

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ**

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

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE ON  
MONDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021 AT 2.00 P.M.**

<b>PRESENT:</b>	Cllr. J. Carroll, Cathaoirleach, Cllrs. C. Claffey (R), J. Clendennen (R), N. Cribbin (R), E. Dooley (R), N. Feighery (R), E. Fitzpatrick (R), J. Foley (R), M. Hackett (R), D. Harvey (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 (R) and K. Smollen (R)
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	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. (R); Ms. O. Farrelly, T.O. (R); Mr. E. Fennell, S.E.O.; Mr. G. Bruton, A/ Meetings Administrator (R); Mr. C. Kelly, S.O. and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O. (R)
<b>SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS</b>	<p>Cllr. J. Carroll welcomed Mr. Stephane Duclot in his new role as Director of Services with Offaly County Council.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. F. Moran the members agreed to suspend standing orders to allow Cllr. J. Carroll, Cathaoirleach to read a statement on behalf of Offaly County Council, in relation to Mother and Baby Homes.</p> <p><b><u>Statement</u></b> As Cathaoirleach of Offaly County Council and on behalf of the Council, I wish to apologise unreservedly to the women and their babies, the survivors and those now deceased, and their relatives for the pain and suffering caused while resident in Mother and Baby Homes or in St Vincent's Hospital, Tullamore.</p> <p>I welcome the fact that An Taoiseach Micheál Martin, TD issued a formal apology on behalf of the State and people of Ireland, to all former residents of the Mother and Baby Homes and County Home institutions.</p> <p>His apology follows the publication of the Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes on January 12<sup>th</sup>.</p> <p>The Government now intends to give detailed consideration to the Report over the coming months with a view to developing a comprehensive Action Plan to address specific themes to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A survivor-centred approach;</li><li>• Access to Personal Information;</li><li>• Care of the surviving records;</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and Research;</li> <li>• Memorialisation;</li> <li>• Restorative Recognition;</li> <li>• Dignified Burial.</li> </ul> <p>Offaly County Council will actively participate with Government in furthering the development of the Government Action Plan as it relates to local government.</p> <p>Offaly County Council, as a public health authority, had responsibility for the operation of the St Vincent’s County Home in Tullamore until the early 1970s. This Council sincerely apologises to the mothers, their children/adopted people, those boarded out or needlessly placed in institutions, their families and the relatives of those who resided in the Offaly County Home/ Mother and Baby Homes, who suffered and were mistreated while resident there. This Council also commits to assisting survivors and their families in whatever way it can into the future.</p> <p>While the Council’s apology cannot undo the pain and suffering, it is an acknowledgement of our deep regret that mothers and their children in a highly vulnerable situation, were often failed by the State, and a recognition that the Council was part of that failure.</p>
<p><b>VOTES OF SYMPATHY</b></p>	<p>Votes of sympathy were unanimously extended to the following:</p> <p>Ms. Miriam Brady, Carrig Cluain, Clara Road Tullamore, on the death of her father Philip Brady;</p> <p>Mr. Gerry Smith, Lahinch, Clara, on the death of his mother Josie Smith;</p> <p>Mr. Michael Wall, Offaly County Council, on the death of his brother Patrick Wall;</p> <p>Ms. Mary Rose Drea, Ballykillmurry, Clara on the death of her father John Drea.</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>
<p><b>CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES:</b></p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. N. Feighery, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy 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 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021.</p>
<p><b>MINUTES FOR NOTING:</b></p>	<p>The members noted the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on Friday 15th January 2021;</li> <li>• Minutes of the Community, Cultural and Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee Meeting on 13th November 2020.</li> </ul>

<p><b>SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001, OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSES TO TRANSFER A PLOT OF LAND IN THE TOWNLAND OF FRANKFORD KILCORMAC FOR THE DEED OF RECTIFICATION IN RESPECT FRANK O’SULLIVAN AND THERESA O’SULLIVAN, FAIRGREEN STREET, KILCORMAC</b></p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. E. Dooley, the members resolved to adopt Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001, to transfer a plot of land in the townland of Frankford Kilcormac for the Deed of Rectification in respect Frank O’Sullivan and Theresa O’Sullivan, Fairgreen Street, Kilcormac in the amount of €500.</p>
<p><b>SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001, OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSES TO TRANSFER TWO PLOTS OF LAND AT RUSSAGH, HORSELEAP TO ARTHUR DILLON</b></p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr K. Smollen, seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery the members resolved to adopt Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001, to transfer two plots of land at Russagh, Horseleap to Arthur Dillon in the amount of €1,000</p>
<p><b>LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2020</b></p>	<p>Cllr. D. Harvey Chairperson of the Local Community Development Committee brought the members attention to the Annual Report for 2020. He highlighted the success of the Leader programme with approximately €6.5m in grant aid awarded over the 4 years. He acknowledged and thanked the members of the committee, the staff of Offaly County Council and the members for their support.</p> <p>Ms. S. Kennedy informed the members that 2020 had been a very busy year, with the completion of the Offaly Local Development Strategy and approval of the LEADER/Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 and also in the context of Covid-19. She commended the roll out of the Community Response Programme, the Community Call Helpline, and the implementation of the Covid-19 emergency funding. She thanked the LCDC group for their hard work and Martin Daly for his role in the Programme. She welcomed Ms. A. Dillon to the role and advised the members that work has commenced on the transitional Leader Programme and work is ongoing to implement the Offaly Migrant Integration Strategy 2020-2024. She highlighted that the various programmes under the Local Community Development Scheme have reached every corner of the county. She thanked the members for their on-going support in particular Cllr. D. Harvey in his role as Chairman and the staff including Mr. Brian Pey and Ms. Paula Donovan.</p>

	<p>The members thanked Ms. S. Kennedy for her update and they thanked the staff and committee members for their hard work. They agreed that the Offaly Local Development Strategy has impacted all areas of the county and they sought clarity on the Transitional Programme.</p> <p>In response Ms. S. Kennedy advised the members that the Offaly Local Development Strategy finished in 2020 and while awaiting EU Policy, the Transitional Programme has been introduced to bridge the gap until the new Programme is announced. She noted that this Programme will identify communities that have not previously benefited and the LCDC will work with those communities to build capacity to avail of this funding for the LCDC in 2021. She also informed the members that a second area of focus will be climate adaptation.</p>
<p><b>TOURISM PRESENTATION</b></p>	<p>Mr. S. Duclot thanked the members for their warm welcome and advised he will be available to assist them when required. He noted that 2020 had started well but unfortunately as the year progressed and lockdowns were imposed many challenges had been faced by the Tourism sector. He highlighted that a lot of time has been spent in developing a marketing plan for 2021.</p> <p>Ms. O. Farrelly provided the members with a comprehensive overview of Offaly Tourism 2020. She highlighted the success of hosting Operation Transformation filmed in the county in January and February 2020, noting that the national weekly audience viewers averaged 444,000. She advised the members that the Summer Marketing Campaign was launched in mid-June, on radio for four weeks and RTE Nationwide featured Offaly on 27<sup>th</sup> July reaching a national audience of 250,000 viewers and showcasing the counties amenities such as the Slieve Blooms, Clonmacnoise and Lough Boora. She informed the members of the Make a Break For It Campaign launched at the end of August and that an additional €1m in funding was allocated to Offaly, Laois and Kildare due to their extended lockdown. She noted that Offaly continues to feature in specific adverts PLUS regional brands of Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands campaigns. She updated the members on Offaly Tourism's social media presence highlighting that followers have increased by nearly 13,000. She informed the members that Offaly Tourism were present at the Holiday World Show in the RDS in January and the Meitheal Global Travel Trade Fair. She updated the members on the on-going print advertising, such as the Daily Adventure Guide and various other brochures. She informed the members that Offaly Tourism is working in co-operation with the Local Enterprise Office and assists in training and support services for the Tourism Sector.</p> <p>She advised the members on the Offaly Tourism focus for 2021 which includes the launch of a new Visit Offaly website and a suite of 5 promotional videos due to be filmed in Quarters 2 and 3. She updated the members on funding provided for 2 projects under Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Schemes for a new brochure and videography promoting outdoor pursuits. She highlighted the hosting of the Ballooning Championships in Birr</p>

scheduled for September. She welcomed the success of the Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trails with 34km of trails in Kinnitty and 9 in Baunreagh now completed and a total of 100km due to be completed by the end of 2022. She updated the members on the planned works for the Grand Canal Greenway and the €400,000 allocation for Birr to develop its potential as a tourism destination town with an opportunity to open a small tourist office in Birr. She advised the members that a Television Production Company will feature Offaly for their magazine travel show for the American market and in addition under the Ireland hidden heartlands campaign a musical culture show along the Shannon featuring Sharon Shannon will be filmed in summer. She welcomed the recently announced Urban Regeneration funding for Tullamore, noting this will enhance the town further.

The members thanked Ms. O. Farrelly for her informative presentation and sought clarification on some areas. They agreed the Grand Canal Greenway is a fantastic resource and they added facilities are required in these areas to promote usage and continued consultation with stakeholders such as the Inland Waterways would be beneficial. Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick stated that there has been a lot of investment in the Derryounce Trails on Laois Offaly border and they could provide huge potential opportunity to link up the Grand Canal, Barrow Greenways and the Mountlucas windfarm. The members raised concerns about maintenance of Greenways, Lough Boora and other amenities, the lack of provision of facilities including car parking and the littering issue in the county. They acknowledged that updating social media is very time consuming and requires a lot of resources from the Tourism team.

In responding to the members queries Ms. O. Farrelly agreed to make contact with Inland Waterways and engage with all relevant stakeholders in the Tourism Sector. She advised the members that unfinished projects such as the Derryounce lakes cannot be marketed until they are ready. She agreed that updating social media is very time consuming for her team members and that they currently have a Tullamore Company doing an audit of their social media activity to ensure they use it efficiently and effectively. She informed the members that Offaly County Council have commissioned a report on the future of Lough Boora to ensure its security and maintenance. She noted that parking issues are outside her remit, however the Tourism team work closely with the Regeneration team to ensure a more co-ordinated approach.

Ms. A. Delaney welcomed Mr. Stephane Duclot to Offaly County Council and she acknowledged the work of the Tourism Team on developing the tourism product, the difficulties presented by Covid-19 in 2020 and noted that this has provided time to put a lot of plans in place. She advised the members that the Midlands cycling destination routes are being reviewed and updated to link up with the surrounding counties and national routes. She acknowledged that supports and ancillary facilities are required.

<p><b>JUST TRANSITION</b></p>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney informed the members that the third report from the Just Transition Commissioner has not yet been published and the Environment Implementation plan is also due in the near future. She informed the members that a company called EnvEcon Consultants have been appointed to assist the Department in submitting the Territorial Plan for the EU Just Transition Fund. She noted that the beneficiary regional spread in relation to the Territorial Plan has not been confirmed. She advised the members that, with regard to the Just Transition Fund, 16 applicants have been approved in strand 1 and a further 46 in strand 2, however it is not known how many have received their final letter of offer.</p> <p>Cllr. N. Cribbin sought match funding in the amount of €13,322 for a successful applicant, Edenderry Carbon Challenge, to allow them progress with their project. He requested clarification from the Head of Finance that the €100k funding set aside in the budget is available to Just Transition successful applicants.</p> <p>Mr. M. Connolly stated that €100k has been ring fenced from the increase in Local Property Tax for Just Transition projects of scale. He advised that it is a matter for members to decide how this funding is to be used and should be reverted to the Corporate Policy Group to devise the criteria to allocate the funding.</p> <p>Cllr. J Carroll agreed this issue must revert to CPG for attention. Cllr. L Quinn stated his support for providing match funding citing it is a good project that could deliver advantages for Edenderry and it is important that the project goes ahead. Cllr. J. Foley stated that this matter has been raised and rejected by the members of the Edenderry Municipal District.</p>
<p><b>MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT</b></p>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney noted the situation regarding Covid-19 cases and the continuing Level 5 restrictions. She called on the public to continue to restrict their movements and reduce social contacts. She noted that draft County Development Plan Chief Executive report has been circulated to the members and she proposed special meetings on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> May morning and afternoon to discuss the plan, noting that the 1<sup>st</sup> June is the deadline for consideration of the CE Report.</p> <p>She noted that the Regeneration team provided the members with a presentation at the February meeting and welcomed the Urban Regeneration funding allocation recently announced for Tullamore. She advised the members that the Roads programme 2021 will be presented to them at the meeting in April. She welcomed the Climate Action group training that is on-going and noted it will be provided to all staff throughout the organisation. She noted that the Waste Management Plan has been circulated to members. She updated the members on the White Paper issued by Government in relation to Irish Water, available to view on <a href="http://www.gov.ie">www.gov.ie</a>. noting that it will have staffing implications. She outlined the funding for private housing grants approved by the Department in the amount of €1,368,805, of which €273,761 is to be provided from Offaly County Council own revenues and advised that the housing team are liaising with Department to seek funding for Offaly County Council housing stock.</p>

Ms. A. Delaney informed the members that the Community Response Forum continue to meet and there is good interaction with the relevant agencies. She highlighted that the community services such as Age Friendly, Arts, Comhairle na Nóg and Library Services being provided.

Cllr. J. Carroll congratulated the Regeneration Team on the recently announced funding for Tullamore and funding for the Courthouse in Birr. He commended the Local Enterprise Office for facilitating the student enterprise awards online reaching over 500 students and he noted that it is a great opportunity for students highlighting St. Brendan's Community School for their participation. He also highlighted the success of Seachtain na Gaeilge programme which were a great success the previous week.

Cllr. D. Harvey raised concern with the changes to Irish Water with implications for staff and for accessing emergency services outside of office hours.

Cllr. F. Moran welcomed the completion of works to replace lead piping in Cork Hill, Clara and queried if the works could be extended to Boland's Terrace, Clara. He sought clarification on the universal submission by 41 residents in Raheen, Clara to link their properties to the sewerage in the proposed development in Raheen.

Cllr. N. Cribbin sought clarification on his proposal for funding of the Edenderry Carbon Challenge. Cllr. J. Carroll noted that this issue has been referred to the CPG. Cllr. L. Quinn noted that he had previously raised this at CPG.

Cllr. K. Smollen requested more detailed information with regard to Covid-19 figures for Offaly noting the numbers are extremely concerning. He raised concerns about the homeless figures and stated that the HAP system not fit for purpose.

Cllr. M. Hackett commended Offaly County Council on their initiative in issuing 550 letters to households enquiring about their methods of disposal of waste and proof of waste collection. He noted the campaign to reduce littering is very pro-active and he requested a 6-month review of Climate Action training.

Cllr. S. O'Brien welcomed the funding for N52 link, noting that it is extremely important in the development of Tullamore Town and Count Offaly.

Ms. A. Delaney agreed to follow up with the members on Irish Water in due course and she confirmed that all submissions for the development in Raheen will be taken into consideration. She advised the members that Offaly County Council are in weekly contact with HSE, in regard to Covid-19 and have not been advised of any significant outbreak in the county, but she will request an update and revert to members. She noted that litter management is a problem given Offaly is a rural area and agreed to follow up on climate action training.

	<p>Ms. S. Kennedy advised the members that there are 858 HAP tenants and while HAP is not tenants first priority housing preference it is effective. She noted some tenants may have issues, but the vast majority of tenants are satisfied with HAP. She stated that Offaly County Council provide various supports to tenants and are available to assist them if they are having issues. She pointed out that housing staff work hard to move people into secure arrangements and social housing stock is expanding on yearly basis. She thanked the members for their support and assistance.</p> <p>Mr. T. Shanahan agreed to seek additional funding from Irish Water to replace lead piping in Boland’s Terrace, Clara.</p>
<p><b>CORPORATE POLICY GROUP REPORT</b></p>	<p>Cllr. J. Carroll advised the members that at the CPG meeting they discussed the agenda, considered the Local Community Development Committee report and Just Transition Update. He sought proposers and seconders for adoption of the draft protocols that had circulated to the members.</p> <p>On the proposal Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. D. Owens the members resolved to adopt the protocols for Online Remote Meetings.</p> <p>Cllr. F. Moran raised concerns on limiting the number of members that may attend a ministerial delegation. Cllr. J. Carroll clarified that this refers to a delegation making a visit to Minister and that if a Minister attends the Council Chamber all members will be allowed to attend. On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey the members resolved to adopt the Protocol for Hosting Ministerial Delegations.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. M. Hackett the members resolved to adopt the Protocol for Opening Book of Condolences.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the members resolved to adopt the Protocol for Elected Members Applying for Funding towards Educational Fees, (in line with Local Government Circular 12/14)</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy the members resolved to adopt the Supplementary Standing Orders on Regulating Proceedings in relation to Remote Meetings of Offaly County Council.</p> <p>Cllr. J. Carroll brought the members attention to a motion proposed by Cllr. M. Hackett in 2020 to utilise the savings from the Cathaoirleachs cancelled New York visit in March 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions. He noted his regret that in his role as Cathaoirleach he had been prevented from visiting the communities of Offaly due to the Covid-19 restrictions.</p> <p>Cllr. M. Hackett outlined his motion that the savings from cancelled visits abroad could be used to invest in trees in each village and town in Offaly to commemorate the hardship and loss</p>



	<p>experienced in each community since this pandemic began last year. He stated that this would be a lasting reminder of the spirit shown by the people of Offaly, it would contribute to biodiversity and coincides with National Tree Week. He acknowledged his confidence in the Offaly County Council Staff to deliver the project in conjunction with community groups, GAA and the Heritage Section.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. L. Quinn, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey the members resolved to adopt the proposal to plant a tree in each town and village of Offaly.</p>
<p><b>NOTICES OF MOTION</b></p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. C. Claffey, seconded by Cllr. S. O'Brien the members agreed to adopt the motion that Offaly County Council acknowledges the final report of the commission of investigation into the Mother and Baby homes and apologises to the women, girls and children impacted from previous County homes and proactively reaches out to survivors and survivor groups to offer practical assistance to survivors and victims, listens to the survivors and asks how we can assist them.</p> <p>Cllr. C. Claffey, acknowledged some action has been taken and she welcomed the apology issued by Offaly County Council. She informed the members that it is important to recognise what has been done, but never forget the women and children sent outside county and she called for opening an archive for information previously buried from 1922-1988. She also suggested a working group should be set up and a special meeting and appropriate memorial arranged for the survivors.</p> <p>Cllr. J. Carroll informed the members that due to the Covid-19 current time restrictions the meeting had to be adjourned as 1 hour and 55minute time limit had been reached and the correspondence and any other business will be listed on the next agenda.</p>

This concluded the business of the meeting.

**MINUTES CONFIRMED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**CATHAOIRLEACH** **RUNAÍ**

**19<sup>th</sup> April 2021**