

**Minutes of Meeting of Longford County Council
held in the Council Chamber and via Microsoft Teams on
Wednesday, 10 June 2026 at 3:30pm**

PRESIDING: Councillor Garry Murtagh

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Seamus Butler, Paul Ross, Niall Gannon, Gerry Hagan, Padraig McNamara, Colin Dalton, Uruemu Adejinmi, Pat O'Toole, David Cassidy, Turlough McGovern, Kevin Hussey, Martin Monaghan, Sean Mimmagh, Peggy Nolan, Mark Casey and Martin Skelly

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. Paddy Mahon, Chief Executive
Mr. John Brannigan, Director of Services
Mr. John McKeon, Director of Finance
Ms. Barbara Heslin, Director of Services
Ms. Samantha Healy, Director of Services
Ms. Grainne Harte, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. Peter Brady, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. David Coppiner, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. Claire Reehill, Administrative Officer
Mr. Gary Brady, Climate Action Officer
Mr. Con Diffley, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. David Tubridy, Senior Engineer
Ms. Martina McGrath, Senior Executive Officer
Ms. Louise Kiernan, Senior Planner
Ms. Louise Connaughton, Clerical Officer

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mick Cahill

MEETINGS

ADMINISTRATOR: Ms. Lorraine McKee

Presentation of the N4

Shane Gill, Westmeath National Roads Office and John Holmes, Roughan & O'Donovan AECOM made a presentation to the Members on the N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky) Phase 3.

The presentation included the following:

- Project Overview
- Project Location
- Need for the Scheme
- Need for the Scheme – Policy Context
- Need for the Scheme – Safety
- Project Progression
- Design Development – Phase 3 Preliminary Design
 - Cross Section
 - Junction Strategy
 - Active Travel
 - Complementary Measures
- Next Steps

They answered questions raised by the Elected Members. These included:

- Design of road
- Timeline for construction and completion
- Ballinalee Road underpass and risk of anti social behaviour
- Inclusion of Active Travel and any impact on delivery timelines
- Future of existing N4
- Budget and funding for the scheme

The Elected Members thanked Shane and John for their detailed presentation and for attending the meeting. In conclusion, they emphasised the importance of the delivery of this strategic infrastructure for the region and for the economic development of County Longford.

1. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

On the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross seconded by Councillor Pat O'Toole the minutes of the special meeting of Longford County Council held on 5 May 2026, as circulated, were confirmed, and adopted.

On the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross, seconded by Councillor Kevin Hussey the minutes of the monthly meeting of Longford County Council held on 13 May 2026, as circulated, were confirmed and adopted.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

None

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

None

4. MANAGEMENT REPORT

Noted

5. TO NOTE CE AND DELEGATION ORDERS

Noted

6. TO NOTE ADOPTED MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY GROUP MEETING HELD ON 8 APRIL 2026

Noted

7. TO NOTE ADOPTED MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY GROUP MEETING HELD ON 14 APRIL 2026

Noted

8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- (i) **To note the minutes of the Economic, Enterprise and Rural Development SPC meeting held on 18 February 2026**

Noted

- (ii) **Annual Report Statement on Internal Controls and Governance Statement**
On the proposal of Councillor Gerry Hagan seconded by Councillor Pat O'Toole the Annual Report Statement on Internal Controls and Governance Statement was approved.

- (iii) **Notice of Motion**
The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Mark Casey seconded by Councillor Turlough McGovern

I call on Longford County Council not to administer any paperwork in relation to the Vacant Above the Shop Grant.

Response:

In response to the Notice of Motion, it should be noted that the Vacant Above the Shop Grant is a national scheme introduced by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under the Government's Housing for All strategy and the Town Centre First Policy. Local authorities are required to administer the scheme in accordance with the terms, conditions and operational guidelines issued by the Department.

The primary objective of the scheme is to bring long-term vacant and underutilised properties back into residential use, increase housing supply, support town centre regeneration, and encourage sustainable development by making better use of existing building stock. The scheme specifically seeks to reactivate vacant space above commercial premises, helping to increase residential occupancy within town centres and support the vitality and viability of main streets. . Importantly, the scheme is designed to support residential

use above active commercial premises and does not seek to replace the commercial function of town centres. The retention of commercial activity at ground-floor level is a fundamental aspect of the scheme and helps ensure that our town centres remain vibrant places for business, employment and community activity.

Longford County Council's role is to assess and administer applications in accordance with the Department's guidelines and eligibility criteria. Where an application meets the requirements of the scheme, the Council does not have the statutory discretion to refuse participation in the administration of the grant. However, the Council does have a responsibility to carefully assess and evaluate each individual proposal to ensure that the proposed development is consistent with relevant planning considerations, local development objectives, regeneration strategies and the broader objectives of the Council for the sustainable development of our towns and villages. Applicants may also avail of grant support for professional expertise, Expert Advise Grant, to assist in preparing proposals that comply with planning requirements, building regulations and the policy objectives of Longford County Council.

To date, the Council has received three applications under the scheme. Each application will be assessed carefully on its own merits and progressed in accordance with the national scheme criteria. It will also ensure that the delivery of additional residential accommodation complements the continued commercial vitality and functionality of our town centres while aligning with the Council's adopted policies and objectives for town centre regeneration, housing delivery and sustainable development.

There was a counter proposal proposed by Councillor Seamus Butler seconded by Councillor Paul Ross against this motion requesting Longford County Council not to administer any paperwork in relation to the Vacant Above the Shop Grant.

A roll call vote was taken from the members present on the motion proposed by Councillor Mark Casey and seconded by Councillor Turlough McGovern.

Results of vote as follows:

Yes	2 votes
No	14 votes
Abstain	1 vote

Based on a majority vote of fourteen votes against this Notice of Motion, Longford County Council will not be supporting this motion.

**The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Paul Ross
seconded by Councillor Peggy Nolan**

I call on Longford County Council to offer an invitation to the British Embassy to invite King Charles to visit County Longford on his upcoming state visit to Ireland to explore our culture and heritage links to the United Kingdom

There was a counter proposal proposed by Councillor Mark Casey seconded by Councillor David Cassidy against this motion requesting Longford County Council to write to the British Embassy inviting King Charles to visit County Longford on his upcoming state visit to Ireland to explore our culture and heritage links to the United Kingdom.

A roll call vote was taken from the members present on the motion proposed by Councillor Paul Ross seconded by Councillor Peggy Nolan.

Results of vote as follows:

Yes	7 votes
No	6 votes
Abstain	4 vote

Based on a majority vote of seven votes in favour of this Notice of Motion, Longford County Council will write to the British Embassy to invite King Charles to visit County Longford on his upcoming state visit to Ireland.

9. PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

(i) To note planning applications received

Noted

(ii) Climate Action Plan Progress Report 2025

Noted

(iii) N55 Pavement Scheme – Westmeath / Longford Section 85 Agreement

Director of Services Barbara Heslin informed the members that Westmeath are the lead authority for the contract which is currently at tender stage. The single contract will cover the two separate pavement works meaning that there will be one works period and one period of disruption. Longford County Council will supervise the works carried out in Longford. The works are projected to commence in mid to late July and will last approximately 7 weeks. Road closures will be required, and diversions will be put in place.

Senior Executive Engineer, Con Diffley addressed questions raised by the Elected Members. Barbara Heslin informed the members that the Ballymahon MD members will be kept up to date on the road closures, works schedule and progress on the project.

On the proposal of Councillor Pat O'Toole seconded by Councillor Gerry Hagan the N55 Pavement Scheme – Westmeath / Longford Section 85 Agreement was approved.

(iv) CE Report on Submissions Received – Proposed Variation no. 1 of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027

Senior Planner Louise Kiernan made a presentation to the Members on the CE Report on Submissions Received – Proposed Variation no.1 of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027. The purpose of the variation is to activate lands currently zoned Strategic Residential Reserve. The variation went out to public consultation on 20 March 2026. By the deadline of 17 April 2026, 13 submissions/observations were received. The Chief Executive Report provides an outline of each of the submissions, a response to the issues raised and a recommendation from the Chief Executive.

Louise answered questions raised by the Elected Members. During the discussion, the Members emphasised the need for more private and affordable housing to be delivered in the county. They said that Longford has the highest percentage of social housing per capita in the country. They also highlighted concerns over housing density requirements.

The presentation included the following:

- Background and reason for proposed variation
- Proposed Variation – LCDP 2021-2027
- Public Consultation
- CE Report and Associated Documents
- OPR Submissions
- Chief Executive Response
- Other Submissions
- Current Action

Director of Services, Barbara Heslin thanked the team in Forward Planning for their work in bring the variation to the Members.

On the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross seconded by Councillor Seamus Butler it was agreed to make the proposed variation, including final AA determination and SEA determination.

(v) Environment Section Enforcement Policy

Councillor Turlough McGovern as Chair of the Physical Development SPC, introduced the policy at the meeting. He thanked the team in Environment for all their work in developing the policy which provides guidance and clarity for stakeholders and Longford County Council employees. It will ensure that enforcement action is carried out in a consistent, transparent, and proportionate manner.

On the proposal of Councillor Turlough McGovern seconded by Councillor Mark Casey the Environment Section Enforcement Policy was approved.

- (vi) **To note the minutes of the Physical Development SPC meeting held on 16 February 2026**
Noted

10. FINANCE, INNOVATION, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

- (i) **To note the Minutes of the Governance SPC meeting held on 18 February 2026**
Noted

11. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- (i) **Section 183 – Disposal of Lands, Higginstown, Granard, Co. Longford**
On the proposal of Councillor Padraig McNamara seconded by Councillor Kevin Hussey, Section 183 – Disposal of Lands, Higginstown, Granard was approved.

- (ii) **To note the minutes of the Social Development SPC meeting held on 16 February 2026**
Noted

- (iii) **Notice of Motions**
The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Kevin Hussey and seconded by Councillor Martin Monaghan

I call on Longford County Council to review its Differential Rent Scheme, including the absence of a maximum rent cap and the 22.5% assessment rate, and prepares a comparative report against other local authorities with options for introducing a fair maximum weekly rent cap and/or reducing the percentage rate applied to assessable income.

Response:

Longford County Council operates a Differential Rent Scheme adopted in November 2023 which is aligned with legal requirements and departmental circulars.

Rents are calculated based on a proportion of assessable household income which reflects a household's ability to pay.

This provides an income-based rent model that supports both affordability for tenants and operational sustainability for Longford County Council.

The current scheme applies an assessment rate of 22.5%, with no maximum weekly rent cap, and includes standard provisions in respect of income assessment and disregards e.g. child benefit

There is variation across County Councils in relation to assessment rates, rent caps and scheme structures, with Longford positioned towards the upper end of the national range in terms of assessment rate and without a rent cap.

It is considered appropriate that the matter be referred to the Social Development Strategic Policy Committee for further examination

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi and seconded by Councillor Pat O'Toole

I call on Longford County Council to write to the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Housing seeking an urgent review and upward revision of Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) limits to ensure they reflect current rental market prices across County Longford.

This Council recognises that while rent assessments for Local Authority housing tenants have been revised in response to rising housing costs, many low-income individuals and families dependent on private rental accommodation continue to face significant hardship due to housing support limits that no longer reflect market realities.

The growing disparity between actual rents and available housing supports is placing vulnerable households at increased risk of housing insecurity and homelessness. Housing supports must be responsive to current economic conditions and provide fair and realistic assistance to those most in need.

Access to safe, secure, and affordable housing is fundamental to the wellbeing and stability of individuals, families, and communities across County Longford.

Response:

This Council recognises that while rent assessments for Local Authority housing tenants have been revised in response to rising housing costs, many low-income individuals and family's dependent on private rental accommodation continue to face significant hardship due to housing support limits that no longer reflect market realities.

The growing disparity between actual rents and available housing supports is placing vulnerable households at increased risk of housing insecurity and homelessness. Housing supports must be responsive to current economic conditions and provide fair and realistic assistance to those most in need.

Access to safe, secure, and affordable housing is fundamental to the wellbeing and stability of individuals, families, and communities across County Longford.

Longford County Council will write to the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Housing seeking an urgent review and upward revision of Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) limits to reflect current rental market prices across County Longford.

12. GENERAL

Notice of Motions

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Mark Casey and seconded by Councillor Turlough McGovern

I call on Longford County Council to call on the Government to abolish the Universal Social Charge in the interest of supporting working families.

Response:

Longford County Council agreed to write to the Minister for Finance regarding this Notice of Motion.

13. CORRESPONDENCE

- (I) **Correspondence from Minister Canney**
Noted
- (II) **Correspondence from Clare County Council**
Noted
- (III) **Correspondence from RSA**
Noted
- (IV) **Correspondence from Waterford County Council**
Noted
- (V) **Correspondence from Failte Ireland**
Noted
- (VI) **Correspondence from Minister Burke**
Noted
- (VII) **Correspondence from Galway County Council**
Noted

14. TRAINING FOR APPROVAL

On the proposal of Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi seconded by Councillor Pat O'Toole the training circulated was approved.

15. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Longford County Council will take place on Friday 19 June 2026 at 4pm in the Council Chamber.

Confirmed and adopted at Meeting of Longford County Council held on 8 July 2026.