

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

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

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE ON
MONDAY 19TH JULY 2021 AT 2.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:	Cllr. D. Harvey, Cathaoirleach, Cllrs. J. Carroll (R); C. Claffey (R), J. Clendennen (R), N. Cribbin (R), E. Dooley (R), N. Feighery (R), E. Fitzpatrick (R), J. Foley (R), M. Hackett (R), J. Leahy (R), T. McCormack (R), R. McDermott (R), F. Moran (R), S. O'Brien (R), P. Ormond (R), D. Owens (R). L. Quinn and K. Smollen (R)
IN ATTENDANCE:	Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive; Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S. (R); Ms. S. Kennedy, D.O.S. (R); Mr. S. Duclot (R); Mr. M. Connolly, H.O.F.; Mr. E. Fennell, S.E.O.(R); Mr. G. Bruton, Meetings Administrator; Mr. B. Pey, A.O. (R) and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O. (R)
VOTES OF SYMPATHY	Votes of sympathy were unanimously extended to the following: The O'Toole Family, 12 Pearse Park, Tullamore on the death of their mother Anne O'Toole. 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.
CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES	On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. T. McCormack, 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 21 st June 2021; Cllr. J. Carroll sought an amendment to the Annual meeting minutes noting that he attended the meeting in person. On the proposal of Cllr. D. Owens, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll, the members resolved to adopt the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Offaly County Council held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on Monday 21 st June 2021
MINUTES FOR NOTING	The members noted the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on Friday 15th May 2021.

<p>SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001, OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSES TO SELL RURAL COTTAGE AT BALLINTEMPLE, CLOUGHJORDAN TO BARRY RYAN, ANNAMEADLE, TOOMAVARA, CO. TIPPERARY IN THE AMOUNT OF €100,000</p>	<p>Ms. S. Kennedy, D.O.S. advised the members of the proposed sale of a rural dwelling erected by Offaly County Council on the tenant's land at Ballintemple, Cloughjordan. The tenants are deceased and their son Mr. Barry Ryan wished to purchase the cottage. A valuation was obtained and it was proposed to sell the property for the amount of €100,000.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. P. Ormond, seconded by Cllr J. Clendennen, the members resolved under Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001, to sell a rural cottage at Ballintemple, Cloughjordan to Barry Ryan, Annameadle, Toomavara, Co. Tipperary for the amount of €100,000.</p>
<p>WOMEN AND DIVERSITY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT DRAFT POLICY</p>	<p>Ms. S. Kennedy, D.O.S. brought the members attention to the Women and Diversity in Local Government Draft Policy noting that the policy has been developed by Offaly County Council to address concerns regarding the low rate of female representation and diversity in Local Government in Offaly. She advised the members that the policy aims to support a more inclusive diverse Local Government and makes recommendations that will ultimately create more awareness, improve diversity and gender balance in Offaly County Council. The recommendations in the policy will be implemented by a Steering Group (created for this purpose) which will report to the Community, Culture and Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee.</p> <p>Mr. B. Pey, A.O. outlined the key points to note in the policy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A series of consultations were facilitated with three groups to gather information in relation to their experiences of representation and participation in Local Government. These groups included the Youth Executive, Traveller Women and the migrant community. The process involved consultation through direct engagement and through surveys. 2. Key Recommendations were made after these consultations and are included in the Policy 3. A Steering Group will implement these recommendations one of which is a Capacity Building Training Programme for anyone that wishes to learn more about Local Government and perhaps run for election in 2024. 4. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has offered to support local authorities in their endeavours to advance the agenda of encouraging the participation of women in Local Government and to support initiatives that promote wider inclusivity and diversity in Local Government and local decision making structures.

	<p>S. Kennedy D.O.S acknowledged the support both internally and externally in drafting the policy and she thanked Cllr. C. Claffey for her input.</p> <p>Cllr. L. Quinn, Chair of the Community, Cultural and Emergency Services SPC noted that it had been discussed at their meetings and he requested the members to see it as a work in progress that will continue to develop over the years. He advised that the policy was guided by the Local Government Act, with input from the Department. He thanked the people that had engaged in developing the policy including past council members, and staff members, Mr. Brian Pey, Ms. Aisling Lambe and Ms. Sharon Kennedy</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. C. Claffey, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll, the members resolved to adopt the Women and Diversity in Local Government Policy.</p> <p>Cllr. C. Claffey expressed her gratitude for being included in drafting the policy. She welcomed the policy and she stressed that it needs to go further to include more diverse members of society such as people with disabilities and the LGBTQ community. She called on the steering group to widen the policy and highlighted that gender balance is really important especially where decisions are being made and balance is needed. She advised that the policy mentions training for women and that this should be available for all staff/members.</p> <p>Cllr. J. Carroll welcomed the policy noting the shortage of female representation in Offaly and the importance of attracting diverse groups to committees to show how Local Government works.</p>
<p>REVIEW OF MEMBERSHIP OF OFFALY LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</p>	<p>Ms. S. Kennedy, D.O.S. advised the members in relation to regulations governing membership of sectors of the Local & Community Development Committee. These require that members be rotated when two consecutive 3 year terms are served and this is a statutory requirement under the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended).</p> <p>She noted that the Cathaoirleach and the Chief Officer of the LCDC, in consultation with the Corporate Policy Group reviewed membership of the ‘Community & other Interests’ sector of the committee in June as required by regulation. It was agreed to seek a new membership nomination from the Construction Industry Federation and also from Offaly Tourism Marketing Limited. She informed the members that there are two nominations to replace outgoing members Mr. Dominic Doheny and Ms. Christina Byrne who have been members of the committee for 2 consecutive terms. She joined with the Cllr. D. Harvey in acknowledging the contribution of both outgoing members to the LCDC.</p>

	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. P. Ormond, seconded by Cllr. T. McCormack the members resolved to approve, without omission or amendment, the nomination of the following new members to Offaly Local Community Development Committee's non-statutory 'Community & other interests' sector;</p> <p>Mr. Philip O'Brien, nominated by Offaly Tourism Marketing Limited.</p> <p>Mr. Pdraig Hannon, nominated by the Construction Industry Federation.</p>
<p>CATHAOIRLEACH'S NOMINEE TO MIDLAND REGIONAL TRANSITION TEAM (MRTT)</p>	<p>Cllr. D. Harvey advised the members that due to need for continuity in the role he nominated Cllr. E. Dooley to be his representative on the Midland Regional Transition Team and he highlighted Cllr. Dooley's knowledge and experience in this area.</p> <p>The members expressed their agreement with this nomination and in accepting the nomination Cllr. E. Dooley stated that he would continue to work diligently on the MRTT.</p> <p>Cllr. P. Ormond requested a report from Cllr. E. Dooley following Just Transition meetings.</p>
<p>LOCAL PROPERTY TAX 2022</p>	<p>Mr. M. Connolly, Head of Finance, drew the member's attention to a presentation which had been prepared by the Finance Department in relation to the LPT process. He advised the members that the process of deciding the LPT has been brought forward in 2021 due to the re-evaluation process being carried out by Revenue. He also noted that it is a very important part of the budget process and for driving capital projects across the county.</p> <p>He advised that if the LPT rate remained unchanged for 2022 and the remaining term of the Council, this would see LPT income of €3.70 million (€740k by 5 years) over the lifetime of the Council. This funding could be used to leverage central funding and could see an income stream of €14.0 million being available to support future development of the towns and communities across Offaly. He noted that the LPT process could see additional funding of €17.60 million being available for Projects of scale in the county.</p> <p>He outlined the challenges facing the Council if the current LPT levels were not maintained, advising that there was little or no scope in the budget to fund additional local projects without additional external funding or a reduction in services. He noted the current deficit to the end of 2020 was €1.66 million, and advised that there was significant uncertainty in relation to the outturn for 2021 without Central Government support. He advised that there was very little additional rates income buoyancy expected in 2022, as the long term effect of the Pandemic continues to affect businesses. He also noted the likely</p>

impact of the successful revaluation appeals on rates income for 2022. He noted the likely decline on the other income streams e.g. Parking Charges income. He advised that most Government funding initiatives were now on a match funding model, and there was no scope in the 2022 draft budget to allocate additional funding for schemes like the Urban and Rural Regeneration Development Scheme.

He advised that any additional income generated through LPT would be ring-fenced for match funding purposes, with any unspent balance being accrued to the following years. He noted that the decision to vary the LPT rate was a reserved function, which was reviewed by the members each year. He noted that Progress Reports on the LPT Projects would continue to be presented to the Council.

He outlined to the members the LPT Projects funded in 2020, including Birr Destination Town, Edenderry Masterplan and Tullamore Street Enhancement. He gave details of the proposed Projects to be supported by the LPT in 2021, including Kinnitty Oris, Edenderry Masterplan Phase 2 and Ferbane Rural Regeneration.

He noted that one submission had been received as part of the Public Consultation process, which was completed on 9th July 2021. This submission had sought that the members lower the LPT rate for 2022.

He advised the members that a reduction in the LPT rate for 2022 would see the LPT payment reduce by 45c per week, for approximately 80% of the households in Offaly. He briefed the members on the revisions to the LPT Bands. He noted that households would have to complete a declaration process in relation to the values of their houses, and the effect of this process was unknown at this stage. He advised that based on current information available in relation to the values of houses declared by the home owners, that it would appear that 96% of the properties in the county would fall into the lower 3 tax bands. The effect of this revision to the bands on households in Offaly would appear to be that most households would see a reduction in the LPT payment in 2022.

In conclusion, Mr. Connolly advised that determining the 2022 LPT variation was a key decision point in drafting the 2022 budget and the current budgetary outlook was that resources were going to be very stretched to maintain the current level of services within the county in 2022. He advised that maintaining the 2021 LPT rate in 2022 would continue to provide much needed match funding for capital projects of scale in the county.

The Cathaoirleach joined with the members in thanking Mr. Connolly for his informative and comprehensive presentation.

The members agreed the LPT has transformed the larger towns and they stressed the need to focus on smaller towns and villages. They sought clarity on the Government's assurance that there will be no loss from the Equalisation fund due to the re-evaluation of the LPT bands. They agreed clarification is required for the €100k proposed to be ring fenced from the LPT. They agreed that there have been huge benefits from the LPT and sought confirmation that the MD allocations and community grants would not be affected by any loss of income through the re-evaluation of the bands.

Mr. M. Connolly informed the members that they will seek clarity on security of funding from the Government and agreed that the deficit is a concern. High level negotiations with Department will continue. He advised the members that the MD allocations and community grants will be for the member's consideration in adopting the budget for 2022.

Cllr. S. O'Brien voiced his dissent with regard to maintaining the LPT at the current level and called for it to revert to the 2019 level. He cited the burden to the public in regard to increases in fuel, food and housing costs.

In response Cllr. L. Quinn queried where the funds required for match funding to continue the valuable projects to rejuvenate the towns and villages would be provided from.

Mr. M. Connolly advised the members that without match funding it was unlikely that Central Government would provide more funding and the only other option would be to allocate funding from our own revenue budget.

A roll was called on reducing the LPT for 2022 by 15% as proposed by Cllr. S. O'Brien and seconded by Cllr. K. Smollen:

In favour: Cllrs. C. Claffey, S. O'Brien and K. Smollen.

Against: Cllrs. J. Carroll, J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, E. Dooley, N. Feighery, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, M. Hackett, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, T. McCormack, R. McDermott, F. Moran, P. Ormond, D. Owens and L. Quinn.

Cllr. D. Harvey, Cathaoirleach, declared the motion defeated.

A roll was called on maintaining the Local Property Tax for 2022 at 2021 levels as proposed by Cllr. E. Dooley and seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy:

In favour: Cllrs. J. Carroll, J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, E. Dooley, N. Feighery, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, M. Hackett, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, T. McCormack, R. McDermott, F. Moran, P. Ormond, D. Owens and L. Quinn

	<p>Against: Cllrs. C. Claffey, S. O'Brien and K. Smollen.</p> <p>The members of Offaly County Council resolved to maintain the variation to the Local Property Tax adjustment factor applied in 2021 for 2022 meaning the Local Property Tax charged to households across Offaly would be maintained at the same level in 2022 as it was in 2021.</p>
<p>JUST TRANSITION</p>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney advised the members that no MRTT meeting had been held since the last Council meeting while the next MRTT meeting is scheduled for September. She noted the Just Transition Commissioners Report published on 7th July has been circulated to the members and the Department has published details of the Just Transition projects on their website.</p> <p>Mr. S. Duclot updated the members that 35 Just Transition projects have entered into contract amounting to €10m across a number of different categories, including Business, Education, Remote Working Hubs, Renewable Energy, Tourism and Community. He advised that there has been further consultation on the EU Territorial Plan and that is to be submitted by end of 2021. He acknowledged the announcement by Bord na Mona of their proposed creation of 1400 jobs. He informed the members of a meeting with the Minister Eamon Ryan and Minister Pippa Hackett and Ms. O. Martin, Head of LEO, and noted their commitment to providing additional co-working hubs.</p> <p>The members expressed their disappointment that they had not been informed of the meeting with the Ministers and Bord na Mona, the previous week.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. F. Moran, seconded by Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick the members requested that the Chief Executive write to Bord na Mona to invite them to attend the next Council meeting.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive agreed to write to Bord na Mona and advised that a letter has also been sent to ESB and an acknowledgement received from them. She advised the members that Mr. K. Mulvey, Just Transition Commissioner, facilitated a meeting with the ESB and the Chief Executives of Offaly and Longford County Councils, seeking funding for communities in these areas.</p> <p>She informed the members that with regard to the meeting the previous week, they had received the invitation on Monday and Cllr. D. Harvey, Cathaoirleach, represented the members on the day. She further advised that following short notice Minister Ryan had requested an informal gathering to get an update on some of the Just Transition projects. She pointed out that due to Covid-19 restrictions the meeting was limited to 15 people, including Cllr. L. Quinn and that 5 projects were presented with one representative per project in attendance. She informed the</p>

	<p>members that further applications have received approval and the project in Rhode is progressing well.</p> <p>The members sought clarification on the jobs being created and called on the Department to publish the Just Commissioners report in more timely manner. Cllr. L Quinn welcomed the Rhode project, noting its huge potential as a flagship enterprise.</p> <p>Mr. S. Duclot agreed to look for more detail on jobs at the MRTT meeting in September.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney acknowledged the input from the staff in Edenderry to arrange the event at short notice, noting that Edenderry looked well on the day and that there is a lot of potential for development in the town. She advised the members that a lot of liaison work is continuing with Bord Na Mona across all levels and that there is recognition of the impact of decarbonisation on County Offaly.</p>
<p>MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT</p>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney, advised the members in relation to the monthly management report. She noted the increase in Planning application figures and that the Chief Executive Report for the draft County Development Plan will be prepared for the members to review at the September meeting.</p> <p>She informed the members that the plan for the Conservation of Birr Courthouse is being prepared and work has commenced for Birr Destination Town. She noted that the Roads Programme in all MD areas is progressing and she acknowledged the work in collaboration with Irish Water on the find and fix scheme across the county. She advised the members the housing report is available for their consideration.</p> <p>She acknowledged the recipients of the Community Recognition Awards and the on-going Arts online programme, including Creative Ireland and the work on the construction of the Tullamore Community Arts Centre. She highlighted the on-going support the Local Enterprise Office are providing for local businesses.</p> <p>Cllr. R. McDermott thanked the Chief Executive and staff for their support under the Creative Edenderry Scheme for the Daingean Sports Hub and he expressed his best wishes to the Offaly Olympian team.</p> <p>Cllr. S. O'Brien queried when the N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan preferred route would be published and if a meeting would be held with Tullamore MD beforehand. He welcomed the 24 legal actions undertaken for unauthorised waste collectors.</p> <p>Mr. T. Shanahan confirmed the N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan meeting would be arranged in the next few weeks.</p>

<p>CORPORATE POLICY GROUP REPORT</p>	<p>Cllr. D. Harvey, Cathaoirleach advised the members that at the Corporate Policy Group Meeting they discussed the Agenda for this meeting, including the review of the LCDC membership and standing orders for casual vacancies.</p>
<p>NOTICE OF MOTIONS</p>	<p>Cllr. J. Clendennen On the proposal of Cllr. J. Clendennen, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy, the members requested Offaly County Council devise a master plan of identified and suitable locations for the future installation of Closed Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV Cameras) across the county, in the best interest of effective crime prevention and mitigation of littering, disposal of waste and fly-tipping.</p> <p>Cllr. J. Clendennen advised the members that the issue of CCTV across the county needs a plan as to where CCTV should be implemented as a preventative measure. The members expressed their concern of the slow progress of CCTV schemes and the need to use the most up to date technology.</p> <p>Ms. S. Kennedy agreed that CCTV can be hugely beneficial. She informed the members that funding is provided under the Department of Justice and comes under the Garda Síochána Acts. She noted that Offaly County Council has been implementing CCTV and are working with 4 groups with Portarlinton now coming on board. She advised that Offaly County Council are learning from our partners in Laois County Council and areas such as public consultation and data control have to be considered. She advised that the role Offaly County Council plays has been approved at JPC and by the Garda Commissioner. She agreed to progress with further schemes and continue to work with relevant groups.</p> <p>Cllr. K. Smollen proposed that Offaly County Council “calls on the Government to immediately update the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines and issue updated guidelines in their place”. This motion was seconded by Cllr. C. Claffey.</p> <p>Mr. S. Duclot advised the members that construction cannot stop on wind farms currently under construction as planning permission has already been granted. He informed the members that a circular was issued from Department that the on-going review of the Wind Energy Guidelines should not impact the County Development Plan process.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. K. Smollen, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy the members resolved that Offaly County Council “calls on the Minister for Finance to implement measures which would allow people with bad credit ratings due to the financial crash of more than a decade ago to gain access to loans from their local Credit Unions. Thousands of homeowners, including many farm families who went into mortgage distress as a result of the bank bailout have no other option but to approach unregulated money</p>

	lenders for credit due to the controls being implemented by the Central Bank.”
COMHDHÁLACHA	Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) and the OPR webinar entitled ‘Delivery of High Quality Housing Appropriate to its Setting’ on Friday, 23rd of July from 10-11.30am via GoToWebinar
COMHFHREAGRAS	The members noted the correspondence issued with the agenda.
ANY OTHER BUSINESS	None

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH
RUNAÍ

20th September 2021