

**Minutes of Meeting of Longford County Council**

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

**Wednesday, 8 February 2023 at 3.30pm**

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**PRESIDING**: Councillor Turlough Mc Govern, Cathaoirleach

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

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

Ms. Barbara Heslin, Director of Services

Mr. John Brannigan, Director of Services

Ms. Samantha Healy, Director of Services

Ms. Fema Farrell, A/ Head of Finance/Director of Services

Mr. Michael Nevin, A/Director of Services

Ms. Mariana Alexandrino – Vacant Homes Officer

**APOLOGIES:** Mr. John McKeon, Head of Finance/Director of Services

Councillor PJ Reilly

**MEETINGS**

**ADMINISTRATOR**: Claire McNabola

**PRESENTATION BY LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL VACANT HOMES OFFICER**

Cathaoirleach Councillor Turlough McGovern welcomed Mariana Alexandrino – Vacant Homes Officer to the meeting.

Mariana gave the members an overview of the 5 Vacant Property Refurbishment Schemes

* Repair and Leasing – RLS
* Buy and Renew
* Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund – Vacant Properties Refurbishment Grant Scheme

and Ready to Build Scheme, Serviced Sites for New Homes

* Energy Upgrade – SEAI funding
* CPO’s - Compulsory Purchase Orders

Mariana outlined the criteria for the different schemes available, she agreed to circulate all necessary forms and information to the members after the meeting. She confirmed that a communication campaign would be organised to publicise the schemes. Mariana together with Director of Services, John Brannigan answered any questions raised by the members.

The members unanimously welcomed the schemes as good and positive news for people wishing to get on the property ladder and have a home in Co. Longford. The Members suggested that a briefing session be organised in each of the Municipal Districts to ensure that information on the various schemes is widely available to people.

Paddy Mahon said this was an excellent opportunity to tackle and reduce vacancies across Co. Longford and also to promote the available housing schemes available.

John Brannigan also informed the Members of the work being done to reduce the level of vacancy in the Council’s housing stock and shorten the turnaround times for vacant properties.

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

On the proposal of Councillor Peggy Nolan, seconded by Councillor Colm Murray, the Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 18 January 2023, as circulated, were confirmed and adopted.

**MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

Councillor Seamus Butler sought an update on the scheduled meeting with Longford County Council and the IDA in light of the recent announcement for a further Advanced Facility for Mullingar, the third IDA project for Co. Westmeath.

Michael Nevin responded by say the meeting was held this morning in Longford. The IDA have identified a number of suitable sites for a facility around the Town of Longford and they have agreed to keep the lines of communication and engagement open to progress with this project.

Councillor Paraic Brady raised the matter of the N4 Rooskey to Mullingar bypass and his disappointment at hearing the comments from Minister Ryan that this project “was not a priority for government”. Councillor Brady continued to say that this priority project was holding Longford back as it’s a key element to the infrastructure of the County.

**DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

None.

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT**

Noted.

**MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY GROUP MEETING HELD ON THE 13 DECEMBER 2022 – AS CIRCULATED**

The adopted Minutes of Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on the 13 December 2022, as circulated, were noted.

**FINANCE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

1. **To note adopted Minutes of meeting of Governance Strategic Policy Committee held on 18 October 2022**

The adopted Minutes of the meeting of Governance Strategic Policy Committee held on 18 October 2022 were noted.

**HOUSING, PLANNING, REGENERATION AND CAPITAL PROJECTS**

1. **To note Planning Applications received since last meeting of the Council**

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

1. **To note adopted Minutes of meeting of Strategic Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee held on 20 October 2022**

The adopted Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee held on 20 October 2022 were noted.

**COMMUNITY, LIBRARY AND CULTURAL SERVICES, CORPORATE AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

1. **To note adopted Minutes of meeting of Placemaking Strategic Policy Committee held on 17 October 2022**

The adopted Minutes of the meeting of Placemaking Strategic Policy Committee held on 17 October 2022 were noted.

1. **Consideration of representative to the Midland Regional Drug Action Task Force Committee MRDATF to replace Councillor Colm Murray**

On the proposal of Councillor Colm Murray and seconded by Councillor Peggy Nolan it was agreed to defer this item to the March Meeting.

1. **To note Ethical Framework for Local Government**

The Ethical Framework for Local Government was noted. The deadline of 28 February was emphasised.

1. **Notice of Motion, as submitted by Councillors, as listed hereunder:**

**The following notice of motion was proposed by Councillor Garry Murtagh and seconded by Councillor Colm Murray**

Longford County Council contact all community groups directly (previously applied) to offer assistance in the completion of the Community Support Fund and the Community Support Grant. To provide training for groups that are not IT literate in the process of online application. (3 municipal districts evening/workshop).

**Response**

The closing date for the Department's Community Support Fund (CSF) 2022 is 7 February 2023. This is the Council’s fourth online application process and includes the same content as the previous hardcopy application forms. The online process delivers on objectives and actions in the Council's Corporate Plan, LECP, Digital Strategy and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

The Council is aware of the Department’s requirements to provide GPS coordinates as part of the CSF application and that certain Elected Members were contacted about the challenge this presents for certain groups, eg Tidy Towns. The Council contacted the Department about this and provided examples of situations where it would be difficult to identify a specific location. The Department advised it uses this information for mapping purposes.

Longford County Council continues to assist community groups apply for funding online. A number of short technical support videos are available on the Council's website. A technical support information session was provided to the public in January 2022 and most of the queries related to the grant scheme itself rather than IT issues. A recording of this was uploaded to the Council’s website.

The Council's Community Grant Support Scheme (CGSS) 2022 was launched later in the year, and three short instructional videos were included on the webpage to assist any applicants who hadn't been through the (Community Activities Fund) CAF process. These are also included on the current funding CSF webpage. No technical queries to date on the online CSF Application process were received.

Following the introduction of the online application process, the Council conducted a random survey of approx. 13% of applicants. No difficulties or issues were indicated. All except one replied that the online system was user-friendly, yet that one was the first online application we received which was fully completed in 14 minutes. No negative feedback was received through Longford PPN.

The experience of our Community Development team who work directly and regularly with Community Groups including older persons' and migrant groups, via the Older Person's Council and on the Intercultural Strategy review, SICAP, etc. has been positive. The Council is not aware of any Community Groups who did not submit an application because it was an online only application process.

The numbers of applications increased significantly under both CAF & CGSS, with 237 and 133 applications received respectively. Some CAF applications were 'double' applications, for both operating and equipment costs. This was a more complicated process. Of these 370 online applications, Community Development Staff assisted four persons, two over the phone and two in person.

Applicants who may not have access to the internet or their own computer are advised they can be facilitated at any of the BCPs or public libraries in the county.

Longford County Council is assisting groups and individuals in improving their digital skills.

* The Council is currently working with the Community Education facilitator (LWETB) to roll out digital skills in the BCP network. The first of these classes has commenced in Mullinalaghta Community Centre. This has been a great success.
* Basic Digital Skills training has been provided through our Creative Ireland programme. Creative Ireland funded digital skills in the Latin School Moyne also a great success.
* Going forward the IT Section advises they may need to run classes that involve bringing your own device.
* Age Friendly Ireland in partnership with Acorn have developed an Age Friendly Tablet dedicated to developing solutions which promote social inclusion, health, wellbeing and encourage digital citizenship for all ages. The tablet is preconfigured for all users and companion apps are provided to trainers who are assigned to support interaction with community Acorn users. Longford County Council has a number of these on loan to individuals through the library service and hopes to expand the scheme.
* Library staff will be made aware as new online grant applications are launched. They will be available to assist people with their applications. If necessary the Library Service will arrange briefing sessions for groups.

**INFRASTRUCTURE, CLIMATE ACTION AND INNOVATION**

1. **To note adopted Minutes of meeting of Climate Action and Planning Strategic Policy Committee held on 19 October 2022**

The adopted Minutes of the meeting of Climate Action and Planning Strategic Policy Committee held on 19 October 2022 were noted.

**VOTES OF SYMPATHY**

Cathaoirleach Councillor Turlough McGovern paid tribute to former Longford Councillor Michael Brennan who passed away recently RIP.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

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

**Claire McNabola**

**Meetings Administrator**

**Confirmed and adopted at Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 8 March 2023.**

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

**Cathaoirleach.**

