great place to work and live and the abundance of services.</p> <p>Ms. O. Martin responded that the cost of developing the new brand was €10k and that it would be phased in on a gradual basis. She advised that the emphasis on facilitating people is included in the brand, on transitioning from the bog to eco-tourism and the new logo would assist communication with a broad range of stakeholders.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney advised the members that the aim is to first promote awareness leading to a gradual replacement of stationery, vehicles etc. and to modernise into a new digital strategy. She highlighted the opportunities for IDA promotion, remote working and linking with tourism. She advised that it would be incorporated into the new Corporate Plan and that the crest could be retained. Mr. R. Grenell informed the members that the crest would be retained but used in both full colour or as a line drawing depending on the façade/format and that this can be set out in the guidelines for use.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. T. McCormack, seconded by Cllr. D. Owens the members resolved to adopt the new Branding for Offaly County Council.</p>
<p>HOUSING PRESENTATION</p>	<p>Ms. S. Kennedy, D.O.S. outlined the services provided and the challenges facing the housing section in Offaly County Council, stating that supporting communities, schools, ageing population, and the disabled are of great importance. She noted the requirement to allow for the diversity of needs and of the environmental challenges. She acknowledged that a lot of progress has been made in the last few years, but that more was needed and the housing staff and the previous Director Mr. T. Shanahan have worked tirelessly to meet the challenges.</p> <p>Ms. M. Cleary, S.E.O. provided the members with a detailed presentation outlining that statistics for the Social housing list, the allocations to date, emergency accommodation, housing stock, acquisitions and pre-letting/voids. She updated the members on the Housing Loans and Grants, the 2019 construction programme and the 2020 construction programme going forward. She gave the members the details of the 199 houses that are currently in the construction pipeline.</p>

The members thanked Ms. M. Cleary and acknowledged the hard work of the housing staff and of the difficult challenges they face on a daily basis. A number of queries were raised in regard to the poor living conditions of some HAP tenants, the support provided by the HAP finder, the number of people in B&B and the associated costs of both HAP and emergency accommodation. They voiced their concerns on the low income threshold for the Rebuilding Ireland Homeloans, insufficient funding for social disabled housing and the lack of communication from the approved housing bodies to assist in dealing with anti-social behaviour. They expressed their frustration at the number of houses under construction and the timeline to progress projects. Cllr. D Harvey requested an update on rent arrears from the Finance Section and Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick inquired about the Presentation Convent lands in Edenderry. The members questioned the availability of council land to build on, the specification of new builds and requested a breakdown of the Mortgage to Rent Scheme.

In responding to the members queries Ms. S. Kennedy advised the members that they are reviewing the council current land bank and have to bear in mind suitability, zoning and value for money. She noted that with regard to rent arrears, the Housing section are working in conjunction with Finance to resolve rent arrears. She acknowledged their frustration with the timeline for projects but advised that they have to comply with the governments guidelines.

Ms. M. Cleary informed the members that inspection of HAP tenancies has been outsourced and since November 2019 over 200 premises have been inspected. She agreed to provide a breakdown of the Mortgage to Rent Scheme to a future Council meeting. She advised that a framework was in place for contractors on the turnaround on vacant houses. She informed the members that the allocation for the adaptation of social housing for people with disabilities and the threshold for the Rebuilding Ireland home loans are set nationally. In response to Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick's query she advised that the Presentation Convent and surrounding lands have been proposed for social housing development by an Approved Housing Body. She agreed to discuss the role of the elected members with the Approved Housing Bodies at a future meeting. She noted that the role of the HAP finder is curtailed but that cash deposits are often provided for social tenants. She agreed that the take up on the Repair and Lease scheme has been limited to date and advised that the Vacant Homes Officer has written to a number of landlords and has received some communication back regarding the planned future use of vacant homes.

Mr. J. Cunningham informed the members that 10-15% of housing in the pipeline will be developed for people with disability and that all new homes are designed to be adaptable. He highlighted that Offaly County Council are one of the most active counties with regard to acquisitions. He noted that more than 50 social housing voids had been enabled in 2019 noting that some require a lot of work. He confirmed that 65% of housing stock are reliant on solid fuel, but that the deep retrofit

	<p>programme will reduce that number as heat pumps are installed, which are 300-400% more efficient.</p>
<p>JUST TRANSITION</p>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney updated the members on the Just Transition advising them that the last meeting took place on 14th February and the next meeting is scheduled for 27th March. She informed the members that the Just Transition Commissioner Mr. Kieran Mulvey has been consulting with the Bord na Mona workers, unions and all other stakeholders and has emphasised the necessity to work together as a region. She noted that Mr. Robert Pollock, EU Coal Regions in Transition had been providing technical assistance and in conjunction with the PPN and LEO a workshop is being organised for April, which will be advertised soon. She informed the members that the Laois Offaly Education Training Board are carrying out on going needs analysis with the Bord na Mona workers to continue to develop and provide initiatives for re-training.</p> <p>Cllr. E. Dooley thanked the Chief Executive for her report and queried if any plans for the enhancement of the bogs have been finalised. He stated that this should be carried out in conjunction with the County Development Plan. He expressed concerns that the €5m funding proposed by the ESB is insufficient, windfarm development should be thoroughly examined. He proposed that Offaly County Council write to the Minister to confirm €250m additional funding for retro-fitting announced before the General Election.</p> <p>He advised that BnM are currently seeking consent from An Bord Pleanala to apply for planning retention/licencing to continue with peat production in the short term. He said the repercussions if BnM must cease peat harvesting would be devastating for sod peat, briquette production and horticulture. He requested that Offaly County Council seek an emergency meeting with the CEO of Bord na Mona to discuss this before March 18th when An Board Pleanala are due to consider same.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin the members resolved to request an emergency meeting with BnM.</p> <p>In responding to the members queries Ms. A. Delaney agreed to write to BnM to request an emergency meeting and to the Department to request increased Deep Retrofit Funding. She advised that as the closing date for the planning process with regard to peat production is 18th March, she could not comment on this case. She noted their concerns about Windfarms.</p>
<p>MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT:</p>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney drew the members' attention to the January monthly management report. She noted the dates for the Local Enterprise Week 2-6th March and the National Campaign to improve Library membership with an open day on 29th February. She advised the members that the planning statistics are available for their information and updated them on the progress of the Greenways. She informed the members that the Roads Programme would be presented to them at the March Council meeting. She updated the members on the Part 8 for</p>

	<p>the burial grounds and of the Water Capital programme. She noted the report brought to the members on the LCDC annual report. She informed the members on the three CCTV schemes and that the next meeting of the JPC scheduled for 24th February. She congratulated the successful Operation Transformation TV programme taking place in Offaly and the recent staging to Vex Robotics County Final in Tullamore on 31st January.</p> <p>Cllr. P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach added his congratulations to The Vex Robotics event and Operation Transformation, noting their showcasing of Offaly's excellent facilities.</p> <p>Cllr. J. Clendennen noted the success of the recently opened Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trails and queried when further works would be undertaken. He also congratulated the Offaly nominees for the Community and Council Awards, the Midland Skill Centre and Ms. Sandy Smollen, on 15th February in Corke Park. He acknowledged the national candidates for the recent General Election and queried the suitability of the Count Centre.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney responded that Stage Two of the Slieve Bloom Mountain Trails are being developed by Coillte and Fáilte Ireland and agreed to write to the Returning Officer in regard to the Count Centre.</p> <p>Cllr. P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach thanked the Chief Executive for her report.</p>
<p>CORPORATE POLICY GROUP REPORT:</p>	<p>Cllr. P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach informed the members that the Corporate Policy Group met earlier that day at the Offaly Archive Facility in the Axis Business Park and complimented the staff and the Offaly Historical Society on the provision of the county's archives.</p> <p>He informed the members that requests from Jigsaw and Comhairle na nÓg had been received to present to the Council and CPG respectively. He noted the invitation from the Offaly Association New York to attend St. Patrick's Day celebrations in New York.</p> <p>He also noted that they discussed the agenda and approved conferences and training.</p> <p>Cllr. R. McDermott requested an interim update on the Local Property Tax.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney agreed to update the members at the March Council Meeting.</p>
<p>NOTICES OF MOTION:</p>	<p>Cllr. J. Clendennen expressed his concerns with regard to the decommissioning of Shannonbridge Power Station. He informed the members of its valuable situation near all motorways and its possible future uses for education, filming, history and commercial potential. Cllr. J. Leahy also requested</p>

	<p>that plans for Lough Boora should be investigated. Cllr. E. Dooley queried if there is a condition in the Shannonbridge Power Station planning permission that Offaly County Council must be consulted.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney confirmed that a meeting is planned with regard to Lough Boora and she will revert back to the members in due course. She noted that all parties are looking at a range of options and confirmed that any de-commissioning must take place in consultation with Offaly County Council.</p> <p>The following motion proposed by Cllr. J. Clendennen, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy and agreed.</p> <p><i>"Offaly County Council collaborate with the Just Transition Commissioner and the ESB to maintain Shannonbridge Power Station in its entirety once it ceases to generate electricity, whilst identifying and developing opportunities to utilise the facility for tourism, remote working and cultural & educational purposes that will benefit the village of Shannonbridge and the surrounding area."</i></p>
<p>COMHDHÁLACHA</p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the members' noted and approved the conferences and training seminars.</p> <p><u>Conferences</u></p> <p>Building the Cross Border Economy - Post Brexit Conference, Wednesday 11th March 2020, 9am - 2pm at Carrickdale Hotel & Spa, Co. Louth. <i>It was agreed no member would attend</i></p> <p>Cross Border Tourism Conference 2020, 22nd April 2020, 8.30am to 2.00pm at Four Seasons Hotel, Carlingford. <i>It was agreed no member would attend</i></p> <p>Celtic Conferences - Regional Development and EU Cohesion Policy beyond 2020, 20th to 22nd March 2020 at Four Seasons Hotel, Carlingford, Co. Louth. <i>It was agreed no member would attend</i></p> <p>Celtic Conferences - Tourism Technology & Competitive Strategies, 27th to 29th March 2020 at O'Donovan's Hotel, Main Street, Clonakilty, Co. Cork. <i>It was agreed no member would attend</i></p> <p>31st Colmcille Winter School, 28-29th February 2020, Colmcille Heritage Centre, Gartan, Church Hill, Co. Donegal <i>It was agreed no member would attend</i></p> <p><u>Training</u></p>

	<p>AILG 2020 Annual Conference, 4th & 5th March 2020, Longford Arms Hotel, Longford. <i>It was agreed Cllrs. E. Fitzpatrick, M. Hackett, D. Harvey, T. McCormack, R. McDermott, F. Moran, S. O'Brien, and P. Ormond would attend</i></p> <p>Irish Planning Institute Annual Conference, 22nd to 24th April, 2020, Clayton Whites Hotel, Wexford. <i>It was agreed no member would attend</i></p> <p>LAMA Spring Training, 12th - 13th March, Sligo Park Hotel <i>It was agreed Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick would attend</i></p>
COMHFHREAGRAS	The members noted the correspondence received.
ANY OTHER BUSINESS:	<p>Cllr. J. Leahy raised an issue with the recent election posters and noted that the Tidy Towns Committees are concerned about the locations of the posters and he suggested that agreed billboards in suitable locations could be allocated for all posters. Cllr. M. Hackett agreed and suggested that Offaly County Council should take the lead on this initiative. Cllr. P. Ormond agreed to refer this to the Climate Action, Environment, Water and Transportation SPC.</p> <p>Ms. A. Dillon brought the members attention to the upcoming Seanad Elections and advised them that the ballot papers will be issued to them on 16th March. She invited the members to return the papers in person on the day of the March Council meeting on 23rd of March. She advised that identification will be required.</p>

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED:

CATHAOIRLEACH

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23rd March 2020