**Minutes of Meeting of Longford County Council**

**held via Microsoft Teams on**

**Wednesday, 9 March 2022 at 3pm**

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**PRESIDING**: Councillor Peggy Nolan, Cathaoirleach

**MEMBERS PRESENT**: Councillors –John Browne, Seamus Butler, Mick Cahill, Colin Dalton, PJ Reilly, Gerard Hagan, Martin Monaghan, Paul Ross, Pat O’Toole, Colm Murray, Garry Murtagh, Mark Casey, Turlough Mc Govern, Uruemu Adejinmi, Paraic Brady and Gerry Warnock.

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

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

Ms. Barbara Heslin, Director of Services

Mr. John Brannigan, Director of Services

Ms. Samantha Healy, Director of Services

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor, Gerard Farrell

**MEETINGS**

**ADMINISTRATOR**: Ann Marie Mc Keon

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

In compliance with Standing Orders, Cathaoirleach Councillor Peggy Nolan requested the suspension of standing orders to express solidarity with Ukraine and its people. The Elected members present unanimously agreed to suspend Standing Orders.

Cathaoirleach Councillor Peggy Nolan stated “On this day the 9 March 2022, the world is facing its greatest threat since World War II. Fifteen days ago, Russia President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine, an independent state and despite the horrific destruction brought by his forces, the Russian President dismissed damming evidence of war crimes by his forces as gross propaganda.

The President of Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky is reported to have survived three assassination attempts. This president stands with his people and has earned world wide respect, while Mr. Putin denies his people access to the facts of his tyranny, by denying access to social media and legislates against the press reporting on his atrocities with fifteen year prison sentences for those journalist who report the truth.

On Friday (March 4) Russian forces shelled Europe’s largest nuclear power station in a battle with Ukrainians forces, causing a major fire in its compounds. President Zelensky branded Putin a nuclear terrorist and the US envoy to the UN said the world had by the grace of God narrowly averted a nuclear catastrophe. We stand with Ukraine and its people and we wish a speedy cessation to all aggression from Russia”.

Councillor Seamus Butler spoke on behalf of the Fianna Fáil Elected Members and supported the words of the Cathaoirleach and noted that “consideration must be given to having a national conversation on our neutrality we’re a small state and we’re extremely vulnerable, however defending our morals and our ethical interest on this is very important”.

Councillor Colm Murray spoke on behalf of the Fine Gael Elected Members and echoed Councillor Nolan’s “sentiments on hopes for a speedy resolution and expressed the need to examine the neutral stance and in particular the neutral stance that we took in the second world war when it was clear there was horrific genocide being perpetrated on millions of people and I don’t think we can just stand by and let the same thing happen here”.

Councillor Gerry Warnock spoke on behalf of the Independent Elected Members and stated that “all we can do is try and remember these people. The Irish people have shown great support as a nation and for a small nation we have a big heart, rushing to the aid of these people whose lives have been ripped apart over the last number of weeks and that makes me proud to be Irish. There are no winners in war”.

Cathaoirleach Councillor Peggy Nolan thanked fellow Councillor Colin Dalton who has organised a number of pallets with non-perishable goods to be transported to refugees in Ukraine in the next number of days with the support of the executive and elected members.

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

On the proposal of Councillor John Browne seconded by Councillor Colm Murray the Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 16 February 2022, as circulated, were confirmed and adopted.

**MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

Councillor Paul Ross acknowledged the letter from the Minister and the allocation of Funding for the M4 Route and thanked all those involved in securing the funding. The Elected Members expressed their delight with the recent announcement and Chief Executive Paddy Mahon thanked the Elected Members and Oireachtas Members for the team effort in securing the funding which will be a major boost for the development of County Longford.

Councillor Mark Casey requested an update on the dog waste dispensers and who is responsible for them and how often are they checked, and Director of Services Samantha Healy agreed to contact Councillor Casey with the information.

**DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

None.

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT**

The Chief Executive Report, as circulated, was noted.

Councillor Seamus Butler requested that the information contained on page 17 of the report in relation to the development of St. Rita’s, Park Road be updated to reflect the information that was provided at the recent Committee meeting of Longford Municipal District.

Councillor Gerry Warnock expressed his annoyance at the slow pace of Longford regeneration projects and noted that several regeneration projects in Longford town and other areas have been allocated funding in recent years however no work has commenced on the ground. Councillor Warnock stated they were told last year that key projects in the county town, including a redevelopment of the Market Square area would commence in quarter one of this year, and claimed he was losing his patience and the local authority was “losing the room” over delays to progress on the Camlin Spur, Camlin Quarter and Longford Connected and projects were being sabotaged.

A number of elected members asked if adequate resources were available to the regeneration department. There was welcome for the appointment of the Director of Service to oversee project delivery. A question was raised as to what the term ‘shovel ready’ actually meant – as while projects had received funding approval, detailed plans were required and some still required planning permission. Concerns over construction inflation affecting the costs of projects and the risk of funding being withdrawn were also raised.

Paddy Mahon responded to the issues raised and said he took offence to the tone of certain comments and language used. He explained that all the issues were previously discussed in detail at a Regeneration Committee meeting and in Committee meeting of Longford Municipal District. He confirmed that a contract has been signed for the Longford Connected project and they were waiting for assurances from the contractor on the project and materials but concerns over the cost of the Camlin Spur had been flagged following tender analysis and cost inflation was a worry for all projects. He confirmed that Longford County Council was committed to delivering projects and acknowledged the challenges faced through construction inflation.

Councillor Gerry Warnock apologised if anyone was offended by the use of the term sabotaged. He said that projects were sabotaged by events and the Council needs to be seen to deliver projects in Longford Town.

In relation to the Camlin Quarter, John Brannigan confirmed that the Council funding announcements must be supported by business plans and other approvals are required before projects are commences. He explained that the Council did not have €10 million sitting in a bank account waiting to be spent and detailed business plans were required for any projects that get funding.

**MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY GROUP MEETING HELD ON THE 18 JANUARY - CIRCULATED**

The adopted Minutes of Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on the 18 January 2022, as circulated, were noted.

**FINANCE**

**Capital Budget 2022 – 2024**

John Mc Keon presented a detailed report on the capital budget and responded to queries raised by the members and on the Proposal of Councillor Seamus Butler and seconded by Councillor Colm Murray the Capital Budget 2022 – 2024 was adopted.

The Members welcomed and approved the Capital Budget and thanked the Finance section for the detailed report.

**PLANNING AND PROJECT DELIVERY**

**Planning Applications**

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

**COMMUNITY, CORPORATE AND ENTERPRISE**

**Political Donations - Local Elections (Disclosure of Donation and Expenditure) Act**

**1999, as amended - Third Parties – as circulated**

It was noted that the Annual Reporting deadline for Political Donations by Third Parties is 31

March 2022.

**Consideration to approve grant under the 2022 Intercultural Grants Scheme** **– as**

**circulated**

On the proposal of Cathaoirleach Councillor Peggy Nolan, seconded by Councillor Colm Murray the members unanimously approved the 2022 Intercultural Grant as circulated.

**GENERAL**

Cathaoirleach Councillor Peggy Nolan explained to the elected members that she was in receipt of an urgent Notice of Motion from Councillor Gerry Warnock. The Cathaoirleach confirmed that the notice of motion complied with Standing Order 25 and was received by her and the Meetings Administrator before 12 noon.

With the unanimous agreement of the Elected Members present it was agreed to consider the Notice of Motion.

**The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Gerry Warnock and seconded by Councillor John Browne -**

I am calling on Longford County Council to write to the Minister for Housing opposing the following provision of the Housing (Sale of Local Authority Houses) (Amendment) Regulations 2021:

“change the requirement for the duration of receipt of social housing support from 1 to 10 years and, in the case of joint applicants, apply the same requirement to the second applicant.”

This is a punitive and regressive measure that is contrary to the objectives of Pathway 1 in the Government’s own Housing for All Strategy – “Supporting Home Ownership and Increasing Affordability”. This amendment needs to be revised as a matter of urgency to allow decent and valued members of our community, who are currently tenants of local authorities, a path towards home ownership within a reasonable timeframe.

The members unanimously agreed to write to the Minister for Housing opposing the provision of the Housing (Sale of Local Authority Houses) (Amendment) Regulations 2021.

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

**The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi and seconded by Councillor Peggy Nolan -**

“I call on Longford County Council to make Longford “breastfeeding friendly” by signing up for the “We’re Breastfeeding Friendly” initiative and invite local businesses

to do the same. The most recent figures from the Irish maternity indication system show

that in 2019, 62% of mothers had initiated breastfeeding after birth. Within 72 hours of

discharge that drops to 42%. At 3 months the figures are 31.2% and by 6 months just

6% of mothers here will be breastfeeding. The recorded figures for Longford mothers

breastfeeding at 3 months is 23.4% and therefore below the national average.

Embarrassment at feeding in public and fear of negative attention has repeatedly been

cited in Irish studies as a factor in women choosing not to breastfeed. While the

situation is extremely complex, a breastfeeding friendly initiative can only serve to

support those mothers who do choose to continue their breastfeeding journey after

discharge from hospital. Longford has a vibrant community of mutually supportive

breastfeeding mothers who have maintained online support groups and chat groups

throughout the pandemic. It is well recognized the profound impact that public health

restrictions have had on pregnant and expectant mothers. As these groups begin to

reconvene in person it is a timely move for Longford to adopt the “We’re breastfeeding

Friendly” initiative and commit to supporting our local breastfeeding mothers.

Businesses across Longford have long welcomed groups and individuals informally in

this manner and a formal recognition would serve to reinforce this openness and

welcome.”

The members unanimously agreed to support the notice of motion.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**Correspondence dated 17 February 2022 received from the Minister of Transport Re M4 Funding - Notice of Motion from Councillor Paul Ross –as circulated.**

Noted.

**Correspondence dated 3 March 2022 received from Irish Water Re Meeting with Elected Members – Notice of Motion from Councillor Peggy Nolan – as circulated**

The members voiced their disappointment at the correspondence received from Irish Water and requested a follow up letter be issued asking Irish Water to attend at their earliest convenience.

**TRAINING**

Report from the CPG on training was noted.

**SYMPATHY**

A vote of sympathy was proposed to the Brady family, Ballymore, Granard on the death of Phil and to the Mallon family, Ballagh, Newtowncashel on the death of Josie.

Hybrid Meeting

Chief Executive, Paddy Mahon welcomed the elected members back to the chamber and acknowledged the work done by IT under the direction of John Mc Keon to facilitate hybrid meetings. Paddy thanked the members for their patience and support.

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 13 April 2022.**

**Peggy Nolan**

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

**Cathaoirleach.**