

**Minutes of Meeting of Longford County Council
held in the Council Chamber and via Microsoft Teams on
Wednesday, 11 June at 4pm**

PRESIDING: Councillor Mark Casey

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Paul Ross, Niall Gannon, Garry Murtagh, Gerry Hagan, Padraig McNamara, Martin Skelly, Seamus Butler, Uruemu Adejinmi, Mick Cahill, Pat O'Toole, Sean Mimmagh, Kevin Hussey, Martin Monaghan, David Cassidy, Turlough McGovern

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. Paddy Mahon, Chief Executive
Ms. Barbara Heslin, Director of Services
Mr. Michael Nevin, A/Director of Services
Mr. John Brannigan, Director of Services
Mr. John McKeon, Director of Services
Ms. Mary Gouldsbury, Senior Executive Officer
Mr. Bernard Shea, Climate Action Coordinator
Mr. Ciaran Murphy, Senior Executive Officer

APOLOGIES: Councillor Peggy Nolan
Ms. Lorraine McKee, Meetings Administrator
Ms. Samantha Healy, Director of Service

A/MEETINGS

ADMINISTRATOR: Mr. Gerard Dennigan

On the proposal of Councillor Mark Casey, seconded by Councillor Turlough McGovern, the members unanimously agreed to take a five-minute break to remember the following individuals who passed away recently.

- Andrew Lowry, employee of Longford County Council.
- Rose Hagan, mother of Councillor Gerard Hagan.
- Anne Heslin, mother of Barbara Heslin, Director of Services.

- Aida McDermott, former employee of Longford County Council and mother of current employee Owen McDermott.

Their contributions and memories were acknowledged unanimously by the members. R.I.P.

Suspension of Standing Orders – Discussion on Relocation of Physiotherapy Unit

On the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross, seconded by Councillor Seamus Butler, the members unanimously agreed to suspend Standing Orders to discuss the proposed relocation of the physiotherapy unit at St. Joseph's, County Longford, to either Athlone or Mullingar.

The members unanimously expressed the importance of retaining this vital facility in County Longford, highlighting the essential service it provides to the people of the county.

There was unanimous agreement among the members to confirm the full support of Longford County Council in ensuring that this facility remains within County Longford. The members also emphasised that the support of Oireachtas Members is critical in securing a positive outcome.

The members called on HIQA to identify and provide a suitable temporary location for the physiotherapy unit in County Longford during the ongoing works at St. Joseph's. This measure is essential to ensure the continued delivery of vital services to the people of County Longford without interruption.

1. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- (i) On the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross seconded by Councillor Seamus Butler the minutes of the monthly meeting of Longford County Council held on 14 May 2025, as circulated, were confirmed, and adopted.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

None

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

Councillor Garry Murtagh declared a conflict of interest in relation to his Notice of Motion, noting his position as a Tús Supervisor.

4. MANAGEMENT REPORT

The members noted the Management report.

5. TO NOTE ADOPTED MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY GROUP MEETING HELD ON 09 APRIL 2025

Noted

6. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

(I) Consideration of draft County Longford Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030 – online presentation by Outscope consultants

Outscope Consultants, represented by Caro-Lynne Ferris, delivered a comprehensive presentation to the Elected Members on the draft County Longford Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) 2025–2029. The presentation provided an in-depth overview of the plan's development, purpose, and proposed strategic direction. Caro -Lynne discussed all questions and comments raised by the Members.

The presentation covered the following key areas:

- **Introduction:** An overview of the purpose and scope of the Outdoor Recreation Plan, including its role in supporting health, wellbeing, tourism, and rural development across County Longford.
- **Strategic Context:** A summary of relevant national, regional, and local policies that inform and align with the plan, ensuring consistency with broader strategic objectives.
- **Consultation Summary:** An outline of the stakeholder and public consultation process, including engagement methods and key feedback themes that informed the draft plan.
- **Current Situation:** A detailed assessment of existing outdoor recreation infrastructure and resources within the county, identifying both strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Strategic Objectives and Action Plan:** A presentation of the plan's core objectives and corresponding actions aimed at enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities over the 2025–2029 period.
- **Appendix 1 – Definition of Outdoor Recreation:** A clear definition outlining the scope of outdoor recreation considered within the plan, encompassing a wide range of activities in natural settings.

The Members welcomed the presentation and acknowledged the importance of developing a strategic framework to support and enhance outdoor recreation in County Longford.

On the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross seconded by Councillor Seamus Butler, the draft County Longford Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030 was approved.

(II) Section 183 – Demountable Cabin Slieve Clondra, Co. Longford

On the proposal of Councillor Mark Casey seconded by Councillor Seamus Butler, Section 183 Demountable Cabin Slieve Clondra, Co. Longford was approved.

(III) **Section 183 – P Mulligan – Freehold Interest of 2 Parnell Road, Granard, Co. Longford**

On the proposal of Councillor Turlough McGovern seconded by Councillor Kevin Hussey, Section 183 P Mulligan – Freehold Interest of 2 Parnell Road, Granard, Co. Longford was approved.

(IV) **Midlands Regional Homeless Action Plan 2025-2029**

Mary Gouldsbury, A/Director of Services provided the members with an update on the Midlands Regional Homeless Action Plan 2025-2029.

On the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross seconded by Councillor Pat O'Toole, the Midlands Regional Homeless Action Plan 2025-2029 was approved.

(V) **Approval of the appointment of the following as members of Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), who have been nominated to replace outgoing members –**

- **Ms. Breege Campbell, nominee of County Longford Public Participation Network**

On the proposal of Councillor Seamus Butler seconded by Councillor Paul Ross, Ms. Breege Campbell was appointed as members of Longford Local Community Development Committee

- **Ms. Bernadette Fagan, nominee of County Longford Public Participation Network**

On the proposal of Councillor Seamus Butler seconded by Councillor Paul Ross, Ms. Bernadette Fagan was appointed as members of Longford Local Community Development Committee

7. PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

(i) **To note planning applications received**

Noted

(ii) **Climate Action Plan 2024-2029**

Bernard Shea, Climate Action Coordinator, presented to the Elected Members an update on the progress made to date regarding the Climate Action Plan 2024–2029, following its approval earlier in 2024.

The presentation covered the following key areas:

- Overview of the Longford County Council Climate Action Plan 2024–2029
- Progress highlights for 2024–2025
- Examples of Community Climate Action Projects

- Developments in New Social Housing and Housing Retrofits
- Upgrades to Public Lighting
- Initiatives in Active Travel
- Improvements to Drainage and Bridges
- Expansion of Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Infrastructure
- Adoption of Electric Vehicles

A comprehensive review of progress under the County Longford Climate Action Plan will be made available on the Council's website.

Bernard and the Management Team addressed questions raised by the Members during the presentation. The Members unanimously thanked Bernard for the presentation and complemented the team on progress to date.

The members raised questions around the timeframe for the completion of the house retrofitting programme. Chief Executive Paddy Mahon explained that the retrofitting schedule is based on funding allocated by the Department. The progress of the retrofitting work will depend directly on the amount of funding received.

(iii) Notice of Motions

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Mick Cahill and seconded by Councillor Pat O'Toole

I call on Longford County Council to through the relevant SPC, review its current policy on Traffic Calming Measures throughout the County in our Towns, Villages, Residential Areas and on approach roads to Rural Schools in the interest of road safety.

Councillor Cahill stated that the current road safety measures in County Longford are not effective and called for a thorough reconsideration of how the local authority implements these measures. He specifically highlighted serious concerns in Kenagh, where motorists entering the village from the Longford and Ballymahon directions frequently travel at high speeds. Councillor Cahill emphasised the urgent need for appropriate safety interventions, particularly given the presence of a school and residential estates in the area. He stressed that the safety of residents and road users is of paramount importance.

Response:

Longford County Council Road Design Section is reviewing the current Traffic Calming Policy. As part of the review, the team is consulting with colleagues in Active Travel and with the Municipal District Area Engineers. The main objectives of the Policy are to improve road safety in towns and villages, reduce and control vehicular speeds, improve driver awareness of vulnerable road users, enhance

the environment and reduce noise, disturbance and anxiety in the area being assessed.

It was agreed that, as a first step, proposals for inclusion in a Draft revised Traffic Calming Policy will be presented to the Physical Development SPC for consideration and discussion.

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Pat O'Toole and seconded by Councillor Mick Cahill

I call on Transport Infrastructure Ireland and Longford County Council for an update on the preferred route option on the N.55 between Ballymahon and Athlone. What is the current timeframe for the delivery of this much needed project.

Response:

Westmeath County Council in partnership with Longford County Council and in association with Transport Infrastructure Ireland announced the Preferred Route Corridor (PRC) for the N55 Athlone to Ballymahon Scheme on the 10 May 2023. As the N55 Athlone to Ballymahon Scheme was not listed in the current National Development Plan (NDP) it was decided to advance the Scheme on an incremental basis (i.e. scheme divided into 4 or 5 phases). The proposed first phase is the by-pass of Ballykeeran Village.

It was agreed that Longford County Council will write to Transport Infrastructure Ireland requesting an update on the scheme.

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Paul Ross and seconded by Councillor Gerry Hagan

That Longford County Council call on the Minister for Climate, Environment and Energy Darragh O'Brien to open up the Domestic Waste Water Treatment grant to all those whose septic tanks need upgrading who wish to apply for it. The current scheme has 3 criteria which are:

- Grant under the National Inspection Plan.
- Grant in Prioritised Areas for Action.
- Grant in High Status Objective Catchment Areas.

County Longford has no areas in prioritised areas for action or high status objective catchment areas which means that unless a house is inspected and fails the criteria, Only then can it apply for the grant which the grant almost unattainable in County Longford in its current format.

Response:

The current Domestic Waste Water Treatment (DWWT) grant system uses a risk-based, targeted approach to ensure national funding is directed where it will have greatest impact (i.e. Prioritised Areas for Action and High Status Objective Catchment Areas) to meet Ireland's Water Framework Directive (WFD) obligations under EU law.

Under the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI), the Environment Section of Longford County Council has committed to 10 no. DWWT inspections for 2025 under the National Inspection Plan (NIP), and well over the 4 no. minimum prescribed by the EPA. Assessment is based on each Local Authority's own desk-based analysis.

Grant applications or requests from members of the public without a prior inspection from the Local Authority are not considered.

To expand the criteria for grant aid beyond the existing will ultimately lessen the scheme's environmental impact, divert limited resources away from the most urgent and sensitive cases, and weaken Ireland's compliance with EU directives.

Finally, opening a DWWT grant application to all would drastically increase workloads and administration demands requiring additional staffing provision.

It was agreed that Longford County Council will write to the Minister for Climate, Environment and Energy outlining the proposal as outlined in the Notice of Motion.

8. GENERAL

(i) Notice of Motions

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Paul Ross and seconded by Councillor Mick Cahill

I call on Longford County Council to seek a meeting with senior management of Uisce Éireann to resolve the serious issue of the water main upgrade from Carrickboy to Ballymahon. This main is bursting on a daily basis causing hardship for families, businesses and farms and there is no information available as to when the upgrade is due to start or what is causing the delay. This level of service is unacceptable, and this issue needs to be resolved as soon as possible.

Response:

It was agreed that Longford County Council will write to Uisce Éireann regarding the Notice of Motion.

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Pat O'Toole and seconded by Councillor Martin Monaghan

I call on the Department of Health and Children and the HSE to immediately commence a recruitment process for the staff required to carry out Assessments of Need for children on the waiting list for Special Education Supports, in light of recent media reports that the waiting list for the assessments could increase to a very alarming level of 15,000.

Response:

It was agreed that Longford County Council will write to the Department of Health and Children and the HSE regarding the Notice of Motion.

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Garry Murtagh and seconded by Councillor Gerry Hagan

I call on Longford County Council to write to the Minister Dara Calleary with responsibility for the Department of Social Protection, to conduct a full review of Community Employment, Rural Social Scheme (RSS) and the Tus initiative, with particular attention to the minuscule top-up payment to people that avail of or are activated on the current schemes and to include a full review of supervisor's salaries and pension entitlements, which need to be index linked to at least a grade 4/5 of a civil servants rates with the implementation of the same.

These schemes play an important and integrate role within our communities, up and down the country and the lack of respect and fair play being shown to these workers is unjust. Without their support within such areas as, childcare/social care/ Tidy Towns, to name but a few would see the very fabric of our society deteriorate even further.

Response:

It was agreed that Longford County Council will write to Minister Dara Calleary regarding the Notice of Motion.

9. CORRESPONDENCE

- (i) Correspondence from Uisce Éireann regarding the provision of generators
Noted
- (ii) Correspondence from Fingal County Council regarding ban on fox hunting on Council owned lands
Noted
- (iii) Correspondence received from Minister Patrick O'Donovan – Notice of Motion at April Meeting of Longford County Council
Noted

- (iv) **Correspondence from Donegal County Council regarding Road Safety and the wearing of High visibility vests**
Noted

10. VOTES OF SYMPATHY

Votes of sympathy were noted at the start of the meeting.

11. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Longford County Council will take place on Friday, 20 June 2025 at 4pm in the Council Chamber. This will be the Annual Meeting.

Chief Executive Paddy Mahon informed the Elected Members that Martin Dalbey will be retiring from his role at Center Parcs. He acknowledged Martin's vision, sincerity, and professionalism, which were instrumental in the successful delivery of Longford Forest—Ireland's largest and, undoubtedly, most successful tourism attraction in County Longford.

The Members unanimously agreed that a presentation should be made to Martin in recognition of his outstanding contribution and that this proposal be brought forward for consideration at the July meeting of the Corporate Policy Group.

Cathaoirleach Mark Casey extended his thanks to the Elected Members for their support during his term as Cathaoirleach, noting that this meeting would be his final one in advance of the upcoming Annual Meeting.

Chief Executive Paddy Mahon, on behalf of the management and employees of Longford County Council, expressed his sincere appreciation to the Cathaoirleach for his support and leadership throughout the year.

Signed: 

Gerard Dennigan
A/Meetings Administrator

Confirmed and adopted at Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 9 July 2025

Signed: 

Cathaoirleach