**Minutes of Meeting of Longford County Council**

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

**Wednesday, 8th September 2021 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. David Tubridy, A/Director of Services

Ms. Barbara Heslin, Director of Services

**APOLOGIES:** Mr. John Brannigan, Director of Services

**MEETINGS**

**ADMINISTRATOR**: Ann Marie Mc Keon

Cathaoirleach Peggy Nolan, at the start of the meeting, said it was great to be back in the Chamber and reminded the Members of the protocols for the meeting and the time limit which must be adhered to.

**PRESENTATION BY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (IDA IRELAND)**

Anne Marie Tierney-Le Roux, Ken Whitelaw and Brid Somers from the IDA attending the meeting and gave a very comprehensive presentation to the members:

* National and Regional Strategy
* Welcomed Longford County Council’s submission on the Strategy
* Regional Enterprise Plans
* Challenging environment
* What investors look for
* 44 IDA clients in the Midlands employing 6,308 people directly
* Longford – IDA supported jobs
* Significant support provided to existing companies
* Transformational investments include upskilling staff, upgrading plant, process improvements etc.
* Steering Committee of the Regional Advanced Manufacturing Plan team
* Executive Steering Committee of the Midlands Engenuity Cluster
* Sit on Regional Skills Forum
* Developing Midlands Lean Network
* Sit on MRTT WG2 – Employment Generation
* Board of Irish Manufacturing Research
* Promote remote working hubs
* Assisting EI clients with property solutions
* AIT & LIT – Technological University of the Shannon
* Work closely with existing clients to retain and strengthen their presence
* Positioning the Region for high value manufacturing, services and R&D opportunities
* Build on success of the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024
* Stakeholder support in leveraging positive messaging/ regional brand
* Importance of Placemaking (Cost of Living & Quality of Life, Housing)
* Talent (Education, Upskilling & Attraction)
* Encourage the development of property solutions
* Support provided by Longford County Council
* Delivery of an Advanced Building Solution in Longford during the lifetime of the Strategy

Cathaoirleach Peggy Nolan complimented the IDA representatives on the presentation and the members raised a number of questions which were responded to.

* Challenges presented by the closure of the ESB power station and the loss of BnM jobs – IDA involved in a number of Working Groups with BnM and ESB
* Just Transition
* Timeframe for delivery of an Advanced Building Solution in Longford – IDA working closely with Longford County Council with project delivery during the lifetime of the strategy
* Remote working – change in policy, game changer for rural locations and opportunities presented by COVID-19
* Acquirement of additional land for a business park – IDA have no immediate plans and will continue to liaise with Longford County Council
* Challenges facing Longford
* Role of the Local Authority in assisting IDA deliver jobs for Longford

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

On the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross, seconded by Councillor Gerry Hagan, the Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 14th July 2021, as circulated, were confirmed and adopted.

On the proposal of Councillor Gerry Hagan, seconded by Councillor Paul Ross, the minutes Committee Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 9th June 2021, as circulated, were confirmed and adopted.

On the proposal of Councillor Gerry Hagan, seconded by Councillor Paul Ross, the Minutes of Special Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 21st June 2021, as circulated, were confirmed and adopted.

On the proposal of Councillor Seamus Butler, seconded by Councillor Gerry Hagan, the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 30th June 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.

**MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY GROUP MEETING HELD ON THE 8TH JUNE 2021 - CIRCULATED**

The adopted Minutes of Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on the 8th June 2021, as circulated, were noted.

**FINANCE & REGENERATION**

**Adopted Minutes of meeting of Governance Strategic Policy Committee held on the 20th April 2021 as circulated were noted.**

**Item referred from Governance Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on the 26th**

**July 2021 – County Longford Digital Strategy 2021 to 2023 – as circulated.**

On the proposal of Councillor Seamus Butler, seconded by councillor Pat O’Toole, County Longford Digital Strategy 2021 to 2023 as circulated was approved.

**Report of the Local Government Audit Services 2020 – as circulated.**

John Mc Keon highlighted the main items of the report:

* 26th February 2021 Draft Annual Financial Statement 2020 submitted to DHPLG
* 12th May 2021 Draft Annual Financial Statement 2020 Presented to Council
* 30th June 2021 Audited Annual Financial Statement 2020 completed. First Audited 2020 Annual Financial Statement in Sector
* 8th September 2021 Unqualified Audit Opinion. No change from Draft Annual Financial Statement
* Extraordinary Year - Rates Waiver 9 months – Re Start Grant – Re Start Grant Plus
* Fixed Assets increased by €15 million
* Deferred income increases by €5 million
* Increase in borrowings €3.4 million
* Governance Highlights – Internal Audit – Risk Management – Data Protection – Ethics - Procurement

The members welcomed the report and Councillor Seamus Butler acknowledged the performance of the Executive over the last eighteen months and the fact that Longford was the first to go digital and the first with the re-start grants. Seamus recognised that Longford County Council met the challenges of COVID-19 in an exemplar manner. John Mc Keon thanked Councillor Butler and acknowledged the work of all his employees in Finance.

**Audit Committee Annual Report 2020 – as circulated.**

John Mc Keon briefed the members on the audit committee annual report:

* Committee made up of five members – membership from 2019 - 2024
* Head of Finance is secretary
* Independent advisory role, on financial reporting processes, internal control, risk management & governance
* Six meetings in 2020
* Reports reviewed by Audit Committee – Internal Audit Reports four – Recurring Reviews three – Statutory Reports six – Presentations two

Councillor Colm Murray noted the good work of all the employees involved and the Executive. In previous years the Chair of the Audit Committee attended the meetings and Colm suggested that going forward the Chair of the committee could be invited. John Mc Keon acknowledged the excellent work of Internal Audit, IT and Finance.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the Audit Committee for the work during the year.

**STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Planning Applications**

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

**Adopted minutes of meeting of Climate Action and Planning Strategic Policy**

**Committee held on the 21st April 2021as circulated were noted.**

**Adopted minutes of meeting of Strategic Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee**

**held on the 22nd April 2021 as circulated were noted.**

**Item referred from Strategic Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held**

**on the 29th July 2021 – Traffic Calming and Ramps Policy – as circulated.**

On the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross, seconded by Councillor Garry Murtagh, Traffic Calming & Ramps Policy as circulated was approved.

The members welcomed the adoption of the plan and look forward to the policy being implemented.

**Date for Meeting of Longford County Council to consider Draft County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 - 19th October 2021.**

On the proposal of Councillor Turlough Mc Govern, seconded by Councillor Colm Murray, the Members present unanimously agreed to hold an In-Committee Meeting at 2pm on 19th October 2021 and a Council Meeting on 19th October 2021 at 3pm to consider the Draft County Development 2021 – 2027.

**COMMUNITY, CORPORATE AND ENTERPRISE**

**Adopted minutes of meeting of Placemaking Strategic Policy Committee held on the 22nd April 2021 – as circulated were noted.**

**Adopted Minutes of meeting of Joint Placemaking and Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee held on the 22nd April 2021 – as circulated were noted.**

**Appointment of members to Longford Local Community Development Committee**

**(LCDC), who have been nominated by the County Longford Public Participation**

**Network to replace outgoing members**

On the proposal of Councillor Colm Murray, seconded by Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi, the following members who were nominated by the County Longford Public Participation Network were appointed to the Longford Local Community Development Committee Tara Farrell, Grace Kearney and Patrick Mc Givney.

**Appointment of a member from Community and Voluntary to the Climate Action and Planning Strategic Policy Committee**

On the proposal of Councillor Pat O’Toole, seconded by Councillor Colm Murray, Community and Voluntary member Pat Murphy was appointed to the Climate Action and Planning Strategic Policy Committee.

**Update on the preparation of Register of Electors 2022/2023.**

Barbara Heslin gave a detailed report on the register of electors.

The preparation of Register of Electors 2022/23 has commenced and is ongoing. There is the possibility that this will be the last Draft Register to be published due to the Modernisation of the Electoral Register.

* Any person aged 18 and over and resident in the county on 1st September 2021 is eligible to be included on the Draft Register.
* Closing date of October 13th to facilitate statutory date for Register publication.
* An option to apply to register online will be available on the Council’s website to facilitate electors.
* Statutory Deadline for receipt of Postal Voters Forms is 25th November 2021.
* Draft will be published on November 1st Statutory Deadline.
* Public Advert on Draft Publication will be placed on the Council Website, Facebook and in the Longford Leader.
* Applicants not included on Draft may apply for correction to the Draft Register during period 1st to 25th November. Such applications forms will also be available online. Decision on such applications made by County Registrar.
* Final Register will be published on February 1st, 2022 and will come into effect on 15th February 2022.

Barbara asked for support of the Elected Members to:

* Encourage and highlight to citizens in their area the importance of participation in Register preparation process
* Remind citizens to ensure submission of any RFA forms or amendments by relevant deadline, either online or by hard copy forms
* NOTE - First time Disabled Postal Voters are required to complete hard copy forms
* Submission of details of their own Eircode if not already submitted
* Review of published Draft Register to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness

Councillor John Browne asked if there is any change to the removal of people from the register. Barbara replied that there is no change. Some of the concerns raised by Elected Members in the past may be addressed by the modernisation of the Electoral Register.

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

Signage Industrial Parks

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

I call on Longford County Council to enhance and bring up to date signage on all industrial parks in the County.

**Response**

Longford County Council is currently involved in a project to enhance and tidy the entrance to all Council developed industrial estates.

This project involves the decluttering of an estate entrance by removing individual business signs, the installation of a stone with the estate name, (where appropriate) and the installation of an entrance sign listing all the resident business in each estate.

All entrance signs are designed to the same standard to allow for consistency and the works on the following estates have been completed to date

* Longford Business & Technology Park, Ballinalee Road,
* Templemichael and IDA Business Parks, Ballinalee Road
* Townparks, Longford Town
* Bridgeway Business Park, Athlone Road

The next two due for completion over the next two months is

* Mastertech, Athlone Road (part of the Ballyminnion regeneration project)
* Athlone Road Industrial Estate, Ballymahon (to be named)

The final two estates to be completed will be

* Teemore Industrial Estate in Granard
* The industrial estate on the Longford Road in Lanesboro (to be named)

County Museum

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

That Longford County Council establish a county museum to showcase the history of the county and especially in light of the discovery of the recent Norman armour. This will also act as an added tourist attraction for the county.

Elected Members, who spoke on the motion, suggested a number of buildings and locations in Longford Town which could be considered as a possible location for a museum. They also suggested that these could be considered as part of the regeneration of the Camlin Quarter. The work of the Longford Historical Society was also acknowledged.

**Response**

Longford County Council does not currently have plans for the development of a County museum. However, consideration could be given to developing a business plan for such a project, as part of a regeneration programme, if Government funding became available.

**GENERAL**

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

Tax Discs

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 Transport and the Garda Commissioner to upgrade technology on all Garda vehicles that will enable them check vehicles registration details so display of tax discs can be phased out. This will facilitate smoother vehicle checks, protect an Garda Siochana on our roads and yield climate responsible practices with less paper being used in our motor tax offices and other government departments.

**Response**

Longford County Council with write to the Department of Transport and the Garda Commissioner regarding the Notice of Motion recommending an upgrade of technology on all Garda vehicles to enable checks to be carried out on vehicle registrations and the phasing out of the requirement to display tax discs.

Purpose Built Community

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Gerard Farrell and seconded by Councillor Paul Ross -

That Longford County Council in line with the programme for government push for the development of a purpose-built community for people living with dementia. Lanesboro would be an ideal location.

**Response**

Longford County Council with write to the Minister for Health and Health Service Executive regarding the Notice of Motion and ask that consideration be given to the development of a purpose-built community, in County Longford, for people living with dementia.

Home Care Package Scheme

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Pat O’Toole and seconded by Councillor PJ Reilly -

I call on the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive to put the “Home Care Package Scheme on a statutory footing with a standard assessment process across the country.

The Cathaoirleach suggested that Pat O’Toole meet the Minister to discuss his motion.

**Response**

Longford County Council with write to the Minister for of Health and Health Service Executive regarding the Notice of Motion requesting that the ‘Home Care Package Scheme’ be put on a statutory footing with a standard assessment process across the Country.

Veterinary Medicines

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

That Longford County Council calls on the Minister for Agriculture Charlie McConogue to allow all existing outlets registered to sell veterinary medicines and products continue to do so after the new veterinary medicines regulations in 2022 come into effect.

If existing licensed and registered operators are forced out of the business this will lead to a lack of competition in the sector and a black market for medicines.

**Response**

Longford County Council with write to the Minister for Agriculture regarding the Notice of Motion and request that consideration be given to allowing all existing outlets registered to sell veterinary medicines and products continue to do so after the new veterinary medicines regulations come in to effect in 2022.

**Correspondence – as circulated**

Correspondence dated 9th July 2021 received from the Department of Justice - Reply to Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Seamus Butler – as circulated was noted.

Covid19 Memorial Tree Campaign – as circulated was noted.

Correspondence dated 31st August 2021 received from the Longford and

Westmeath Education and Training Board – Reply to Motion submitted by Councillor Martin Monaghan – as circulated was noted.

Community Safety Partnership Scheme

Councillor Seamus Butler noted the contents of the letter and outlined his on-going concerns regarding the size of the committee and the reduction in representation by Elected Members and members of An Garda Síochána.

The new Community Safety Partnership Scheme is being piloted in Longford, inner city Dublin and Waterford. The first meeting will take place this month under independent Chairperson Martina Moloney.

The Members supported Seamus’s concerns and acknowledged the need to start looking at where local democracy is going and the input they have in local communities. They believe that this is another example of diminution of their role as local representatives by Government Departments.

The Members agreed to ensure that resources and funding are put into supporting the Local Community Safety Partnership to ensure that policing standards in the county are improved and held to a high standard and that people feel safe. They also emphasised that, ultimately, they are held directly accountable by the public.

**In Committee Meeting**

On the proposal of Cathaoirleach Peggy Nolan, seconded by Gerry Warnock, the Members present unanimously agreed to have an In Committee meeting at 2.30pm on 13th October 2021 in advance of the October Meeting of Longford County Council to discuss issues of concern which have been raised by certain Elected Members with the Cathaoirleach including the erosion of Elected Members’ power.

**Votes of Sympathy**

On the proposal of Cathaoirleach Peggy Nolan, seconded by Councillor Colm Murray the members unanimously agreed to send a letter of sympathy to the Hume family on the death of Pat Hume R.I.P. This letter will be signed by the Cathaoirleach.

On the proposal of Councillor Garry Murtagh, seconded by Cathaoirleach Peggy Nolan the members unanimously agreed to send a letter of sympathy to the Hagan family on the death of Fidelma Franhill (nee Hagan).

Congratulations

On the proposal of Councillor Mick Cahill, seconded by Councillor Pat O’Toole, the Members present unanimously agreed to write a letter of congratulations to Angelina Carberry. Banjo-player Angelina was recently announced as TG4 Ceoltóir na Bliana/Musician of the Year.

Blended Meeting

Paddy Mahon thanked and acknowledged the efforts of the Elected Members, the Meetings Administrator and the IT team for their efforts in getting everyone back to the Chamber for today’s meeting. He said that it was a very productive meeting and it’s great to get back into the Chamber.

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**

**13th October 2021.**

**Peggy Nolan**

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

**Cathaoirleach.**