

**Minutes of Meeting of Longford County Council**

**held in the Council Chamber and via Microsoft Teams on**

**Wednesday, 20 March 2024 at 4pm**

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**PRESIDING**: Councillor Colm Murray, Cathaoirleach

**MEMBERS PRESENT**: Councillors – John Browne, Seamus Butler, Mick Cahill, Colin Dalton, Gerry Hagan, Paul Ross, Pat O’Toole, Garry Murtagh, Peggy Nolan, Gerard Farrell, Uruemu Adejinmi, Martin Monaghan, Mark Casey, Gerry Warnock, Turlough McGovern, Paraic Brady

**IN ATTENDANCE:**  Mr. Paddy Mahon, Chief Executive

Ms. Barbara Heslin, Director of Services

Ms. Samantha Healy, Director of Services

Mr. John Brannigan, Director of Services

Mr. Michael Nevin, A/Director of Services

Mr. John McKeon, Head of Finance/Director of Services

**APOLOGIES:** PJ Reilly

**MEETINGS**

**ADMINISTRATOR**: Ms. Claire McNabola

Cathaoirleach Councillor Colm Murray together with the Members wished Councillor PJ Reilly a speedy recovery and that he would be back to good health soon.

1. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

On the proposal of Councillor Peggy Nolan seconded by Councillor Seamus Butler the Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 14February 2024, as circulated, were confirmed and adopted.

1. **MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

None

1. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

None

1. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT**

Noted

1. **MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY GROUP MEETING HELD ON THE 16 JANRAURY 2024– AS CIRC ULATED**

Noted

1. **FINANCE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**
2. On the proposal of Councillor Seamus Butler, seconded by Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi it was agreed to approve the raising of a loan of €2,330,000 from the Housing Finance Agency to finance approved Local Authority Housing Loan applications, as authorised by the Housing Acts
3. **Capital Budget 2024 – 2026**

Head of Finance, John McKeon presented a detailed report on the capital budget. The Executive responded to queries raised by the members including:

* Funding for roads and regeneration
* Provision of funding for a new Business Park
* New Library for Longford Town and the possibility of an arts and culture centre in the town
* Affordable Housing
* Pobal Le Cheile Project

The Members welcomed the Capital Budget and thanked the Finance section for the detailed report. They recognised that this is an aspirational and ambitious budget. They highlighted all the positive work being delivered in the county.

Councillor Gerard Farrell proposed that Longford County Council write to the ESB, to seek clarification on their plans for the Power Station Site in Lanesboro.

Chief Executive Paddy Mahon thanked the Members for their positive contributions and thanked John McKeon and the Finance Team for all their work in the preparation of the Capital Budget, Paddy Mahon continued to say it’s a true reflection of the ambition of Our Elected Members.

On the proposal of Councillor Seamus Butler and seconded by Councillor Peggy the Capital Budget 2024 – 2026 was adopted.

1. **Increased Cost of Business (ICOB) Grant**

John McKeon gave the Members an overview of the Increased Cost of Business Grant, a €257m incentive to support small and medium sized businesses. John emphasised to the Members that this was a grant and not a waiver.

The Members welcomed the package, they concurred this was a fantastic initiative from the Department, they also paid tribute to the Finance Team and the Local Enterprise Office for all their support to the Business Community over the past few years.

The members stressed the importance of making businesses aware of the scheme and suggested that the Council engage with the Chamber of Commerce.

1. **HOUSING, PLANNING, REGENERATION & CAPITAL PROJECTS**
2. **Consideration of disposal of Property at 21 Chapel Lane, Longford Town, Co Longford, in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 issued on the 28 February 2024 – as circulated.**

On the proposal of Councillor John Browne and seconded by Councillor Peggy Nolan the disposal of Property at 21 Chapel Lane, Longford Town, Co Longford, in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 issued on the 28 February 2024 was approved.

1. **Consideration of disposal of Property at 4 Church Street, Edgeworthstown, Co Longford, in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 issued on the 28 February 2024 – as circulated.**

On the proposal of Councillor Pat O’Toole and seconded by Councillor Garry Murtagh, the disposal of Property at 4 Church Street, Edgeworthstown, Co Longford, in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 issued on the 28 February 2024 was approved.

1. **COMMUNITY, LIBRARY AND CULTURAL SERVICES, CORPORATE AND HUMAN RESOURCES**
2. **Consideration of Intercultural Grants under the Community Grant Support Scheme 2024**

On the proposal of Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi and seconded by Councillor Paul Ross the proposed Intercultural Grant applications were approved.

1. **Approval to the appointment of the following as members of Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), who have been nominated to replace outgoing members –**
2. **Mr. Fulton Grant, nominee of Longford Chamber of Commerce/Business Pillar**

On the proposal of Councillor Seamus Butler and seconded by Councillor Peggy Nolan, Mr Fulton Grant was appointed to the of Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

1. **Mr. Enda Mc Manus, nominee of County Longford Public Participation Network**

On the proposal of Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi and seconded by Councillor Turlough McGovern, Mr Enda McManus was appointed to the of Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

1. **Consideration and adoption of Draft Annual Report 2023**

On the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross and seconded by Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi it was agreed to adopt the draft Annual Report 2023 as circulated subject to the inclusion of the Statement of Comprehensive Income and performance indicators. This content will be updated when available and when the Annual Financial Statement 2023 is adopted by the Elected Members at a later date.

1. **Civic Reception Proposal**

The Elected Members considered the recommendation from the CPG regarding hosting a civic reception for Community of Aughnacliffe. On the proposal of Councillor Garry Murtagh and seconded by Councillor Paraic Brady it was agreed that Longford County Council would host a Civic reception for the Community of Aughnacliffe, to honour their All Island All Ireland win in the Pride of Place Awards. A date will be agreed in the coming days.

1. **Notice of Motions**
2. **On the proposal of Councillor Seamus Butler seconded by Councillor Uruemu Adejnmi**

That Longford Co Co provides the resources to enable a door-to-door check of all the existing premises with listed electors, especially but not exclusively, in the Longford Town area to ensure that some blatant inaccuracies can be corrected. This should be put in place as a matter of urgency to be effective before the forthcoming Local Elections

**Response**

Barbara provided the members with a comprehensive update on the work being carried out by the Franchise Team.

The importance of maintaining an accurate Register of Electors is well recognised by the Franchise Teams in Longford County Council as it is throughout the local government sector. The Franchise Team is happy to work with any elected member to secure increased accuracy of the Register.

Core modernisation changes to the electoral registration process that commenced in the latter part of 2022 included a move from household registration to individual registration only. Individual registration and personal responsibility on individuals for their registration limits the effectiveness of field workers. For that reason, only 7 of the 31 local authorities used fieldworkers in 2022 with effectiveness, access, and people’s reluctance to give personal information on the doorstep being primary reasons for discontinuation of use of fieldworkers. Our own experience in summer 2023 was similar when a number of our Franchise Team conducted fieldwork in a housing estate in Longford Town. The fundamental restructuring introduced with the Electoral Reform Act 2022 was a systematic one balancing easier access and personal responsibility with registration authority activity. Whilst the move from household-based to individual registration limits the effectiveness of fieldworkers the system has introduced an important functionality. A more effective way possibly to address the inaccuracies highlighted is to avail of the functionality on check the register to make a third-party claim to correct the register. Completion of this claim form allows an individual or elected member to submit a request to the registration local authority for an amendment to an entry on the register other than your own. This can include for example if you know that there is an incorrect entry on the register. The registration authority is then enabled to deal with any incorrect entry or inaccuracy by making any enquiries it considers appropriate to consider the request and determine what action it should take in respect of the claim.

The move from household-based to individual registration required registration authorities to review and revise approaches to maintaining the register. The Franchise Team have undertaken many initiatives and work on data quality to maintain an electoral register that is secure, comprehensive and accurate. A significant number of citizens have engaged with the Franchise Team through Check the Register platform (4,479 as at 12 noon today). In addition we have received and processed 210 manual application forms, 83 of those were postal voters applications since January 2023. Large-scale national and local public communications campaigns supported this work and the Department have provided additional funding to support registration authorities in this work.

The Franchise Team is currently working, following the recent electoral event, to address the corrections required resulting from return of polling information cards to secure enhanced Register accuracy in advance of the Local Elections.

It was agreed that the Franchise Team will provide a soft copy of the Electoral Register on a weekly basis to the Elected Members. This will be made available on the Member’s Extranet.

1. **GENERAL**
2. **Notice of Motions**
3. **On the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross, seconded by Councillor Paraic Brady**

That Longford County Council recognises the significant contribution that farming and the Agri-sector make to the Irish and local economy. The council acknowledges the income challenge on Irish farmers arising from the significant increases in the cost of doing business, regulatory costs, and cuts in Basic Income support for farmers.

The Council calls on the government to introduce no further regulations on farmers or any other measures that may increase costs on farms without full negotiation and agreement with the IFA. The council calls on the European Union and the Irish Government to provide additional stand-alone funding, separate to the Common Agricultural Policy, To support farmers to undertake climate and biodiversity measures.’

The members also calls on the government to restore the VAT refund for essential farm infrastructure. This comes on the back of recent changes to the flat rate VAT scheme, which allowed unregistered farmers to reclaim VAT on certain expenditure on farm investments.

**Response**

It was agreed that Longford County Council write to the Dept of Agriculture to provide additional stand-alone funding, separate to the Common Agricultural Policy, To support farmers to undertake climate and biodiversity measures’, and also to restore the VAT refund for essential farm infrastructure.

1. **On the proposal of Councillor Paraic Brady, seconded by Councillor Mick Cahill**

We call on Longford County Council to write to Minister Darragh O Brien to seek an extension to the waiver in place currently on Development Contributions which is due to cease on 24th April 2024.

**Response**

It was agreed that Longford County Council write to Minister Darragh O’Brien and seek extension to the waiver in place currently on Development Contributions which is due to cease on 24th April 2024.

1. **CORRESPONDENCE**
2. Correspondence received from Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine re. Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme (SCEP) – Noted
3. **VOTES OF SYMPATHY**

Councillor Paraic Brady expressed his sympathy to the Crowe following the recent passing of Sharon Crowe, Drumlish Co. Longford. R.I.P.

Councillor Seamus Butler & Councillor Martin Monaghan expressed their sympathy to the Reid family on the recent passing of Fr Desmond Reid RIP

The Members collectively expressed their sympathies to Chief Executive Paddy Mahon and the extended Mahon family on the recent passing of his father Brian Mahon, Tuam Co. Galway.

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Claire McNabola**

**Meetings Administrator**

**Confirmed and adopted at Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 10 April 2024.**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Cathaoirleach**