

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

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

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE ON
MONDAY 15TH NOVEMBER 2021 AT 3.30 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). and K. Smollen (R)
APOLOGIES:	Cllr. L. Quinn
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. G. Bruton, Meetings Administrator, and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O. (R)
VOTES OF SYMPATHY	<p>Vote of sympathy was unanimously extended to the following:</p> <p>The Glennon Family, Fahy, Rhode on the death of John Glennon;</p> <p>Mary O'Neill, Clonmullen Lodge, Edenderry on the death of her husband Peadar O'Neill;</p> <p>Anne Plunkett, St. Teresa's Terrace, Edenderry on the death of her husband George Plunkett;</p> <p>The Davy family, Tubberdaly, Rhode on the death of their father Alan Davy;</p> <p>The Molloy family, Coolnahiley, Tullamore of the death of their daughter Caoimhe Molloy.</p> <p>The Chief Executive, on her own behalf and on behalf of the staff of Offaly County Council, joined with the members in this vote of sympathy.</p>
CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES	On the proposal of Cllr. T. McCormack, seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery, the members resolved to adopt the minutes of the ordinary meeting of Offaly County Council held on 18 th October 2021.
MINUTES FOR NOTING	<p>The members noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on 8th September 2021;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on 17th September 2021
<p>OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL NOMINATIONS TO OFFALY SPORTS PARTNERSHIP 2021</p>	<p>Ms. S. Kennedy informed the members that a strategic review of the Offaly Sports Partnership has been undertaken and approved by the LCDC up to 2025. She advised the members that the new structure was agreed in October and three nominations from Offaly County Council are sought, one from each of the Municipal Districts and at least one female representative. If there is no female representative nominated the membership will reduce down to two members.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. D Harvey, seconded by Cllr. T. McCormack, Cllr. D. Owens was nominated on behalf of Tullamore Municipal District. This nomination was agreed by all members.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. P Ormond, seconded by Cllr. J. Clendennen, Cllr. C. Claffey was nominated on behalf of Birr Municipal District. This nomination was agreed by all members.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. R. McDermott, seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery, Cllr. N. Cribbin was nominated on behalf of Edenderry Municipal District. This nomination was agreed by all members.</p>
<p>JUST TRANSITION</p>	<p>Mr. S. Duclot, D.O.S. updated the members with a presentation on the National Just Transition Fund 2020 and the EU Just Transition Fund 2021-2027 including the preparation of the EU Territorial Just Transition Plan.</p> <p>He outlined the three priority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enterprise & Employment, Training & upskilling, Community Transitioning. <p>He outlined the innovative project types which include private sector, Local Authorities and community groups with 46 projects in total now under contract and in delivery mode. He advised the members that this consists of 16 Strand 1 Projects of less than €100,000 and 30 Strand 2 Projects for €100,000 and above. He noted that these projects amount to a total funding of €18.8m with €15.1m in grant funding and a match funding requirement of a minimum of 15% from other sources. The projects must be completed within 3 years of receiving funding, therefore no later than 31 December 2023 and he acknowledged that this will be a challenge for projects recently approved. He informed the members that 31 of the projects out of these 46 projects would benefit County Offaly.</p> <p>Mr. S. Duclot updated the members on the EU Transition Fund brought about to support the most affected regions in EU Member States to meet the challenges of the green transition. He noted the</p>

aim of the fund is to invest in specific projects that will generate employment in less carbon intensive industries and help to absorb redundancies from the reduction in size or closure of existing factories or plants in the regions. He advised the members that to access the EU Just Transition Fund, Ireland must prepare a Territorial Just Transition Plan for approval by the European Commission and that the Territorial Plan will define the regions eligible for funding and the measures to be funded, in line with the relevant EU regulations.

He informed the members that Ireland's allocation is €84.5m for the period of 2021 – 2027, with co-funding from national resources ranging from 50% to 85%. Ireland Territorial Just Transition Plan is to be approved by the European Commission and further public consultation is due to start before end of this year, with the implementation of the plan set for Q1 2022.

He updated the members on the National Development Plan 2021-2030 consisting of EU funding that will concentrate on the areas most impacted by the transition away from fossil fuels to generate power, and in particular will consider the needs of the Midlands region. He brought the members attention to the Climate Action Plan 2021 - Securing Our Future, a Just Transition Implementation Plan for the Midlands Region. The government will shortly finalise a Territorial Just Transition Plan which will set out the proposed investments and targeted sectors and regions under this Fund.

The members thanked Mr. S. Duclot for his presentation and they stressed the need to continue to keep pressure on to keep the focus on County Offaly and to seek continued support from representatives at Government and EU level. They sought more information on the projects including what gains they will bring and in particular the amount of jobs that will be created. They expressed their concerns on the short window of opportunity for public consultation on the EU Territorial Plan and queried who can make submissions. They stressed the importance of the Territorial Plan and that it needs to focus on land management.

The members expressed their concerns on the importation of products previously supplied by Bord na Mona and the effect on the climate that the transportation of these goods will have. They queried if there had been any progress on the proposal brought by Cllr. E. Dooley to the ESB to access €5m for community funding.

In response to the member's queries, Mr. S. Duclot advised that EnvEcon Consultants were appointed to engage with all stake holders and to inform the Department on devising the Territorial plan. He reiterated that public consultation is due before end of year and Offaly County Council are working on the submission to clearly set out its requirements. He advised that public consultation is usually 6-8 weeks and is open to any member of the public, but he will clarify this with the Department and he will

	<p>relay more information when it becomes available. He informed the members that 9 to 10 projects are exclusively in Offaly and as information on the Department website states that there are 103 direct jobs and 600 indirect created as a result of the Just Transition projects.</p> <p>He advised the members that the eligibility criteria will form part of the public consultation and when the draft is published this should provide a better understanding of the process.</p> <p>The members requested that Offaly County Council’s submission on the Territorial Plan be presented to them and Mr. S. Duclot agreed to revert to the members when the timeframe for the submission is available.</p>
<p>MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT</p>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney brought the members attention to the monthly management report. She congratulated Geashill on their win as tidiest village in the Tidy Towns Competition, noting its a fantastic achievement for the community who have been working for this over number of years and she acknowledged all medals retained in Tullamore, Birr, Clonbullogue and Ballycumber.</p> <p>She advised the members on the progress of the Laois Offaly Just Transition project for Medieval Churches, Conservation and Pollination. Howley Hayes Cooney were awarded the tender and the first round of site visits have taken place. She noted the maintenance programme continues at the medieval church sites that have been conserved in recent years and work is on-going with the community at Kilcomin, near Shinrone, to plan for the conservation of the early Christian Monastic Site. Also a method statement has been commissioned for the conservation of the burial ground wall at Lemanaghan.</p> <p>She brought the members attention to the recent launch of Accelerate Green by Bord na Mona offering high quality office space with Wi-Fi, open plan desk space, meeting rooms and individual offices. She acknowledged the amount of projects and work taking place in the Heritage services. She advised the members that feedback from the public consultation on N52 link from Tullamore to Kilbeggan is being prepared and works on the Active Travel Programme and Edenderry Inner Relief are on-going.</p> <p>She noted that Housing Services had provided a detailed presentation at the October meeting and update on their services is available in the report. She informed the members that LCDC meetings and projects are continuing and the Arts and Libraries continue to avail of funding, providing services and running events. She acknowledged the on-going work carried out by the Local Enterprise Office in providing supports for businesses. She advised the members that the financial report and list of Chief Executive Orders are also available for their review.</p>

	<p>Cllr. F. Moran congratulated Ballycumber for their success in the Tidy Towns Competitions and noted increasing their points is a significant achievement and shows they are going in right direction.</p> <p>Cllr. K. Smollen called on the council to build more social houses as he expressed concerns about the HAP system.</p> <p>Cllr. N. Cribbin joined with Cllr. M. Hackett in congratulating Geashill and thanked the staff in the Edenderry Municipal District and Offaly County Council for their work with the community in this area.</p> <p>Cllr. D. Harvey, Cathaoirleach joined with the members in congratulating all the towns and villages that had increased their standing in the Tidy Towns competition.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney advised that HAP is one of suite of options available for social housing and the Housing Section utilise the resources available to them as per government policy.</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, civic receptions and proposal to hold the December meeting on 13th December. Further discussions on Civic receptions will be in January 2022.</p>
<p>NOTICE MOTION OF</p>	<p>On the proposal of Cllr. Mark Hackett, seconded by Cllr. N. Feighery the members resolved that Offaly County Council considers the provision of better equestrian infrastructure to support the establishments of safe riding areas and riding trails across the county.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies lands that may be suitable for horse riding trails across the county. • Explores how other jurisdictions embrace horse riding into their activities - for leisure and for tourism. • Engages with Failte Ireland to examine how a tourism network of equestrian activities around Offaly could be established. <p>Mr. S. Duclot advised the members that this is a policy issue and he recommended to refer the item for discussion at the next Strategic Policy Committee.</p> <p>Cllr. K. Smollen noted he does not support this motion.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. Robert McDermott, seconded by Cllr. T. McCormack the members resolved that this council calls on the Chief Executive to provide a briefing to the Elected members on the proposals to amend the legislation governing the Register of Electors.</p> <p>Cllr. R. McDermott brought the members attention to www.voter.ie a new service currently only available to Dublin</p>

residents. Cllr. F. Moran requested the resolution be circulated to all Local Authorities.

Mr. E. Fennell, S.E.O. read a response from the Department in relation to this motion as follows:

As discussed following a number of reports, recommendations and consultation the Government committed to a number of electoral reforms including the modernisation of the electoral register. The overall goal for the Electoral Registration modernisation project is to deliver a modern accessible and secure voter registration system; make the process of registering to vote more responsive to the needs of the public; and to streamline related administration while maximising the security and integrity of our democratic process.

Work is ongoing on all the various elements of the project, including the legislation to underpin the modernisation. The general scheme of the bill of the Electoral Reform Bill (Part 3 provides for the modernisation proposals for the register) was published in January 2021 and was the subject of pre-legislative scrutiny by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage who reported in August 2021.

The Department continues to work with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel to the Government (OPC) on the drafting of the bill and work is also continuing on the other interconnecting elements of the project to bring it to fruition.

Mr. Fennell went out to outline a response from the Minister to a recent Parliamentary Question on the issue.

Question: To ask the Minister for Housing; Local Government and Heritage if his Department plans to extend the online voter registration on voter.ie beyond Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Minister of State for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (Malcolm Noonan) response:

The Programme for Government - Our Shared Future commits to the delivery of an ambitious programme of electoral reform, including the modernisation of the electoral registration process. These reforms will be underpinned by the Electoral Reform Bill, which is currently being drafted.

The modernisation includes the introduction of continuous or rolling registration; the simplification of forms and processes; the use of PPSNs in the registration process; as well as the gradual roll-out of an online option for registration. Together, these reforms will simplify and streamline the process of registration, making it easier for people to register to vote and update their details and for local authorities to maintain and update their registers.

	<p>Voter.ie is an initiative of the Dublin local authorities. It is an on-line platform, which offers online registration via MyGovID as well as a shared database within which each local authority continues to manage its register. On foot of a technical evaluation of the platform and its suitability for national roll-out, my Department established a governance structure drawn from central and local government to consider the further development of Voter.ie in this regard. This work is ongoing.</p> <p>Mr. E. Fennell advised the members that he will continue to monitor progress and come back to the members when more information becomes available and an update can be organised when required.</p> <p>He agreed to circulate the resolution to all Local Authorities.</p>
COMHDHÁLACHA	None
COMHFHREAGRAS	The members noted the correspondence issued with the agenda.
ANY OTHER BUSINESS	<p>Cllr. T. McCormack requested that a public reception for all sporting clubs and organisations should be organised to acknowledge their contribution to the community and their many achievements.</p> <p>Cllr. D. Harvey Cathaoirleach congratulated Tullamore Senior GAA for winning the Dowling Cup.</p>

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH **RUNAÍ**

13th December 2021