

**LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL**

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LONGFOIRT**

**Minutes of Adjourned September Monthly Meeting of Longford County Council**

**held in the Council Chamber, Aras an Chontae, Great Water Street, Longford on**

**Wednesday, 17th September 2014 at 4.00 p.m.**

**PRESIDING**: Councillor Mark Casey, Cathaoirleach.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**: Councillors – Paraic Brady, John Browne,

Seamus Butler, Mick Cahill, Micheál Carrigy,

John Duffy, Gerard Farrell, Padraig Loughrey,

Luie McEntire, Martin Mulleady, Colm Murray,

Pat O’Toole, Peggy Nolan, P.J. Reilly and Gerry Warnock.

**IN ATTENDANCE:**  Mr. Tim Caffrey, Chief Executive.

Mr. Barry Lynch, Head of Finance/Director of Services.

Mr. Jack Kilgallen, Director of Services.

Mr. Frank Sheridan, Director of Services.

**APOLOGY:** Councillors Paul Ross and Mae Sexton

**MEETINGS**

**ADMINISTRATOR**: Ms. Anne Lee.

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES.**

On the proposal of Councillor C. Murray seconded by Councillor M. Mulleady, the Minutes of Annual Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 6th June 2014 were confirmed and adopted.

On the proposal of Councillor S. Butler seconded by Councillor M. Carrigy, the Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 9th July 2014 were confirmed and adopted.

MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES.

In reply to a query from Councillor M. Carrigy, Mr. F. Sheridan, Director of Services, stated that there was no update regarding the appointment of members of Longford County Council to the Board of Longford Community Resources.

CORPORATE POLICY GROUP MINUTES.

The adopted Minutes of Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on the 18th June 2014, which had been circulated, were noted.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE ORDERS.

The Chief Executive Orders, which had been circulated, were noted.

**MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT.**

The Monthly Management Report, which was circulated with the Agenda, was noted.

**ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, CORPORATE,**

**CULTURAL & RECREATIONAL SERVICES, HUMAN RESOURCES,**

**PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL.**

**Planning Applications**

The list of Planning Applications received since the last meeting of the Council was submitted and noted.

**Date for meeting to consider Chief Executive’s Report on submissions received during the consultation period in relation to the Draft Longford County Development Plan 2015 – 2021**.

On the proposal of Councillor S. Butler seconded by Councillor C. Murray, it was agreed that the Chief Executive’s Report on submissions received during the consultation period in relation to the Draft Longford County Development Plan 2015 – 2021 be considered at the October Monthly meeting of the Council.

**Standing Orders.**

On the proposal of Councillor S. Butler seconded by Councillor C. Murray, it was unanimously agreed to adopt Standing Orders in respect of Longford County Council Meetings, as circulated.

**Draft Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2014 – 2019**.

On the proposal of Councillor M. Mulleady seconded by Councillor C. Murray, it was unanimously agreed that the Draft Strategic Policy Committee Scheme 2014 – 2019, as circulated, be advertised for public consultation up to  28th October 2014.

**Nomination of one member to the Westmeath Rural Community Transport Association.**

On the proposal of Councillor P. Nolan seconded by Councillor M. Casey it was unanimously agreed that this item be deferred to the October meeting pending clarification on the following items -

* Westmeath Rural Community Transport Associationbe renamed the

Longford/Westmeath Rural Community Transport Association.

* Longford County Council to nominate three members to the Association.

**Notices of Motions.**

Staffing Embargo**.**

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor M. Mulleady and seconded by Councillor P. Loughrey -

“That Longford County Council writes to the Minister of the Environment regarding the staffing embargo which is resulting in reduced number of roads crews”.

It was agreed that a letter be forwarded to Mr. Alan Kelly, T.D., Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government and the economic implications of lifting the staffing embargo to be emphasised in the correspondence.

Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park.

On the proposal of Councillor M. Cahill seconded by Councillor C. Murray, it was agreed that Mr. Donall MacAnBheatha, Senior Planner, be requested to make a presentation at the November meeting of the Council regarding the proposed Mid-Shannon Wilderness Park.

**FINANCE & INFORMATION SYSTEMS, HOUSING & BUILDING.**

**Public Liability Claims.**

It was noted that four public liability claims were received in July and none in August.

**Dates for the Following Meetings** -

Municipal District Meetings to consider draft Budgetary Plan for 2015.

* Granard Municipal District Committee – Tuesday, 7th October 2014 at 4.00 p.m.
* Longford Municipal District Committee - Wednesday, 8th October 2014 at 10.30 a.m.
* Ballymahon Municipal District Committee - Thursday, 9th October 2014 at 4.00 p.m.

It was agreed that the Municipal District Meetings to consider the draft Budgetary Plan be held in the Council Chamber, Aras an Chontae.

Finance “In Committee” Meeting.

On the proposal of Councillor C. Murray seconded by Councillor M. Cahill, it was unanimously agreed that the Finance Meeting be held in committee on Tuesday,

11th November 2014 at 4.00 p.m. in the Council Chamber.

Statutory Budget Meeting.

It was unanimously agreed that the Statutory Budget Meeting be held on Tuesday,

18th November 2014 at 4.00 p.m.

**Statutory Audit Report for year ended 31st December 2013.**

Mr. B. Lynch, Head of Finance, outlined the details of the Statutory Audit Report on the 2013 Annual Financial Statement, as circulated.

The Head of Finance replied to queries raised by the members on the following issues -

* Housing Loans.
* N5 Bypass project - On the proposal of Councillor M. Carrigy seconded by Councillor M. Casey, it was agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government regarding the overspend on the N5 Bypass and the terms of the Fixed Price Contract for the project. It was noted that the National Roads Authority had responsibility for the project.

The members were assured that that an independent conciliatory arbitrator was involved in ensuring that the overspend on the project was legitimate. It was agreed that a report be prepared for the October meeting of the Council regarding the financing of the N5 Bypass.

**Financial update for Q2 of 2014**.

The details of Financial Update for Quarter 2 of 2014, as circulated, was noted.

The Head of Finance replied to queries raised on the following issues -

* N.P.P.R.
* Commercial rates.
* Tenant Purchase Scheme - Councillor P. Brady proposed and Councillor P. Nolan seconded that a letter be forwarded to the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government regarding the re-introduction of a Tenant Purchase Scheme.

**Local Property Tax (Local Adjustment Factor) Regulations 2014**.

Report prepared by the Deputy Chief Executive regarding the Local Property Tax (Local Adjustment Factor) Regulations 2014, as circulated was discussed in detail by the members under the following headings -

* Background - Under Section 20 of the Finance (Local Property Tax)Act 2013 as amended by Section 5 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2013 - a local authority may, as a reserved function, resolve to vary the basic rate of the Local Property Tax within its functional area by a maximum of +/- 15%.
* Estimation of Income and Expenditure.
* Financial Position of Longford County Council.
* Estimation of Financial Effect of Varied Rate – potential impact on LPT Revenue for the coming year.
* Potential Impact on the Service Plans of Longford County Council.
* Report on Public Consultation.

The Chief Executive and Head of Finance emphasised to the members that if Longford County Council decides to vary the LPT basic rate downwards, the resultant loss in Local Property Tax income will be reflected in reduced LPT funding to the authority. No additional funding from the equalisation fund will be provided by the Department of the Environment.

On the proposal of Councillor M. Carrigy seconded by Councillor S. Butler, it was agreed that the meeting adjourn for ten minutes to allow the members consider the matter.

Following the recommencement of the meeting, Councillor M. Carrigy proposed and Councillor S. Butler seconded that the Local Property Tax basic rate be reduced by 3% for 2015 (which equates to a reduction €66,000 decrease in overall revenue for 2015) and an additional 3% reduction for each year between now and 2019.

The Chief Executive reiterated to the members that the balance in offsetting the 3% reduction would have to be found elsewhere and he also referred to the impact this reduction will have on services. This issue will need to be addressed at the Statutory Budget meeting on the

18th November 2014.

The members expressed dissatisfaction that the Council is not in a position to vary the basic rate of the Local Property Tax by more than 3% in 2015.

**Notices of Motions.**

Rates Exemption on Creches.

The following Notices of Motions were taken together -

Proposed by Councillor John Duffyand seconded by M. Mulleady

***“That Longford County Council apply a rates exemption to all educational facilities in County Longford including private crèches who provide preschool and after school care for children in this county as is the case in other similar counties”.***

Proposed and seconded by Councillors Micheal Carrigy,Colm Murray, Padraig Brady, Paul Ross, John Duffy, PJ Reilly, Padraig Loughrey, Martin Mulleady, Mick Cahill and Seamus Butler

***“We call on Longford County Council to exempt all childcare facilities from rates that provide the ECCE programme subject to the local authority been legally able to do so.”***

Mr. B. Lynch, Head of Finance, stated that property which is not rateable is covered in schedule 4 to the Valuation Act 2001. Exemption from rates can only be determined in accordance with the schedule by the Valuation Office and Longford County Council has no legal function in this regard.

Childcare facilities which provide the ECCE programme may be entitled to an exemption from rates provided that they meet certain criteria. The Valuation Office has previously provided the following clarification regarding the ECCE scheme.

Early Childhood Care facilities exclusively used for the provision of ECCE funded sessional places for 38 weeks of the year are deemed to be exempt from rates under Schedule 4 of the Valuation Act, 2001.

Outside of this 38 week period should these properties be used other than for the provision of educational services (e.g. child minding or uses other than those specified under Schedule 4 of the Valuation Act, 2001) these properties will be deemed to be **rateable** for the entire year.  Exemption can only be granted where the premises are used exclusively for educational purposes. Therefore, where the occupier alternates the use of the premises between rateable and non-rateable services during the rating year, under the valuation legislation, that premises is deemed to be rateable for the entire year.

It is open to any childcare enterprise who believes they may be entitled to an exemption to apply to the Valuation Office for a revaluation.

The Head of Finance and Chief Executive recommended to the members that rates exemption for Creche owners be considered, in detail, by the Economic Strategic Policy Committee.

With regard to legal letters being issued to Creche owners regarding rates, the executive agreed to examine this issue.

**Better Estates Awards**.

The Cathaoirleach and members praised Shiela Tipper, Housing Liaison Officer, for her excellent work in organising the Longford County Council Better Estates Competition.

**Rural Broadband**.

On the proposal of the Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mark Casey, seconded by Councillor P. Nolan, it was agreed that an item be placed on the Agenda for the October meeting of the Council regarding membership of I.T. Sub-Committee.

**General Items**.

Correspondence - circulated with Agenda.

Circular Letter LG 20/2014 dated 9th July 2014 received from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government regarding Local Government Reform Act 2014 was noted.

Letter dated 25th July 2014 received from Mr. John Tierney,Managing Director, Irish Water, regarding Irish Water/Local Authority Members Liaison was considered by the Members.

On the proposal of Councillor P. Nolan seconded by Councillor M. Casey, it was agreed that a letter be forwarded to Mr. John Tierney, Managing Director, Irish Water requesting that a dedicated 24 hour phone number be made available for local authority representatives.

Letter dated 29th July 2014 received from the Office of the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government regarding equalisation was noted.

**Notices of Motions**.

Supply of Natural Gas to Longford.

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor S. Butler and seconded by Councillor P. Nolan.

“That Longford County Council calls on Bord Gais to instigate a capital programme to supply natural gas to Longford”.

It was agreed that a letter be forwarded to Bord Gais regarding this issue.

Broadband in Rural County Longford.

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor S. Butler and seconded by Councillor M. Casey.

“That Longford County Council calls on Minister of State for Rural Affairs, Anne Phelan, to prioritise the rapid roll out of fast broadband to rural County Longford”.

It was agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of State and that this item be considered by the proposed I.T. Sub-Committee.

Memorial to Albert Reynolds, R.I.**P**.

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor S. Butler and seconded by Councillor M. Carrigy -

“To mark the passing of Albert Reynolds, past Longford County Councillor, Minister, Taoiseach and Statesman, Longford County Council will establish a permanent and significant recognition of his name.”

It was unanimously agreed that the Mall Park in Longford town be renamed the

“The Albert Reynolds Peace Park”.

Suspension of Standing Orders.

Councillor M. Carrigy proposed and Councillor J. Duffy seconded that Standing Orders be suspended to allow for the completion of the Agenda.

Ophthalmic Services.

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor M. Casey and seconded by Councillor P. Nolan -

"That this Council immediately seeks a meeting with Trevor O Callaghan, Midland Regional Hospital Manager in relation to the Longford Community Ophthalmic Physician, as there is a referral list of 1,200 people from Longford for this service."

The members of the Council on the Regional Health Forum received the following reply from Mr. James Conway, Assistant Director, Midland Hospitals -

“Following a recruitment campaign, an appointment is being processed to the post of Permanent Community Ophthalmic Physician based at the Midland Regional Hospital, Mullingar. Discussions have commenced to agree start date for Physician to take up this post. This post includes a commitment to provide ophthalmology out patients’ clinics in Longford.”

**Funding Crisis at St. Christopher’s Centre, Longford**.

The members expressed serious concern regarding the funding crisis facing St. Christopher’s Centre, Longford, in particular the future of two residential units in the County.

On the proposal of Councillor L. McEntire seconded by Councillor P. Brady, it was unanimously agreed that Mr. Leo Varadkar, T.D., Minister for Health, be requested to meet a deputation, comprising of represenstatives from the local authority and St. Christophers.

**Get Well Wishes.**

The members wished a speedy recovery to Councillor Mae Sexton.

**Congratulations**.

Congratulations were extended to Councillor Gerard Farrell on his recent engagement to Sarah.

**Conferences -**

The attendance of Members at series of scheduled Training Events organised by the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) listed in Circular Letter LG 21/2014 dated 20th August 2014 received from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government regarding Training for Elected Members was agreed.

Report from Corporate Policy Group was noted.

**VOTES OF SYMPATHY**.

On the proposal of Councillor P. Nolan seconded by Councillor G. Farrell, it was unanimously agreed that a vote of sympathy be extended to the Bawle family, Newtowncashel and the Brady family, Longford on the death of Elaine Bawle.

On the proposal of Councillor S. Butler seconded by Councillor J. Browne, it was unanimously agreed that a vote of sympathy be extended to the Twaddle family, Longford on the death of Lilly Twaddle.

On the proposal of Councillor P.J. Reilly seconded by Councillor M. Carrigy, it was unanimously agreed that a vote of sympathy be extended to the Monahan family, Coolarty on the death of Richard Monahan.

On the proposal of Councillor M. Carrigy seconded by Councillor P.J. Reilly it was unanimously agreed at that a vote of sympathy be extended to the family of the late

Brendan Flynn, Bornacoola.

This concluded the business of the meeting.



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

**Anne Lee,**

**Meetings Administrator.**

**Confirmed and adopted at Monthly Meeting of Longford County Council held on the**

**8th October 2014.**

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

**Cathaoirleach.**