

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ**

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

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE  
ON MONDAY, 20<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2020 AT 2.00 P.M.**

<b>PRESENT:</b>	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, F. Moran, D. Owens, L. Quinn and K. Smollen
<b>APOLOGIES</b>	Cllr. S. O'Brien
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	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. L. Mitchell, S.E.P., Mr. A. Murray, S.P., Ms O. Farrelly, Tourism Officer, and Mr G. Bruton, A.O.
<b>VOTES OF SYMPATHY:</b>	<p>Votes of sympathy were unanimously extended to the following: -</p> <p>Mrs. Mary Hyland, Garryhinch, Portarlinton, on the death of her husband, Jack Hyland;</p> <p>Mrs. Ann Gorman, Cloneygowan, Tullamore, on the death of her husband, John Gorman;</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>
	Cllr P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach, welcomed all the members to the first meeting of the New Year. He extended a warm welcome to Ms Sharon Kennedy, who had recently taking up the post of Director of Services.
<b>CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES:</b>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the members resolved to adopt the minutes of the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- In-Committee Meeting of Offaly County Council held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019</li><li>- Ordinary Meeting of Offaly County Council held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019</li></ul>

<p><b>MINUTES FOR NOTING:</b></p>	<p>The members noted the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minutes of Corporate Policy Group Meeting held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019.</li> <li>- Minutes of Corporate Policy Group Meeting held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019.</li> </ul>
<p><b>DRAFT ANNAUL SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2020</b></p>	<p>Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S., drew the members’ attention to the draft <i>Annual Service Delivery Plan 2020</i>, as circulated with the agenda. He informed the meeting that the preparation of an Annual Service Delivery Plan is provided for on a statutory basis in the <i>Local Government Reform Act 2014</i>.</p> <p>He advised that the draft Service Delivery Plan for 2020 identified the various services that the Council propose to provide in the year ahead and that it takes account of, and is consistent with, the Corporate Plan 2019-2024 (adopted December 16<sup>th</sup> 2019) and Budget 2020 (adopted November 11<sup>th</sup> 2019).</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy, the members resolved as follows;          “In accordance with Section 134A of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended, the Annual Service Delivery Plan 2020 as recommended by the Chief Executive is hereby adopted”.</p>
<p><b>COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS AMENDMENT</b></p>	<p>Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S., drew the members’ attention to the amended Standing Orders. He noted that Standing Order Item 46 in relation to the receipt of deputations, the amended Standing Order allowed for 10-minute presentation and a maximum of 8 slides.</p> <p>He noted that Standing Order Item 57 had been amended to list the revised SPCs.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, seconded by Cllr. C. Claffey, the members resolved to adopt the amended Standing Orders.</p>
<p><b>DRAFT SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2020</b></p>	<p>The members noted the Schedule of Meetings for 2020 which had circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S. informed the members that the meeting scheduled for Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 was re-scheduled to Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 to facilitate St Patricks Day arrangements.</p>
<p><b>DIRECTIONS ON THE OFFALY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027</b></p>	<p>Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S., noted that Ms Lorraine Mitchell, S.E.P. and Mr. Andrew Murray, S.E., would brief the members on this agenda item.</p>

**DIRECTIONS ON THE  
OFFALY COUNTY  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
2021-2027  
Cont/..**

Ms Mitchell, reminded the members that a special in-committee council meeting was held 2nd December 2019 to hear members' potential directions regarding the preparation of the draft Offaly Co. Development Plan. It was agreed that the executive would distil what was expressed by the members into draft directions before Christmas. It was further agreed that at the January Council Meeting the Members would either endorse the draft directions or amend them in their political groupings.

She advised the members that in accordance with Section 11(4) of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended, directions shall be *strategic in nature* and take account of the *statutory obligations of the local authority* and any *relevant policies or objective for the time being of the Government or any Minister of the Government*.

In issuing directions, members shall be restricted to considering the proper *planning and sustainable development of the area* to which the development plan relates.

She outlined the Proposed Directions for the members:

1. Request that local **need** including functional need should be examined.
2. While recognising that, where possible, people who wish to live in an area in which they were born and reared should be allowed to do so, the plan should examine and promote a **range of rural housing options**, some of which may be real alternatives to one-off rural housing, e.g.
  - a. Examination of whether **Sráids** should be included in the new plan as a viable alternative to dispersed rural living and the formulation of proactive measures by the Council to ensure their success as small scale rural settlements.
  - b. Promoting the re-use of derelict or vacant stock in villages.
  - c. Incentivising if possible the reuse of building stock in villages.
3. Ensure that more **social housing and affordable housing** is delivered throughout the county, and use up the council's blocks of land for local authority housing.
4. Proactive policy to redress the decline of **rural settlements**, and the closure of services within them e.g.:
  - a. Ensuring **streets** again become more residential.
  - b. Promoting the refurbishment of **derelict / vacant** town centre houses.
5. Address regional **roads policy**.
6. Support the improvement of **train stations** in Co. Offaly, particularly Tullamore, in terms of greater connections and

**DIRECTIONS ON THE  
OFFALY COUNTY  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
2021-2027  
Cont/..**

frequency of trains. Despite this, the cost of public transport can be cost-inhibitive.

7. The County Development Plan needs to look at the extent of the **cutaway bogs** in terms of the imminent cessation of industrial peat harvesting, the social and economic changes this will bring to rural communities in Co. Offaly and also the potential opportunities presented for after use. The plan should promote looking at the peatlands in a holistic way, for example giving weight to potential economic development opportunities as well as opportunities for reverting to nature and possible carbon sinks etc..
8. The local authority should examine the issue of **carbon sinks**.
9. The **wind** energy strategy should be examined in terms of cumulative impacts, particularly in the Edenderry area. The plan should consider the issue of community benefit. The location of wind turbines on cut away bogs is an appropriate location.
10. The plan should investigate the potential of all types of **renewable energy** in the county.
11. Promote more **jobs** development in Edenderry and Portarlinton, particularly in light of the imminent cessation of industrial peat extraction and the large numbers commuting to Dublin from the area.
12. The plan should '**talk up**' the county; promote the county for economic activity, tourism and as a good environment in which to live.
13. Include reference to **Birr** being a Tourism Destination Town and as a technology hub (for educational, tourism, employment and iLofar purposes) in order to aid in getting funding.
14. Policy needs to be provided to preserve **trees** and that if a tree is removed it should be replaced by 2 or 3 trees.
15. There is concern at the waste water treatment plant capacity of **Edenderry**.

She noted that the timeframes allowed for in the legislation were as follows, no later than 12 weeks after receipt of any directions from the member, prepare a pre-draft plan for the members' consideration. The members would have an 8-week period in which to amend the Plan and the Plan would then go on Public Display for a 10-week period.

In their comments on the Proposed Directions the members welcomed the inclusion of a number of policies particularly those on local need, promotion of job development in Edenderry and Portarlinton, and wind energy. A number of members welcomed the inclusion of the policy on railway

<p><b>DIRECTIONS ON THE OFFALY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027</b> Cont/..</p>	<p>stations and expressed the view that Clara Railway Station should be manned on daily basis. They noted that a local group were exploring the viability of re-opening Geashill Station. They requested that the Planning staff would keep the members advised of any National Development Plans or initiatives. They also noted the restrictions in the national guidelines in relation to car parking spaces for multi-residential unit developments.</p> <p>Ms Mitchell gave the members clarification in relation to the issues they raised and advised that their comments would be included in the Pre-Draft Plan.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the members resolved to adopt the Directions on the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027</p>
<p><b>SPC MEMBER RATIFICATION</b></p>	<p>Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S. informed the members that the following persons had been nominated to serve on the Strategic Policy Committee of Offaly County Council:</p> <p><i>Community, Culture and Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee</i></p> <p>Thomas Woulfe, Clonbullogue, Tullamore, Co. Offaly (IFA nominee)</p> <p>A further nomination has been sought for this committee from the Environmental Pillar of the Public Participation Network</p> <p><i>Land Use, Planning and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee</i></p> <p>Eimhin Shortt, Birr Growery, Birr, Co. Offaly (Public Participation Network Environmental Pillar Nominee)</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery, the members resolved to accept the proposed nominations.</p>
<p><b>PRESENTATION BY OFFALY TOURISM</b></p>	<p>Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S. introduced this agenda item. He advised that Ms Olive Farrelly, Tourism Officer would give a detailed presentation updating the members on developments in this area in 2019.</p> <p>Ms Farrelly reported to the members that the new Tourist Office opened in May 2019 and is open 6 days per week, manned by volunteers or members of the Tourism team in Offaly County Council. She advised that there had been in excess of 1,500 callers to the office since it opened.</p> <p>She reported on the very successful inaugural Tourism Seminar held in April 2019 and on the Shane Lowry Homecoming Event in July. She noted that the Shane Lowry event generated huge publicity for the county, and noted that the event was covered by international news/sports TV stations. She noted</p>

**PRESENTATION BY  
OFFALY TOURISM  
Cont/..**

that July also saw the Summer Marketing radio campaign on RTÉ and Virgin Media, which coincidentally started on the day after Shane's win in the Open. Offaly Tourism also featured in the Ray D'Arcy Show when it visited Banagher in July.

Offaly Tourism had a presence at the Tullamore Show in August with new branding. They also exhibited at 5 other trade shows across the country during 2019. They increased their social media presence by 49% and now had in excess of 10,500 followers. She showed samples of the print advertising carried out in 2019 and advised that Offaly Tourism promotion brochures are available at 210 locations in the greater Dublin area, including T1 and T2 in Dublin Airport and 40 locations in the Midlands.

Offaly Tourism supported a number of Festivals and Events during the year and actively promotes events on [www.visitoffaly.ie](http://www.visitoffaly.ie), the Visit Offaly Facebook page, issuing a trade and marketing distribution list and through the Tourist Office. The Tourism Team issue Monthly and Annual Event Guides. She advised that visitors expected that free WiFi would be available at tourist destinations. She noted that free WiFi was available at 15 access points in 9 Tourism spots in Offaly.

She reported on future Tourism Developments in 2020, she noted that a Masterplan was being drafted for Clonmacnoise, work was continuing on the Grand Canal Greenway, and the Slieve Blooms Mountain Bike Trails. A new branding had been developed for the Slieve Blooms, which will be rolled out in 2020. She reported that Offaly was successful in an application for funding for Birr as a Destination Town.

She outlined the focus for Tourism in 2020 and advised that the TV programme 'Operation Transformation' was based in Offaly this year and this provided the county with significant promotional coverage. On foot of Shane Lowry's success, the Tourism Team are actively promoting golf in the county. She advised that the Ballooning Championship was scheduled to return to Birr in September, to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Year of the Championship and to coincide with Birr 400<sup>th</sup> events.

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) Funding had provided €30,520.00 for two projects in the county; *Offaly Outdoor Recreation Brochure* and *Videography for outdoor pursuits*. The Tourism Team had tendered for LEADER Funding for a suite of 5 promotional videos to be filmed over the summer 2020. She advised that work will commence on the development of the new Visit Offaly website and the drive for increased membership of Offaly Tourism Marketing would continue in 2020.

The members thanked Ms. Farrelly for her comprehensive and informative report. They extending congratulations to all of the staff involved in the Shane Lowry Homecoming Event. The members suggested that the Office should provide promotional material in relation to Clara Bog and provide free WiFi in this area. They queried if the Tourism brochure stands could be

**PRESENTATION BY  
OFFALY TOURISM  
Cont/..**

provided in pubs and restaurants in the county. They noted that the county was divided across two Fáilte Ireland regional areas and queried if there were plans to address this issue. They noted that Lough Boora could be promoted as an area of tranquillity and also asked if there were plans to use this area to promote the Industrial Heritage of the county, particularly Bord na Móna's contribution to the county. The members noted the increased insurance costs and queried if the Office could assist with addressing this issue. It was noted that the Ballooning Championship was to be held in Birr and suggested that a similar event should be organised for Tullamore. The members welcomed the proposals to increase membership of Offaly Tourism Marketing.

The members noted that there were a number of Tourism attractions in the Edenderry area which should be promoted. It was noted that the Tourism office in Tullamore was in an excellent location and the members queried if there were plans to establish a Tourism office in Birr. The member noted that there was a growing tourism market among retired persons and queried if the Tourist office would include this area in their marketing strategy, particularly with companies operating bus tours across the country.

In responding Ms. Farrelly advised that the Tourism office would be attending a seminar to be held in March, which included bus tour operators. She advised that the Office proposed to increase the use of Social Media, as a tool to increase membership of Offaly Tourism Marketing. She noted that the Tourism Strategy included objectives in relation to promotion of Industrial Heritage. She advised that Clara Bog is included in the strategy and advised that she would revert to the members in relation to the use of brochure stands in pubs and restaurants. In relation to the members' comments on the Fáilte Ireland regional areas, she noted that Fáilte Ireland allowed local providers to decide which brand they identified with 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands' or 'Ireland's Ancient East'.

**MONTHLY MANAGEMENT  
REPORT:**

Ms. A. Delaney drew the members' attention to the December monthly management report. She noted the important dates for the members' diaries. She noted that the official opening of the new housing development in Blundell Wood, Edenderry would be arranged in the coming weeks. She welcomed the decrease in the number of homeless persons in Offaly. She noted the National Roads allocation for the N52 and N62. She highlighted for the members the recent developments in relation to waste and litter offences. She reminded the members that a memorandum of understanding was signed linking Tullamore with the city of Luzhou in China, at a meeting with a delegation from the city.

She reminded members that the closing date for the inclusion on the Supplementary Register of Electors was Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020.

**MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT:**  
**Cont/..**

She briefed members on developments regarding the establishment of the Just Transition Team, she advised that Mr. Keiran Mulvey was in the process of setting up this team.

Cllr. R. McDermott, queried if there was an update on the Report to be drafted in relation to Peat-Based Roads in Offaly. Cllr. E. Dooley, welcomed the report on the Just Transition Team and sought the members support for Bord na Mona retirees who had suffered a decrease in their pensions of approximately 30% in the last number of years. Cllr. J. Leahy supported Cllr. Dooley's proposal.

Cllr. D. Harvey, queried if there was an update on the Report to be drafted in relation to the Storm-drain on the north side of Tullamore.

Cllr. L. Quinn proposed that the funding arising from the Just Transition Programme should be used to re-build the peat-based roads, he stated that this would be a good use of the existing skills-set within the Bord na Mona workforce. Cllr. N. Cribbin supported Cllr. Quinn's proposal.

Cllr. K. Smollen sought a progress report on the Register of Electors, he queried if the County Council were engaging with the youth of the county to encourage them to register.

Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick queried the proposals to link the Common Agricultural Policy reform to Rural Development.

Cllr. J. Clendennen queried what criteria was used in deciding which foreign delegations the County Council or Municipal District would meet.

The Chief Executive responded to the member's queries, she advised that the report on the Peat-based Roads had yet to issue and she would circulate copies once it was complete. She noted that this report would inform funding decisions on this issue. She noted that Bord na Móna pensions were not a matter for the Council but could be raised with the Just Transition Team. She advised that the report on the Tullamore North Drainage Plan was being prepared and she would revert to the members once the report was completed. In relation to the issue of youth engaging with the democratic system, she noted that the Council engaged with the younger citizens through Comhairle na nÓg and the local schools. She advised that the issue of LCDC funding was in the early stages and clarification was required before proceeding. She noted that all requests to meet delegations from other countries received careful consideration.

She noted early comments in relation to Shop Front Enhancements and advised that this issue would be forwarded to the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development SPC at its next meeting.



	<p>Cllr. P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach thanked the Chief Executive for her report.</p>
<p><b>CORPORATE POLICY GROUP REPORT:</b></p>	<p>Cllr. P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach informed the members that the Corporate Policy Group met earlier that day and discussed the agenda and approved conferences and training.</p> <p>He reported that the Committee were given a presentation on the new Corporate branding for Offaly County Council. The Committee also discussed a Tullamore twinning visit to Chandler.</p> <p>He noted that the Committee agreed that the members of the County Council would be visiting the new Offaly Archive facility on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at 12.00pm, in advance of the February Monthly meeting.</p>
<p><b>NOTICES OF MOTION:</b></p>	<p>The following motion was proposed by Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. E. Dooley and agreed.</p> <p><i>"Offaly County Council calls on the Government and the newly appointed Just Transition Commissioner to support firstly, the homes of current Bord Na Mona employees are retrofitted before any programme is rolled out to retrofit social houses. Offaly Council believes that this would go some way to compensating employees from Bord Na Mona for the stress and pressure which they will endure as a result of the transition which will take place"</i></p> <p>Following a lengthy discussion on the motion, some members expressed concern that that this proposal would see Bord na Móna employees pitted against social housing tenants. The Chief Executive noted that the funding was being provided by the Department and was specifically for retrofitting social housing and she didn't believe that the Just Transition Commissioner had the power to alter the Departments decision on this funding. She advised the members that their comments would be passed to the Department.</p> <p>The following motion in the name of Cllr. S. O'Brien fell as Cllr O'Brien had sent apologies for the meeting.</p> <p><i>"Offaly County Council considers that it is inappropriate for the Government to hold a commemoration ceremony to honour the RIC and DMP. We note that the Government has decided to defer the commemoration due to be held on the 17th January 2020. We ask that this commemoration is not rescheduled as the vast majority of the people consider it totally inappropriate".</i></p>
<p><b>COMHDHÁLACHA</b></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>

