**Minutes of Meeting of Longford County Council**

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

**Wednesday, 13th October at 3.00pm**

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**PRESIDING**: Councillor Peggy Nolan, Cathaoirleach.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**: Councillors – Paraic Brady, John Browne, Seamus Butler, Mick Cahill, Mark Casey, Colin Dalton,

Gerard Hagan, Martin Monaghan, Garry Murtagh, Paul Ross,

Pat O’Toole, P.J. Reilly, Turlough McGovern, Uruemu Adejinmi, Gerard Farrell, Colm Murray, and Gerry Warnock.

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

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

Mr. John Brannigan, Director of Services

Ms. Barbara Heslin, Director of Services

**MEETINGS**

**ADMINISTRATOR**: Ann Marie Mc Keon

**Deputation from Longford Women’s Link - Notice of Motion Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi**

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Uruemu and seconded by Councillor Seamus Butler -

I am asking Longford County Council to call on the Minister for Justice to consider introducing a specific offence of stalking on to the statute books as well as longer sentences for the crime than that currently available to prosecutors.

Cathaoirleach Peggy Nolan welcomed Tara Farrell and Heather Mc Kenna to the meeting and recognised the excellent work of Longford Women’s Link.

Tara Farrell from Longford Women’s Link thanked the members for allowing them the opportunity to address the meeting on this important issue. Tara explained that they were speaking on the Notice of Motion in context of the recent bill on the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person (Amendment)(Stalking) Bill 2021 which seeks to make stalking a stand-alone offence. Stalking someone is not classified as a stand-alone crime under Irish law.

The Law Reform Commission has already recommended that a specific stalking offence should be enacted. This appears to have had a significant practical effect in England, Wales, and Scotland since their introduction of similar legislation. The bill is at stage three here. Stalking is very personal, particularly for woman and causes enormous stress and anxiety for them. Tara mentioned the Non-Fatal Offences against the person Act 1997 which was signed into law in December 2020 and will be reviewed every two years. This will need to be tested to see how it’s working.

Heather outlined the importance of raising awareness in relation to domestic violence and how the figures increased since Covid-19. Stalking is a clear example of a crime which has become all too common, this is facilitated by the rise in communications technology. It is a depraved and destructive behaviour which can cause severe distress to victims and leave a lasting negative impact which may not fade even when the behaviour stops. Heather and Tara asked the members to support this bill to dissuade and punish such behaviour.

The members unanimously agreed to support the bill and noted the many formats of stalking that it was not just looking through a person’s window. The unregulated world of social media plays a large role in this type of behaviour. The impact that stalking has on individuals leaves a lasting effect that erodes the confidence of that person.

Councillor Adejinmi thanked the members for their support and acknowledged the Corporate Policy Group for allowing this deputation today.

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

On the proposal of Councillor Colm Murray seconded by Councillor John Browne, the Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 8th September 2021, as circulated, were confirmed and adopted.

**MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

None.

**DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

None.

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT**

The Chief Executive Report, as circulated, was noted.

Septic Tanks

Councillor Seamus Butler enquired if the number of septic tanks inspected was available. John Brannigan replied that he didn’t have the figure to hand.

Gritting

Councillor Garry Murtagh referenced a proposed notice of motion that he had submitted to the full Council Meeting for consideration. Cathaoirleach Peggy Nolan informed Councillor Murtagh that his motion was referred to the Granard Municipal District meeting in November as it related to the gritting of additional roads in the Granard Municipal District and it was therefore a Municipal District matter.

**MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY GROUP MEETING HELD ON THE 13TH JULY 2021 - CIRCULATED**

The adopted Minutes of Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on the 13th July 2021, as circulated, were noted.

**COMMUNITY, CORPORATE AND ENTERPRISE**

**Consideration of agreement between Granard Town Twinning and East Rouen, Normandy.**

On the proposal of Councillor PJ Reilly, seconded by Councillor Turlough Mc Govern it was unanimously agreed to sign the agreement between Granard Town Twinning and East Rouen, Normandy.

**Proposal by Cathaoirleach Peggy Nolan to confer the Freedom of the County.**

Councillor Gerry Hagan noted Shaunagh Connaire’s achievements and how in 2009, Shaunagh was shortlisted as 'Student Broadcast Journalist of the Year' by the Guardian and Sky News, just one year after leaving her career as an accountant with KPMG. Shaunagh is an extraordinary journalist and filmmaker and is known across the world. Councillor Hagan highlighted the importance to recognise the outstanding contribution that Shaunagh has made to society. Shaunagh has touched boundaries across the globe, her frontline work has included reporting live from the Ebola zone in Sierra Leone and the refugee crisis in the Middle East and she has also operated undercover in China to uncover human rights abuses.

Gerry said that Shaunagh and her family now live in New York where she works for the George and Amal Clooney Foundation as director of communications and media.

On the proposal of Councillor Gerry Warnock, seconded by Councillor Gerry Hagan it was unanimously agreed to confer the Freedom of the County to Shaunagh Connaire.

**Consideration of amendments to Longford County Council Standing Orders and Supplementary Standing Orders – as circulated**

Barbara Heslin outlined all the proposed changes to the members. A number of the changes reflected updated sectoral guidance and public health advice regarding arrangements for Council meetings and a recommendation that a review of standing orders be carried out in the context of these guidelines and advice. Feedback from a national review of standing orders carried out by Waterford County Council was also considered. A review of the standing orders and the relevant legislation has also been carried out and the changes also reflect feedback received from Members.

Proposed changes include blended meetings, arrangements for presentations and delegations, flexibility for venue, dates, duration and time, in committee meetings, public/media request for documentation, suspension of standing orders, procedures around notices of motion and adjournment of meetings following a bereavement.

The Supplementary Standing Orders are also updated based on the most up to date sectoral guidance and public health advice received.

The members provided feedback on the draft document. Councillor Colm Murray proposed that the allocation time of three minutes debate on a notice of motion be increased to five minutes, Cathaoirleach Peggy Nolan seconded the proposal.

It was agreed that the final document be present to the next meeting for adoption.

**Consideration to approve grant under the 2021 Intercultural Grants Scheme – as**

**circulated.**

On the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross, seconded by Councillor Pat O’Toole, the 2021 Inter-Cultural Grants as circulated to the meeting were approved.

Dead of Night Festival

Councillor Seamus Butler enquired if this event was happening this year. Barbara Heslin outlined some of the major challenges associated with organising an event of scale such as Dead of Night during 2021. She explained that a number of other smaller events were being organised by community groups.

**FINANCE**

**Consideration of the disposal of property at 22 Annaly Park, Longford, County**

**Longford (under the shared ownership scheme), in accordance with the terms of Section**

**183 of the Local Government Act 2001 issued on the 9th September 2021.**

On the proposal of Councillor Gerry Warnock seconded by Councillor John Browne, it was unanimously agreed to dispose of the property at 22Annaly Park, Longford, County Longford (under the shared ownership scheme), in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 issued on the 9th September 2021, as circulated.

**Consideration of the disposal of property at 29 Teffia Park, Longford, County Longford**

**(under the shared ownership scheme), in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of**

**the Local Government Act 2001 issued on the 9th September 2021.**

On the proposal of Councillor Gerry Warnock seconded by Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi, it was unanimously agreed to dispose of the property at 29 Teffia Park, Longford, County Longford (under the shared ownership scheme), in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 issued on the 9th September 2021, as circulated.

**Dates for budget meetings:**

Granard MD – General Municipal Allocation Meeting – Tuesday 26th October.

Longford MD – General Municipal Allocation Meeting – Wednesday 27th October.

Ballymahon MD – General Municipal Allocation Meeting – Thursday 28th October.

Budget 2022 – ‘In Committee’ Meeting – Monday 15th November.

Budget 2022 Meeting – Monday 22nd November

On the proposal of Councillor Colm Murray seconded by Councillor Gerry Hagan, the members present unanimously agreed to hold the 2021 budget meetings at the dates outlined to the meeting.

**Notices of Motions, submitted by Councillors, as listed hereunder –**

National Broadband Ireland

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

I call on the Minister for the Environment, Climate and communications to immediately accelerate the National Broadband Ireland (NBI) plan for the rollout of Broadband in County Longford as according to the NBI website the majority of County Longford will not see broadband until 2026.

**Response**

Longford County Council will write to the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications requesting that they accelerate the National Broadband Ireland rollout for County Longford and in particular for the rural areas.

**Update**

The members requested an update on the roll out of Rural Broadband for the next meeting.

**STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE, REGENERATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Planning Applications**

The list of Planning Applications received since last meeting of the Council were noted.

**Consideration of the disposal of rural detached bungalow at Cornafunshion, Ballinalee,**

**County Longford in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government**

**Act 2001 issued on the 22nd September 2021.**

On the proposal of Councillor Gerry Hagan seconded by Councillor PJ Reilly, it was unanimously agreed to dispose of the rural detached bungalow at Cornafunshion, Ballinalee, County Longford in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 issued on the 22nd September 2021, as circulated.

**Consideration of the disposal of a strip of land at Lamagh, Newtownforbes,**

**County Longford in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government**

**Act 2001 issued on the 22nd September 2021.**

On the proposal of Councillor Gerry Hagan seconded by Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi, it was unanimously agreed to dispose of the strip of land at Lamagh, Newtownfobes, County Longford in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 issued on the 22nd September 2021, as circulated.

**Consideration of the disposal of a strip of land at Lamagh, Newtownforbes, County**

**Longford in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government Act**

**2001 issued on the 22nd September 2021.**

On the proposal of Councillor John Browne seconded by Councillor Seamus Butler, it was unanimously agreed to dispose of the strip of land at Lamagh, Newtownfobes, County Longford in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 issued on the 22nd September 2021, as circulated.

**Consideration of the disposal of rural detached bungalow at Castlenugent, Granard,**

**County Longford in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government**

**Act 2001 issued on the 29th September 2021.**

On the proposal of Councillor Gerry Hagan seconded by Councillor John Browne, it was unanimously agreed to dispose of the rural detached bungalow at Castlenugent, Granard, County Longford in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 issued on the 29th September 2021, as circulated.

**Notices of Motions, submitted by Councillors, as listed hereunder –**

Dedicated Dereliction Officer

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi and seconded by Councillor Seamus Butler -

I call on Longford County Council to write to the Department of Housing and Local Government to request allocation for a dedicated dereliction officer in County Longford. This officer will engage with owners of derelict and unoccupied residential and commercial properties to reduce the number of derelict properties in our towns and villages and have vacant spaces occupied by businesses and families. The Dereliction Officer will also liaise with planning and regeneration teams and provide relevant information to support their work.

**Response**

Longford County Council will write to the Department of Housing and Local Government to request that approval be given for the appointment of a dedicated Vacant Homes Officer and for the appointment of any required administrative support that will be required to ensure that problems relating to derelict and vacant properties can be tackled in a systematic and ongoing way.

Harvesting of Horticultural Peat

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Paul Ross and seconded by Councillor Colm Murray -

I call on Longford County Council to write to the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications and the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to provide a “fast-track ‘one-stop-shop’ framework for planning and licensing” for the harvesting of horticultural peat, as was recommended by The Just Transition Commissioner in his progress report dated April 2020.

Such a ‘streamlined approach between Statutory Bodies’ would help prevent the absurdity of 200 truckloads of peat being imported from Latvia to be stockpiled on a bog just outside Legan and would instead allow the resumption of the responsible harvesting of peat moss here in Ireland, as it occurs elsewhere in Europe, in Northern Ireland, Scotland, England, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.”

**Response**

Longford County Council will write to the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications.

Affordable Housing

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Gerry Warnock and seconded by Councillor Peggy Nolan -

I am calling on Longford County Council to reach out to the eleven other local authorities who find themselves discriminated against by restrictive criteria published by the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government, that in effect precludes twelve local authorities from advancing New Build Affordable Housing within their respective jurisdiction’s. A New Build Affordable Housing option in Longford is crucial in assisting households on moderate incomes who wish access to home ownership and every local authority should have the capability to enable eligible households to achieve this goal.

**Response**

Longford County Council will write to the Department of Housing and Local Government requesting that all Local Authorities have access to the Local Authority Affordable Housing Initiative so that it is available to households on moderate incomes that are trying to access home ownership but which cannot do so on affordability grounds.

**Correspondence**

Correspondence dated 6th September 2021 received from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media - Reply to Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Martin Monaghan – as circulated was noted.

Correspondence dated 21st September 2021 from the Minister of Health – Reply to Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi – as circulated was noted.

**Votes of Sympathy**

Colm Murray proposed, and Councillor Peggy Nolan seconded that a vote of sympathy be extended to Gerry Hagan and the Hagan Family on the death of Fidelma Hagan.

**St. Josephs**

On the proposal of Peggy Nolan, seconded by Councillor PJ Reilly the members unanimously agreed to write to the Minister for Health to express their concerns that the second Palliative bed that was promised to St. Josephs, Longford has to-date not received sanction and to note their disappointment that St Josephs is not being considered as a Regional Acute Brain Injury Unit under the current Neuro-Rehabilitation Strategy Plan.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

**Ann Marie Mc Keon**

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

**Ann Marie Mc Keon,**

**Meetings Administrator.**

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

**10th November 2021.**

**Peggy Nolan**

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

**Cathaoirleach.**