

**Minutes of Meeting of Longford County Council**

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

**Wednesday, 10 April 2024 at 3:30 pm**

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**PRESIDING**: Councillor Colm Murray, Cathaoirleach

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

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

Ms. Barbara Heslin, Director of Services

Ms. Samantha Healy, Director of Services

Mr. John Brannigan, Director of Services

Mr. Michael Nevin, A/Director of Services

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

Mary – Jane Sweeney, Music Generation (Part)

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor PJ Reilly, Councillor Peggy Nolan

**MEETINGS**

**ADMINISTRATOR**: Ms. Claire McNabola

**PRESENTATION – MUSIC GENERATION**

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Mary-Jane Sweeney, Music Generation Officer to the meeting.

Mary-Jane briefed the members regarding the establishment of the Music Generation Programme. Under the leadership of the Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board and in partnership with Longford County Council, Longford is one of twenty-five areas now participating in Music Generation - Ireland’s national music education programme.

Music Generation believes in every child and young person’s musical potential and their innate artistry; that it is every child and young person’s right to have the choice of access and the chance to participate as a musical citizen and that music doesn’t just change lives, it transforms lives.

Mary-Jane emphasised the growth of the Music Generation Programme across the County and how it has bene a great addition to the rich culture and tradition of music already being fostered in County Longford.

Mary-Jane outlined some of the initiatives in the current programme and future plans. She outlined the collaboration with other agencies and organisations and acknowledged the support from Longford County Council.

Mary-Jane replied to queries raised by the members. The Members complemented Music Generation on the work they are doing and looked forward to the expansion of the programme.

1. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

On the proposal of Councillor John Browne seconded by Councillor Paraic Brady the Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 20 March 2024, as circulated, were confirmed and adopted.

1. **MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

None

1. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

None

1. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT**

Noted

Councillor Martin Monaghan requested an update on the Increased Cost of Business Grant - feedback from businesses, uptake, funds paid out to date etc. Councillor Monaghan paid compliment to the Rates Team for their professionalism and efficiency in dealing with business owners on this matter.

Councillor Mick Cahill highlighted the challenge this is for business owners and sought clarity on flexible payment methods.

Head of Finance, John McKeon responded to the questions raised by the Members and said a new media campaign will be commencing in the coming weeks in relation to same. He provided statistics on the current level of uptake at a national and local level. He said that, currently, Longford has the highest uptake in the country. He encouraged local businesses to engage with the Council and apply online for the grant. He updated the Members on the most recent legislation as it applies to rates and the payment plans which businesses can avail of in consultation with the Council.

1. **MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY GROUP MEETING HELD ON THE 13 February 2024– AS CIRCULATED**

Noted

1. **COMMUNITY, LIBRARY AND CULTURAL SERVICES, CORPORATE AND HUMAN RESOURCES**
2. **NATIONAL FAMINE COMMEMORATION**

Martina Needham provided the Members with a high-level overview of the plans for the National Famine Commemoration 2024. For Co. Longford to host a National Commemoration is a huge honour and privilege. This will be the first time such an event will be held in Co. Longford. The event will be hosted in The Green in Edgeworthstown on 19 May.

Martina thanked Chief Executive Paddy Mahon and Director of Services Barbara Heslin for their support in pursuing this application.

Martina requested support from the Members in welcoming dignitaries to the event and assisting them in finding their way around Edgeworthstown. She asked that they confirm their attendance and their availability to assist on the day at the earliest opportunity.

Councillor Paraic Brady suggested that Martina investigate the possibility of displaying the music manuscripts of Thomas ‘Blind’ Kiernan in Edgeworthstown library during the event.

The Members congratulated Martina and the Management Team for all the hard work and effort that went into the application and the works to date on the Commemoration Day plans. They said this is a marvellous opportunity for Edgeworthstown and the County of Longford.

Chief Executive Paddy Mahon thanked and acknowledged the huge effort and work carried out by Martina and her Team. The Cathaoirleach said this is a huge honour and opportunity for the Council and Elected Members to showcase the County. He acknowledged the efforts of the Edgeworth family to alleviate the devasting impact of the famine.

It was agreed that Martina would present a further update at the May meeting of the Council.

1. **CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT BYLAWS – PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS AND OPEN SPACES 2024**

Councillor Paul Ross as chair of the Placemaking SPC presented the Draft Byelaws for Parks, Playgrounds and Open Spaces to the Members. He outlined the contents of the byelaws. He confirmed that the consultation process was completed, and they were being recommended by the Placemaking SPC for adoption.

On the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross, seconded by Councillor Paraic Brady the Members agreed to adopt the draft Byelaws. They will come into effect after the May meeting of the Council.

1. **2024 CATHAOIRLEACH AWARDS**

Following acceptance and approval of nominations, the date for the 2024 Cathaoirleach Awards has been agreed. The Awards will take place on Wednesday 8th May in the Atrium of Aras an Chontae at 6pm.

1. **APPROVAL OF THE APPOINTMENT OF MS EILEEN MC ARDLE, NOMINEE OF LONGFORD PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK AS A MEMBER OF LONGFORD LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (LCDC).**

On the proposal of Councillor Seamus Butler, seconded by Councillor Pat O’Toole the Members agreed to approve the nomination of Eileen Mc Ardle to the Longford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

1. **INFRASTRUCTURE, CLIMATE ACTION AND INNOVATION**
2. **NOTICE OF MOTIONS, SUBMITTED AS LISTED HEREUNDER**

**The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Garry Murtagh, seconded by Councillor Paul Ross**

In accordance with the Standing Orders, Councillor Garry Murtagh submitted an amended wording for his Notice of Motion. The amended wording below was seconded by Councillor Paul Ross.

Calling on Longford Co Council to write to the Minister for Housing Local Government & Heritage Darragh O Brien with responsibility for water services, regarding the Terms & Conditions to capital funding available to private water groups. Which is constricting their ability to provide a service to its members.  Inevitably forcing them to be consumed via an inter connection to Uisce Eireann network as indicated by the department, as is the case regarding the only 2 private group water schemes in the north and south of county Longford.

Furthermore, and in complete contrast to the first part, the impossible and untenable terms and conditions placed upon groups wishing to connect to Uisce Éireann, in essence leaving it impossible to be connected. Further compounded by the insufficient funding made available to groups fortunate enough to qualify. Inevitably leaving it impossible for groups/families to avail of a water connection thus depriving people of their fundamental human rights to clean water and the demise of rural Ireland.

We invite the minister to Longford to meet with the members to discuss the issues/concerns in dept.

**Response**

It was agreed that Longford County Council would write to the Minister for Housing Government & Heritage Darragh O’ Brien in this regard.

1. **HOUSING, PLANNING. REGENERATION & CAPITAL PROJECTS**
2. **NOTICE OF MOTIONS, SUBMITTED, AS LISTED HEREUNDER**

**The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Paraic Brady, seconded by Councillor Garry Murtagh**

That Longford County Council publish the envisaged number of houses that are proposed for social housing in each municipal area for 2024 and 2025 including a breakdown of housing waiting lists and how many social housing applications have been received to date. also, to include have we a housing scheme to look after people with disabilities, ie independent living.

In addition, regarding details of lands owned by Longford County Council.

**Response**

Longford County Council deliver 60 to 70 new homes annually across the 3 Municipal Districts using a range of delivery mechanisms including direct build and turnkey schemes. Longford County Council currently has sites available for 70 homes which are at various stages of development.

In 2023 Longford County Council proactively reduced its vacancy rate of homes from 7% to 2%. With the Support of the Department of Housing Local Government and Planning 70 vacant properties were brought back into use for 70 family’s homes.

The current housing demand is for 661 families of which 50% are currently availing of housing support. A further 170 applications are at currently in the assessment process.

1. **GENERAL**

**(A)NOTICE OF MOTIONS, SUBMITTED, AS LISTED HEREUNDER**

**The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Garry Murtagh, seconded by Councillor Gerry Hagan**

1. I am calling on Longford County Council to write to the Minister of Education Norma foley with the responsibility for school transport, while I welcome and thank minister for the much-needed review and report on the school transport system, I feel the timeline indicated to implement the recommendations, is slow moving.

I ask the Minister that Co. Longford be used as a pilot programme, due to its geographical size, the size of population and notably a rural county. that sufficient funds to support the logistics necessary to provide transport to every child as outlined in the report, be made available. furthermore, I invite the minister and her officials to meet with the elected representatives of Co. Longford to address the issues on the ground and discuss adequate solutions for the same.

**Response**

It was agreed that Longford County Council would write to the Minister for Education Norma Foley in this regard.

**The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Garry Murtagh, seconded by Councillor Paul Ross**

1. I am calling on Longford County Council to write to the Minister of Health Stephen Donnelly regarding the retention and support of our nurses. that they should have available to them, the same health care support as other front-line staff. to implement a similar scheme as, (or to be included in) the St. Paul’s Garda Medical Aid Society

**Response**

It was agreed that Longford County Council would write to the Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly in this regard.

1. **CORRESPONDENCE**

Correspondence received from Minister Darragh O’Brien’s office in relation to “section 48” development contributions and the refunding of Uisce Eireann water and wastewater connection charges – Noted

1. **VOTES OF SYMPATHY**

Councillor Colm Murray requested a vote of sympathy for Sarah McNally, Longford and New York – May She Rest in Peace

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

**Claire McNabola**

**Meetings Administrator**

**Confirmed and adopted at Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 8 May 2024.**

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

**Cathaoirleach**