

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ**

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

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE  
ON MONDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 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. M. Connolly, H.O.F. (R); Ms. A. Dillon, A/D.O.S. (R); Ms. O. Cummins, A.O.(R); Mr. J. Cunningham S.E.E. (R); Mr. E. Fennell, S.E.O.; Mr. G. Bruton, A/ Meetings Administrator (R); Mr. R. Bell, H.I.S. and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O. (R)
<b>VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS</b>	The members joined with Cllr. J. Carroll in congratulating Cllr. J. Clendennen on the occasion of his recent marriage to Elaine and wished them all the best in the future.
<b>CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES:</b>	<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 18th January 2021.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. N. Feighery, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy the members resolved to adopt the Minutes of the Special Meeting of Offaly County Council held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on Monday 25th January 2021.</p>
<b>MINUTES FOR NOTING:</b>	<p>The members noted the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Minutes of the Corporate Group Policy Meeting held in Áras an Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore on 18th December 2020;</li><li>• Minutes of the Land Use, Planning and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee held on 8th September 2020.</li></ul>
<b>SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001, OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSES TO SELL</b>	<p>Cllr. J. Carroll informed the members that due to a conflict of interest Cllr. E. Dooley excused himself from this agenda item.</p> <p>Ms. A. Dillon advised the members that the purchaser had requested that the sale of this site be transferred to the company name Midland Doorsets Ltd.</p>

<p><b>SITE NUMBER 10 FERBANE BUSINESS &amp; TECHNOLOGY PARK TO MIDLAND DOORSETS LTD</b></p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. J. Clendennen the members resolved to adopt Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001, to sell Site Number 10 Ferbane Business &amp; Technology Park to Midland Doorsets Ltd in the sum of €25,000.</p>
<p><b>SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001, OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSES TO DISPOSE OF SITE 17 (1.78 ACRES) FERBANE BUSINESS PARK TO CLAIM MANAGEMENT GROUP FOR THE SUM OF €44,000</b></p>	<p>Ms. A. Dillon updated the members on the proposed disposal of Site 17 Ferbane Business Park to the Claim Management Group, The Square, Cloghan. She advised the members that Claim Management Group currently employ 21 fulltime staff. The site will consist of offices to process insurance claims and a warehouse. This office will be the HQ for a service offered nationally and a number of new jobs will be created as a result of this new business.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy the members resolved to adopt Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001, to dispose of Site 17 (1.78 acres) Ferbane Business Park to Claim Management Group for the sum of €44,000.</p>
<p><b>ARTS ACT GRANT 2021</b></p>	<p>Ms. S. Kennedy advised the members that following a call for applications the Arts Office received 15 applications with a total allocation in the amount of €13,050. She recommended that a surplus funding of €6,950 be allocated to further develop arts in community projects from where applications for funding is low with the intention of increasing applications for 2022.</p> <p>Cllr. J. Carroll welcomed the grants allocation in the current challenging times.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. D. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. J. Clendennen, the members resolved to adopt the Arts Act Grants 2021.</p>
<p><b>REGENERATION TEAM UPDATE</b></p>	<p>Ms. A. Dillon advised the members that the regeneration team had been established to facilitate funding applications with staff resources provided by Offaly County Council. She advised the members that as more funding streams become available more staff resources will be required and 2020 brought a significant rise in funding drawdown.</p> <p>Ms. O. Cummins provided the members with a detailed presentation on the Regeneration Team update. She advised the members that the teams role is to prepare applications for submission to various Departments, co-ordinate development of projects, act as point of contact with various groups, stakeholders &amp; other sections, provide financial management and reporting to the various Departments. She highlighted the economic benefits for tourism, heritage, environment, amenities and leisure. She updated the members on the widespread projects completed across the county under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, including town enhancement in Edenderry, the purchase of public access to Croghan Hill and many village enhancement schemes. She pointed out that Tullamore is the only town in Offaly that qualifies for Urban Regeneration with other towns benefitting from the Rural Regeneration Schemes and updated</p>

the members on the match funding requirements. She highlighted the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme which has provided funding for various schemes such as the Kinnitty Mountain Bike Trails, Derrycastle Lake and Trails and the link to the Clara Bog Boardwalk. She updated the members on the ORIS and Greenway funding which has now gained 100% funding from the Department. She highlighted the Failte Ireland grant to develop Birr as a tourism destination town. She noted that some of the projects have been possible due to the increase in the Local Property Tax, which has provided significant match funding.

She outlined the funding for projects 2016 to 2019 consisting of €13,167,840.00 in grants, €4,105,861.00 in match funding, resulting in total investment of €17,103,701.00 for County Offaly. She outlined the match funding resources from the Offaly County Council budget, Development Levies, Local Property Tax and Offaly County Council staff resources.

Ms. O. Cummins brought the members attention to the project applications 2020 submitted to various Departments and waiting on approval, amounting to €16.879m grants, with €2.272m required in match funding. She cautioned that greater challenges will arise as projects grow in scale and number. She also noted that new funding streams are becoming available bringing more opportunities for Greenways, Just Transition and Covid-19 projects. She provided the members with an overview of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2020, the Urban & Rural Regeneration Development Fund, Greenway funding 2020 and Just Transition 2020/2021. She thanked the members for their support and in particular the increase in Local Property Tax which has helped to leverage additional funding.

Cllr. J. Carroll, Cathaoirleach, congratulated Ms. O. Cummins, the Regeneration Team, Planning Staff and the management for their work in developing projects across a widespread of the county.

The members joined with the Cathaoirleach in thanking the team and noted how the county has improved with most communities seeing some benefit and how this will bring economic, tourism and linkage opportunities. They welcomed the government investment and cited a number of successful projects in their areas. They welcomed the level of public consultation and agreed that increasing the Local Property Tax has been beneficial to the county and a further presentation would be valuable before agreeing the budget and LPT for 2021.

Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick sought a co-operative approach with Laois County Council for projects in Portarlinton.

The members also sought more investigation into developing vacant properties, a review of the rates of exemption for unused commercial properties and raised concerns about delays on some projects due to third party contractors.

	<p>Cllr. E. Dooley called on collaboration with other agencies such as Bord na Mona and Waterways Ireland.</p> <p>In response Ms. S. Kennedy agreed that it is necessary to work in tandem with Laois County Council and confirmed that a submission and supporting letter for the Market Square public realm in Portarlinton has been provided. She also advised that support has been given to Laois County Council for a transportation study and flood relief scheme and a joint meeting with MD members in Portarlinton has been sought. She advised the members that they are also working on housing projects such as in Kilmalogue.</p> <p>In response to the members queries Ms. A. Dillon confirmed that vacant properties will be looked at this year and they will revert with proposals to the members and that also the rates issue for vacant commercial properties could be reviewed She pointed out that there has been some success with Compulsory Purchase Orders in 2020. She agreed that improvement with regard to dealing with third party contractors would be beneficial but cautioned that Covid-19 had compounded delays on some projects. She agreed to support Bord Na Mona, Waterways Ireland and other agencies in the development of projects.</p>
<p><b>JUST TRANSITION</b></p>	<p>Cllr. J. Carroll, Cathaoirleach informed the members that a delegation of CPG members, Chief Executive, Ms. A. Dillon, A/D.O.S. and Oireachtas members had met earlier in the day with the Irish Members of the European Parliament Deputies, Billy Kelleher, Deirdre Clune and Grace O Sullivan to discuss the prioritisation of Offaly for Just Transition. He noted that they had received a good reaction and will meet again to discuss progress in a few months. He thanked Oireachtas members for their support in seeking a long term solution and he noted that it was a fruitful meeting.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney advised the members that a Regional Transition meeting had taken place on 10<sup>th</sup> March with an update provided by the Just Transition Commissioner Mr. K. Mulvey. She noted that his third report is due to be published soon and that Just Transition Applicants are now working closely with the Department to resolve issues with their applications. She informed the members that the working groups gave their reports at the meeting and of the Departments implementation plan for midlands. Bord na Mona briefed the meeting on the €108m Peatlands Climate Action Scheme and on the LIFE Integrated Project due to be published. She noted that the Midland Regional Transition Team for the European Territorial Plan have requested engagement on this.</p> <p>Ms. A. Dillon advised the members that Bord na Mona briefed the members last week on the bog rehabilitation and the members had raised concerns about future amenity provision, the impact on Offaly's roads and the impact on adjacent agricultural lands. They also raised concerns about bog fires, biodiversity, illegal dumping and Bord Na Mona offered to further engage with relevant communities. She advised that there is more information</p>

	<p>available on their website and the public have been invited to make submissions.</p> <p>The members thanked management for their update. Cllr. J. Leahy noted that the template for meeting with the MEPs worked very well and it would be a good system to use in the future to ensure continued engagement. Cllr. E. Dooley sought more detail on the Just Transition applications and in particular how many applications involve technology, research and development. Cllr. N. Cribbin queried if any assistance could be given to community groups to help with match funding.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney agreed to source more detail on the Just Transition applications and agreed that it is difficult for community groups to raise match funding, however it is important for Offaly County Council to ensure match funding availability for its projects.</p>
<p><b>MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT</b></p>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney drew the member’s attention to the January management report. She advised the members that the planning section have been inundated with applications, work on the greenways will continue when the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted for construction and the roads programme 2021 will be presented to the members at the March Council meeting. She noted that climate action training with members and staff had taken place the previous week and thanked the members for their engagement. She noted that housing had provided the members with a full update at the January Council meeting. She highlighted that work on the Disabled Persons Grants has been on-going with additional funding sought from Department and she agreed to keep the members updated on this. She advised the members that LCDC have continued to approve funding and LEO have been providing businesses with a lot of one to one mentoring and initiatives including Covid-19 and Brexit related issues. She also noted as per Level 5 Covid-19 restrictions the Library Services continue to be provided to the public online.</p>
<p><b>CORPORATE POLICY GROUP REPORT</b></p>	<p>Cllr. J. Carroll advised the members that at the CPG meeting they prepared for the MEP meeting and discussed the agenda including the Arts Act Grants, the Regeneration update, motions, amendments to Standing orders, draft protocols for ministers, book of condolences and members support for education.</p>
<p><b>NOTICES OF MOTION</b></p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. K. Smollen, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey the following notice was agreed</p> <p><i>“With the recent inauguration of President Joe Biden in the US, that Offaly County Council calls on the Taoiseach and the Government to make representations to the new Administration there about the plight of Irish immigrants in the United States, otherwise known as ‘the undocumented Irish’ who have been living and working there, some for many years.”</i></p> <p>Cllr. K. Smollen brought the members attention to the plight of the undocumented Irish in the USA and the opportunity</p>

	<p>following the election of President Joe Biden to make representation on their behalf to the new Administration.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. M. Hackett, seconded by Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick the following motion was agreed</p> <p><i>“That Offaly County Council ask the Minister for housing, planning and local government, to update legislation to exempt school buildings and community buildings from planning permission for the installation of solar panels that cover less than 50% of the rooftop space.”</i></p> <p>In advising the members on his motion Cllr. M Hackett pointed out that legislation to exempt businesses from planning permission for the installation of solar panels that cover less than 50% rooftop space already exists and this should be extended to schools. He further noted that schools could generate excess electricity which they could then sell to the power grid and provide another source of income for them.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. P. Ormond, seconded by Cllr. T. McCormack the following motion was considered</p> <p><i>“Offaly County Council calls on the Irish Government Departments of Health, Justice and Equality and Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to recognise that Parental alienation as a situation when a child’s resistance or hostility towards one parent is not justified and is the result of psychological manipulation by the other parent and to implement recommendation 36 of the Report of the Reform of the Family Law System October 2019 now being reviewed by the Family Justice Oversight Group.”</i></p> <p>A discussion ensued and many of the members expressed concerns with regard to the implications for domestic violence and felt they required more information in this regard. Cllr. C. Claffey advised the members that Minister for Justice Helen McEntee has set up a family law oversight group to investigate the implications of changing the law in this regard.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. C. Claffey, seconded by Cllr. K. Smollen the members agreed to withdraw the motion put forward by Cllr. P. Ormond and wait on the recommendation from the Department of Justice family law oversight group.</p>
<b>COMHFHREAGRAS</b>	The members noted the correspondence issued with the agenda.
<b>AOB</b>	Cllr. S. O’ Brien brought the members attention to the possible temporary closure of the paediatric diabetic clinic in Mullingar due to lack of staff and of the huge impact this would have on many of Offaly’s’ young diabetic patients. He pointed out that this would cause further hardship as many would have to travel to Dublin and possibly use public transport which is of further concern due to Covid-19.

	On the proposal of Cllr. S. O'Brien, seconded by Cllr. C. Claffey the members resolved to write to Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly to ensure that the paediatric diabetic clinic in Mullingar is adequately staffed to ensure it does not temporarily close, as this will have a huge impact on Offaly's young diabetic patients.
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This concluded the business of the meeting.

**MINUTES CONFIRMED:**

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**CATHAOIRLEACH**

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**15<sup>th</sup> March 2021**