
**Minutes of Meeting of Longford County Council
held in the Council Chamber and via Microsoft Teams on
Wednesday, 17 January 2024 at 4pm**

- 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, Peggy Nolan, Gerard Farrell, Uruemu Adejinmi, Martin Monaghan, Mark Casey, PJ Reilly, Gerry Warnock and 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
- APOLOGIES:** None
- MEETINGS**
- ADMINISTRATOR:** Ms. Claire McNabola

1. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- (i) On the proposal of Councillor Gerry Warnock seconded by Councillor Seamus Butler the Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 13 December 2023, as circulated, were confirmed and adopted.
- (ii) On the proposal of Councillor Pat O’Toole seconded by Councillor Seamus Butler the Minutes of Statutory Budget Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 4 December 2023, as circulated, were confirmed and adopted.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Councillor Gerry Warnock reiterated the issue raised in the December meeting relating to waste disposal at apartment developments and the engagement with the relevant management companies. He also highlighted dumping issues in the Longford Town area and in particular Great Water Street over the Christmas period.

Director of Services Samantha Healy confirmed that following last month's meeting, several enforcement actions have been taken including Section 9 and Section 55 notices being issued. She also confirmed that engagement with management companies had taken place. She agreed to follow up in relation to the apartments on Great Water Street.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

None.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

The Chief Executive Report for December 2023 was noted.

Councillors Mark Casey and Gerard Farrell raised their concerns over recent events in the Lanesborough area and the impact on a project, by a private operator, for the housing of Ukrainian refugees. They condemned the actions of those responsible for the suspected arson attack on the building and highlighted the impact of external influences and unsubstantiated rumours spread on social media. They also raised concerns about the lack of communication on plans for the premises. Councillor Farrell said that the proposed investment would have benefited both Lanesborough and Ballyleague and a good relationship had been developed with the developer. He hoped that something positive could still be delivered for Lanesborough.

Cathaoirleach Colm Murray and several elected members also condemned the suspected arson attack in Lanesborough and raised concerns over communication by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

The Cathaoirleach complemented the swift and decisive action of the Longford County Council Fire Service and said that there had been a significant risk of damage to the premises and adjoining buildings in the town. He also confirmed that, as a result of the suspected arson attack, the developer was no longer going to proceed with the project. He raised concerns about communication by the relevant Departments and acknowledged the updates provided by the Executive. He said that inaccurate information and rumours were spread on social media. He emphasised that Longford is a very welcoming county and that the Council and communities had worked together to help the integration of Ukrainians. He hoped that further opportunities to develop the building could be identified.

The Chief Executive, Paddy Mahon, also condemned the actions in Lanesborough. He provided a comprehensive summary and timelines of the regular communications and updates to Elected Members since the project was first proposed. He confirmed that the Council had engaged with the developer during the planning phase of the project and engaged with the relevant Departments as part of the Emergency Refurbishment (Ukraine) Project which is overseen by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The proposed works were carried out in agreement with the Department and the owner entered a contract to provide accommodation for Ukrainian refugees. The Executive provided regular, detailed and timely updates to the Council as information became available on proposed projects in Lanesborough, Ballymahon and Longford town. He expressed concern about the disturbing social media content and said that it is very hard to control this. He complemented the Fire Service on their quick response. Paddy also complemented the work of the Community Forum which assisted with the integration of Ukrainians into the County. He said that feedback from the Ukrainians was that Longford was a very welcoming county and they felt lucky to be living here. He confirmed the decision of the owner to withdraw from the contract with the Department.

Michael Nevin condemned the actions of those responsible for the suspected arson attack. He expressed his sympathies to the owner of the property who had also received threats to himself and his family. The owner had answered a national call to provide accommodation for Ukrainians. Michael confirmed that a €1m investment in the property was planned to repurpose it and the owner had already invested significant resources in the project. Due to the risks and safety concerns the owner has now decided not to proceed with the project. Michael explained that some promoters deal directly with the Department and the Council have no knowledge of these arrangements unless the Department approach the Council directly. In contrast, the Council had always been fully transparent in providing information regarding the proposed projects in Lanesborough, Ballymahon and Longford town. A planned communication campaign was planned for the project in Lanesborough but the events over the past few days had overtaken this.

Councillor Peggy Nolan asked for an update on the proposed meeting with the HSE. The Cathaoirleach confirmed that he and the Council was still waiting for the HSE to respond. It was agreed by the members to write directly to the CEO of the HSE requesting a meeting.

5. MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY GROUP MEETING HELD ON THE 7 NOVEMBER 2023 – AS CIRCULATED

The adopted Minutes of Corporate Policy Group Meeting held on the 7 November 2023, as circulated, were noted.

6. HOUSING, PLANNING, REGENERATION AND CAPITAL PROJECTS

(a) Consideration of Draft Anti-Social Behaviour Policy – as circulated

On the proposal of Councillor Gerry Warnock seconded by Councillor Paraic Brady, the draft Anti-Social Behaviour Policy was adopted.

(b) Consideration of disposal of Property at 3 Lisbrack, Longford Town, Co Longford, in accordance with the terms of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 issued on the 19 December 2023 – as circulated

On the proposal of Councillor Seamus Butler seconded by Councillor Uruemu Adejimi, the disposal of property at 3 Lisbrack, Longford Town, Co Longford was approved.

(c) Notice of Motions, submitted by Councillors, as listed hereunder

Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Seamus Butler and seconded by Councillor Uruemu Adejimi

That the Executive of Longford County Council arrange a visit for the Members and Executive to the new Innovation Quarter in the former Ballina Military Barracks, including if possible, a meeting with the team that oversaw and delivered the project. Ideally this visit should be arranged sooner rather than later and should hopefully inform our delivery strategy for the Camlin Quarter.

Response

The Executive agreed to arrange a visit for interested Elected Members to Ballina Military Barracks in the next 5-6 weeks and a meeting with Mayo County Council Regeneration Team to discuss the project to be arranged if possible.

7. COMMUNITY, LIBRARY AND CULTURAL SERVICES, CORPORATE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

(a) Consideration of Draft Annual Service Delivery Plan – as circulated

Barbara Heslin outlined the structure of the report and informed the members that the Service Delivery Plan was developed by the relevant Senior Officers and Management Team. It reflects the vision and strategic objectives in the Corporate Plan. She explained that all sections, with the exception of Housing was included. As presented, it reflects the specific objectives and tasks for the coming year and guides each section through their 2024 priorities and focuses on the areas that need to be invested in. The plan includes specific performance indicators for each section, including both local and national indicators. These will be reported on during and at the end of the year.

On the proposal of Councillor Uruemu Adejimi seconded by Councillor Seamus Butler the Draft Annual Service Delivery Plan was adopted. The Cathaoirleach requested that

the Service Delivery Plan for Housing be presented at the February meeting of the Council.

(b) Draft Bye Laws – Parks, Playgrounds and Open Spaces Byelaws 2024 – as circulated

Councillor Paul Ross introduced the proposed Parks, Playgrounds and Open Spaces Byelaws 2024 and explained that they had been considered by the Placemaking SPC. He complemented the team responsible for drafting them. In response to Councillor Butler, Barbara Heslin confirmed that, where permits are required, these will be developed following the adoption of the byelaws by the Council. She also confirmed that enforcement procedures were also covered in the draft document.

On the proposal of Councillor Paul Ross, seconded by Councillor Mick Cahill the Draft Parks, Playgrounds and Open Spaces Byelaws 2024 were considered and approved to go forward to public consultation.

(c) Political Donations - Local Elections (Disclosure of Donations and Expenditure) Act 1999, as amended - Members of Local Authorities – as circulated.

Director of Services Barbara Heslin reminded the elected members that Members of Local Authorities Disclosure of Donations must be submitted no later than 31st January 2024.

(d) Political Donations - Local Elections (Disclosure of Donations and Expenditure) Act 1999, as amended – Third Parties – as circulated.

Director of Services Barbara Heslin reminded the elected members that Third Parties Disclosure of Donations must be submitted no later than 31st January 2024.

8. INFRASTRUCTURE, CLIMATE ACTION & INNOVATION

(a) Notice of Motions, submitted by Councillors, as listed hereunder

Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Pat O’Toole and seconded by Councillor Mick Cahill

I call on Longford County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland to provide and update on the proposed new road layout on the N55 between Rathmore, Ballymahon and Cornamaddy, Athlone.

Response

Westmeath County Council in partnership with Longford County Council and in association with Transport Infrastructure Ireland announced the Preferred Route Corridor (PRC) for the N55 Athlone to Ballymahon Scheme on the 10th of May 2023 .

A brief presentation on the proposed Scheme was provided to the Members of Ballymahon MD on the 25th of May 2023.

As the N55 Athlone to Ballymahon Scheme is not listed in the current National Development Plan (NDP) it is most unlikely that this Scheme in its entirety will secure funding ahead of other Schemes listed in the NDP.

Construction of the Scheme in 4 or 5 phases is considered the best way to advance the improvement of this route.

Samantha Healy confirmed that, as information became available, this would be communicated to the Ballymahon Municipal District Elected Members.

9. **GENERAL**

(a) Notice of Motions, submitted by Councillors, as listed hereunder

Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Paul Ross and seconded by Councillor Pat O'Toole

- (i) I call on Longford County Council to write to the Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine to ensure that all who entered the Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme (SCEP) are not penalised by the recent change in cow indexes and ensure that all those who entered the scheme in good faith prior to the ICBF changes to the replacement and terminal cow index are allowed keep the cow indexes which their animals had when they entered the scheme. This will ensure that all those who entered the 5 year scheme will be able to remain in this important scheme which was designed to improve the environmental sustainability of the national herd.

Response

It was agreed that correspondence would be sent to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in relation to the Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme (SCEP).

Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Paul Ross and seconded by Councillor Paraic Brady

- (ii) That Longford County Council call on the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to ensure that all applicants of the second phase of the ACRES Environmental scheme are included in the scheme this year.

Response

It was agreed that correspondence would be sent to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in relation to the inclusion of farmers in the ACRES Environmental scheme.

Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi and seconded by Councillor Seamus Butler

I call on Longford County Council to write to the Minister for Health to restore full pay parity including benefits for Section 39 organisations and staff with Section 38. Pay inequality is causing staff recruitment and retention challenges for section 39 organisations which puts at risk the vital services they provide for service users in our Communities.

Response

It was agreed that correspondence would be sent to the Minister for Health in relation to the restoration of full pay parity for Section 39 organisations and staff with Section 38 equivalent.

10. VOTES OF SYMPATHY

The Members of Longford County Council offered their sympathies to the families and friends of:

Sean Donnelly, Cloncoose, Longford.

Dessie Hynes, Rosslare Strand Wexford, Baggot St Dublin and Formerly of Longford

Charlie Martin, Cartron, Granard, Co. Longford

Morag & Paul Kavanagh, Granard, Co. Longford

All who have passed away in recent time. May their souls rest in peace.

Signed: _____

Claire McNabola
Meetings Administrator

Confirmed and adopted at Meeting of Longford County Council held on the 14 February 2024.

Signed: _____

Cathaoirleach

