

**MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON
ON MONDAY, 23RD APRIL, 2018 AT 2.15 PM.**

- PRESENT:** Councillor Orla Leyden, Cathaoirleach **PRESIDED**
- MEMBERS:** Cllr R. Doherty, Cllr T. Ward, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr I. Connaughton, Cllr D. Connolly, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr M. Creaton, Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice, Cllr P. Kilduff, Cllr M. Mulligan, Cllr J. Murphy, Cllr J. Naughten and Cllr L. Callaghan.
- OFFICIALS:** Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive
Majella Hunt, Director of Services
Martin Lydon, Director of Services
Pat Murtagh, A/Director of Services
Cait Kenny, Assistant Staff Officer
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator
- Apologies:** Cllr J. Keogh and Cllr K. Shanagher

49.18 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Dineen
SECONDED by Cllr. Cummins
It was **AGREED** to adopt the Minutes of Plenary Meeting held on 26.03.2018

50.18 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

51.18 LEASE OF LANDS (CORPORATE SERVICES)

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Naughten
SECONDED by Councillor Kilduff
It was **AGREED** that the Council consent to the lease of property pursuant to the provisions of Section 211 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 and Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001. Particulars of the property which the County Council proposes to lease:-

The property: Unit 1, Monksland Civic centre, Monksland, Athlone, Co, Roscommon
The person to whom the property is to be leased to: Jennifer Harte
Consideration: €600 per month (€7,200 per annum) plus VAT as applicable, plus service charges
Terms of Lease: Four years and nine months

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Fallon
SECONDED by Councillor Naughten
It was **AGREED** that the Council consent to the lease of property pursuant to the provisions of Section 211 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 and Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001. Particulars

of the property which the County Council proposes to lease:-

The property: Unit 2, Monksland Civic centre, Monksland, Athlone, Co, Roscommon

The person to whom the property is to be leased to: The Redeemed Christian Church of God.

Consideration: €600 per month (€7,200 per annum) plus VAT as applicable, plus service charges

Terms of Lease: Four years and nine months

52.18 MANAGEMENT REPORT

Members noted the Management Report for Quarter 1 2018.

53.18 ADOPTION OF UNAUDITED ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2017

Mr. Martin Lydon, Head of Finance and A/Director of Services outlined key points regarding the accounts:

- Overall surplus of €11,000 for 2017 bringing overall general reserves to €183,000
- €73.7m spent in Revenue and Capital Accounts with no recourse to overdraft during the year
- 93% of all invoices paid within 30 days
- Increase in Rates collection of €234,000 however reduction from 91% to 83% of rates collection (due to change of method for accounting of doubtful debts)
- Total of €10.2m received in National Grants of which €7m received from Equalisation Fund
- Approval sought for Divisional Over-expenditure in sum of €4,727,697 and the transfers from/to reserves of €2,769,351
- Roscommon County Council is in good financial shape.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Connaughton
SECONDED by Cllr. Connolly

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Unaudited Annual Financial Statement for Year ended 31st December 2017.

54.18 DECLARATION OF PUBLIC ROAD - S11 OF THE ROADS ACT 1993 AND ROADS REGULATIONS 1994, PART 2

Mr. Pat Murtagh A/Director of Services reported as follows:

Applications were received to have roads located at Baylough, Athlone and Taylorstown, Clonown, Athlone declared public roads. The roads have been examined and the Council is satisfied that they are suitable for declaration as public roads. There are no immediate financial implications for the Council in such a declaration. The Council will be charged with their future maintenance.

The statutory notice proposing to declare the roads public was published and no objection or representation was received.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Naughten

SECONDED by Councillor Kilduff

It was **AGREED** to declare the road at Baylough, Athlone, Co Roscommon in to be a public road.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Fallon

SECONDED by Councillor Naughten

It was **AGREED** to declare the road at Taylorstown, Clonown, Athlone, Co. Roscommon to be a public road.

55.18 ALLOCATIONS UNDER THE TIDY TOWNS AND AMENITY GRANTS SCHEME 2018

Ms. Majella Hunt, Director of Services presented the 2018 Tidy Towns and Amenity grants for approval of the members as follows:

- In accordance with the terms of the scheme, funding for Tidy Towns Associations is prioritised for those entering the National Tidy Towns Competition in 2018. Funding for Local Development Associations who are carrying out small scale enhancement works in their local areas are recommended.
- An allocation to the County Roscommon Community Games and three sub aqua clubs that are active in search and rescue are also recommended.
- The total budget for the scheme is €60,000 and a total of 83 eligible applications were received and are recommended for grant approval.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Byrne

SECONDED by Cllr. Cummins

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Allocations under the Tidy Towns and Amenity Grants Scheme 2018.

56.18 CORRESPONDENCE

- Letter of acknowledgement from Department of Health regarding the Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs.
- Letter from Sligo Municipal District RE: Resolution passed by Members in relation to Broadcasting of GAA Matches.
- Letter from Donegal County Council RE: Resolution passed by Members in relation to Community Employment Schemes
- Letter from An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar T.D, expressing thanks for work carried out by Roscommon County Council Staff during Storm Emma.
- Letter of acknowledgement from Dept. of Housing, Planning and Local Government regarding the allocation of funding to local authorities for dealing with dangerous roadside trees.
- Letter from Amnesty International in relation to Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs.
- Letter from Dept. of Housing, Planning and Local Government in connection with the National Planning Framework.
- Letter from Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government regarding Taking in Charge applications.

57.18 CHIEF EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

There were no items for discussion.

58.18 COUNCILLORS CONFERENCES - PAYMENT/ATTENDANCE

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Cummins

SECONDED by Councillor Fallon

It was **AGREED** to adopt the list of payments for attendance at conferences as circulated to the members.

59.18 VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS AND SYMPATHY

- Votes of congratulations were extended to the Roscommon Senior Football Team on Winning Division 2 of the National Football League.
- Vote of Sympathy was proposed by Cllr. Liam Callaghan to the Duignan and Mulvey families on the recent passing of Mary Mulvey, husband of Council employee Paul and daughter Kitty and the late Charlie Duignan, both former Cathaoirleach of Roscommon County Council.

60.18 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Sliabh Bawn Windfarm:

The Cathaoirleach thanked Mr. Martin Lydon for the information circulated regarding the Report on the Sliabh Bawn Windfarm. She is of the opinion that the current guidelines that informed the report on Sliabh Bawn are outdated as they don't deal with low frequency noise and the current wind turbines are now twice the height. The families affected have referred this report to consultants they have engaged and are willing to make this available to the Council when completed. She asked Mr Lydon to confirm when will the Councils own report on the noise be carried out and completed.

Mr. Lydon confirmed that the equipment had been calibrated and returned last week. Work will start this week and expected to take 3-4 weeks to complete on 7 or 8 sites. It is expected to have a report in 6 to 8 weeks.

In response to concerns raised by members at to the locations of testing and a desire that testing be done when south east winds are blowing, Mr. Lydon said that all concerns will be taken into consideration but locations will also depend on gaining access.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Leyden

SECONDED by Cllr. Byrne

It was **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council call on Mr. Denis Naughten, Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment to bring in the new Guidelines for Wind Energy without further delay and cease the subsidisation of on-shore wind energy.

Vacant Site Levy

Cllr. Liam Callaghan spoke on the proposed Vacant Site Levy and queries he has received from people as a

result of letters that issued to them from the Council -

- Not aware their land was zoned for development
- Not aware of next steps if using the lands for agricultural purposes
- Need clarity on the current situation in Roscommon and what the next steps are for land owners affected by the levy.
- Amazed that there is a levy on undeveloped land when there are so many unfinished estates and vacant houses in county and this levy should not be applicable in County Roscommon

Members made the following points in relation to the discussion:

- If many of the sites were put up for sale for housing development, there would be no buyers for these sites
- Acknowledged that the levy is applicable in large urban centres where there is land hoarding but not applicable in rural counties
- Conditions are not right for development at the moment and with the cost of new building regulations there are no builders currently building as they cannot buy lands and build at a profit.
- Is there an appeals process?
- There is a need for houses in the county but it is now cheaper to buy rather than build.
- When the levy to be introduced nationally.
- This is a very significant issue and a worry to all those who received letters – how can they be removed from the register?
- Is this levy being implemented uniformly by all local authorities?

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Cummins

SECONDED by Cllr. Byrne

It was **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council call on the Mr. Eoghan Murphy, Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to put the Vacant Site Levy on hold until such time as there is clarity that the levy is being implemented uniformly across every county by each Local Authority.

The Director of Services Mr. Martin Lydon addressed the members as follows:

- The Vacant Site Levy shows there is learning from all sides and this is the first time that people have said that their zoned lands won't be developed and there is a balance that is required.
- Before lands are put on the register the council will write to ask for a submission within 28 days of receipt of the initial letter. There is an appeals process to An Bord Pleanála. Roscommon County Council have followed the legislation carefully and issued 175 notices.
- All Local Authorities have been called to a meeting with the Department in 1st May and a report will be made back to the members after this meeting.
- The Council will have to take into account the RSES Strategy as there will be a reduction in zoned land because of this.
- The information on the site register will include name address, folio number and market value of the site.

Castlerea Fire Station

Cllr. Fitzmaurice asked the A/Director of Services when can the Castlerea Fire Station be opened, now that interviews have been held for the vacant positions? He also expressed his sympathy to the family of the

late Dan Doherty who passed away this morning and gave many years of dedicated service as a fire fighter in Castlerea. His comments were supported by Cllr. Dineen, Cllr Mulligan and the Cathaoirleach.

Mr. Pat Murtagh, in reply stated that the closure of the station for the past 16 months was unprecedented but there is a need to ensure that all personnel can work safely together. The interviews have concluded and the recruitment process has moved onto the next stage and as yet he cannot give a definitive date for the reopening of the station.

The Chief executive expressed his sympathy to the family of Mr. Doherty. He stated that he is fully committed to the reopening of the station in Castlerea this year.

Health Services

Cllr Rachel Doherty spoke regarding health facilities as follows:

- Confusion with regard to closure of in St Joseph's centre in Ballaghaderreen. Senator Hopkins said on local radio this morning that this facility would close on Friday while Mr. Tony Canavan of HSE said that there was a review its very early stages and there is no decision yet as to when if facility would close, and that decision would be made in the next couple of weeks.
- In April last year there was a temporary closure of this facility.
- Is a Government representative announcing a decision on behalf of the HSE, in advance of a decision expected in a couple of weeks?
- Need to write to Mr. Tony Canavan of HSE to ask him exactly what is happening in Ballaghaderreen and also what is proposed for other day care centres in county Roscommon and also to the many hostels we have in the county.
- "Vision for Change" should be dispensed of.
- HSE did not attend a recent meeting in Dublin where service users and representatives from Roscommon County Council attended.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Doherty
SECONDED by Cllr. Dineen

It was **AGREED** that a letter should be sent to Mr. Tony Canavan to confirm will he outline in a couple of weeks that a decision will be made on Ballaghaderreen and what timeframe is he talking about. Has the announcement been made on behalf of the HSE and if it's not going to close on Friday when can we expect a decision in the coming weeks.

Cllr. Mulligan condemned any decision to close the facility as it is peoples' home.

Cllr. Creaton said that the statements from Cllr. Doherty were unfair as Senator Hopkins did not announce a closure of the facility on Friday and the Mr. Canavan HSE stated that there is a review ongoing with no dates for decisions as yet.

Cllr. Ward stated that these issues have been raised on an ongoing basis at the HSE Forum monthly meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward
SECONDED by Cllr. Dineen

It was **AGREED** that a detailed letter be sent to Minister Simon Harris outlining the cuts year after year to the health budget in County Roscommon.

Members also stated the following:

- Time to bring the issues with regard to Mental Health services in County Roscommon to the Minister for Health as he is in charge of the Health Budget.
- Call on the six local Oireachtas members to stand up to the closures and cuts as it is only the local politicians that are fighting for the families affected.
- Our elderly people deserve respect – bringing people to day care facilities from Ballaghaderreen to Boyle is unfair.
- No doubt the HSE is trying to close many mental health facilities in the county and so many of our facilities being downgraded.
- The HSE are civil servants and have said they will do what the Government wants so we must call on our government representatives to act on our behalf.

It was agreed that the letters should be sent immediately to the Minister and HSE.

Roads:

Cllr. Ward asked if there is an update from the Department on his Notice of Motion regarding a request for extra funding to repair the many roads that are in very poor condition state following the severe winter weather. This is a major issue in South Roscommon in particular as the public are concerned they are paying property tax, motor tax and roads are in a very poor state.

Mr. Pat Murtagh, A/Director of Services informed the meeting that a letter did issue to the Department and the Roads Senior Engineer has met with the new Department inspector last week and brought this serious matter to their attention.

The members expressed their opinions as follows:

- All the members have roads in their areas that need immediate attention
- The Minister for Transport should be contacted regarding extra monies
- There is a limit to the amount of patching that can be done and the damage was done 10 years ago with the cut in funding to resurface roads when it was required.
- Can the roads adjacent to Four Roads be repaired in advance of the county ploughing championships next weekend?
- Need to look at black topping more roads as tar and chip is not as effective with the changing nature of the weather.
- Welcome funding for Local Improvement Schemes and when will works commence?
- Will vacant outdoor positions will be filled and there is no tar patching unit operational in Ballaghaderreen at this present time?

Mr. Pat Murtagh will revert to Cllr Mulligan regarding vacant outdoor positions. He also said that works on LIS schemes will commence as soon as possible as funding has only just been approved from the Department but as members are aware, this funding is for non public roads.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward
SECONDED by Cllr Fallon

It was **AGREED** to write again to the Department regarding additional funding for repair of roads.

Festivals and Events:

The following were noted:

- County Ploughing Championships in Four Roads next weekend.
- Lamb Festival in Roscommon town on May bank holiday weekend with chef Catherine Fulvio in attendance
- International Tapestry collection in Aras an Chontae in conjunction with the Lamb festival.
- Congratulations to Roscommon Youth Theatre on their recent production of Oedipus
- Votail 100 will take place in King House on 25th April
- The Freedom of County Roscommon award to Brian O'Doherty will take place on 26th April in the IMMA, Dublin

Cllr Kilduff made a statement on the proposed change to the Constitution in the forthcoming referendum on 28th May regarding the regulation of termination of pregnancy. He said that he would be personally voting no and while everyone knows there will be some form of abortion he cannot accept the 12 week proposal and urged the government parties to propose an alternative solution.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Monday, 28th May, 2018.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are
Confirmed and Signed:



Meetings Administrator



Cathaoirleach



Countersigned