

**MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON
ON MONDAY, 22ND OCTOBER, 2018 AT 2.15 PM.**

PRESENT: Councillor Ivan Connaughton **PRESIDED**

MEMBERS: Cllr O. Leyden, Cllr R. Doherty, Cllr T. Ward, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr D. Connolly, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr M. Creaton, Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr P. Kilduff, Cllr M. Mulligan, Cllr J. Murphy, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher and Cllr L. Callaghan.

OFFICIALS: Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive
Majella Hunt, Director of Services
Martin Lydon, Director of Services
Shane Tiernan, Director of Services
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator
Michelle Carney, Assistant Staff Officer
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator

Apologies:

121.18 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Dineen
SECONDED by Councillor Creaton
It was **AGREED** to adopt the Minutes of Plenary Meeting held on 24.09.2018

122.18 MATTERS ARISING

Fire in Castlerea:

Cllr. Fitzmaurice said that the Dolan Family and their neighbours are upset at the statement of the Chief Executive at the last plenary meeting regarding the fire in their shed and its potential consequences. Can the Chief Executive reflect on his remarks and is there any update on the reopening of the fire station in Castlerea?

Cllr. Dineen also stated that the family had contacted him about the matter. He stated he has 1,700 petitions from people in Castlerea requesting that their fire station be reopened and asked for an update on the reopening of the station. Cllr. Creaton also spoke of the family concerns and requested an update.

The Cathaoirleach welcomed the newly appointed Director of Services Mr. Shane Tiernan to his first Meeting of Roscommon County Council.

Mr. Tiernan thanked everyone for the warm welcome. He informed the members that two recruits have gone through initial induction and their recruit training will commence in early November. There are some refurbishment works currently ongoing in the Castlerea Fire Station and there is a process in place to reach the objective of getting the fire station reopened.

123.18 MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Management Report for Quarter 3 2018 was noted.

124.18 DISPOSAL OF LANDS (CORPORATE SERVICES)

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Naughten

SECONDED by Councillor Ward

It was **AGREED** that the Council consent to the disposal of lands 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 land which the County Council proposes to dispose of:-

The land: Site comprising 0.649 Ha (1.604 acres) at Monksland Townland, Athlone, Co. Roscommon

The persons from whom the land was acquired: Eamonn Conneely & Dolores Conneely, Gurwin Ltd.

The person to whom the land is to be disposed: Odan Eboy Ltd.

Consideration: €50,000

Councillors Naughten, Kilduff and Fallon welcomed the sale of the site and for the creation of a business and the jobs it will bring and remarked that Roscommon County Council ensure there is an adequate land bank in the Monksland area to facilitate future investment in the area.

Director of Services, Majella Hunt confirmed that this is part of an indigenous site already there and a new medical products company will be setting up there. She added that the Council have other sites at this location and keep informed of sites on the market and their suitability.

125.18 ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE AUDITED ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2017

Mr. Martin Lydon, Head of Finance presented the report to the Members and highlighted the following:

- The revenue account reported a surplus of €11,000 after net transfers of €2.8m with an accumulated surplus of €183,000 at 31.12.17.
- There was an increase in rates collected of €0.03m but the % year on year decreased from 91% to 83% due to the treatment of doubtful debts. Loans figure is down and many Council loans are very old.
- Contracts for the appointment of Legal services for debt collection are due to be signed by year end.
- Development Contribution debtors have reduced by €2.3m to €6.8m at year end.
- The Council fully owns Roscommon Leisure Centre and provided subvention of €186k in 2017. There is an accumulated loss of loss of €231k at year end.
- Moylurg Rockingham Ltd. Is 50% owned by the Council and recorded a profit of €204k in 2017 reducing accumulated losses to €445k. The €2m loan will be repaid when the company is profitable.
- An administrative error was identified by Revenue Audit in November 2017 in the VAT returns and the payment due including interest and penalties have been paid with robust controls now in place.
- Unfinished Housing estates continue to reduce with bond negotiations. At the end of 2017 the Council holds 98 bonds worth €15.1m and 25 cash bonds worth €958,000.

Mr. Lydon then gave a full report to the members on the VAT underpayment to Revenue:

- On 6th November 2017 Revenue informed the Council that a VAT Audit would be commence on 30th

November for the period Financial year 2016 and 1 Jan – 31 Oct 2017.

- The next correspondence received on 17th January 2018 from Revenue was replied to by the Council on 23rd January. In their reply the Council confirmed that there was a system error regarding the payment of VAT for the months of July and August 2017 which led to an underpayment of €331,000. This under payment was paid to Revenue the next day, 24th January.
- During the scope of the Audit a total of €31million was audited and a sum of €11,000 was also identified.
- The underpayment was identified by the Council as a systems error and this was accepted by Revenue. However, as no qualifying disclosure was made from the period 6th November to 30th November and the amount of the underpayment was in excess of €35,000 penalties and Interest totalling €114,300 were applied and Roscommon County Council will be named as a tax defaulter in December. (The penalty was reduced from 40% to 30% due to cooperation received) The total amount of default will be shown as €456,000 of which €342,000 was properly payable at VAT at the time.
- The payment did not affect front line services due to salary payment differences in staff leaving and being recruited and additional income from unwinding FEMPI legislation.
- Roscommon County Council takes compliance seriously and apologises for this error and systems and resources have been put in place to ensure this will not happen again.

The Members reacted as follows:

- Disappointment was expressed that the elected Members are only now being informed of this matter and enquired as to why were the members of the CPG and the Cathaoirleach were not informed in the period since last January?
- What is meant by a systems error and how can the members be assured this will not happen again? Is there an Internal Audit Committee and were they aware of this?
- There is very little information regarding the issue in the Audit Report – can the Chief Executive elaborate on the issue?
- Concern expressed that Roscommon County Council will listed as a tax defaulter at the end of the year. It is accepted that this error was to no-ones benefit but the matter has been dealt with and we will have to move on.
- It is frightening that the type of penalty that can be applied for an honest mistake despite paying what was owed as soon as the error was discovered. It is also unfortunate that Revenue did not contact the Council to inform them that the money was not paid earlier and applied appears out of proportion but accepting that Revenue have rules they must implement for everyone. It is unfortunate that one arm of the State is taking money from another.
- No front line services were affected but can the penalty be further reduced?
- Cllr. Cummins, as a member of the Audit Committee confirmed that the Roscommon County Council Audit Committee were informed this week about the matter and accepted this was an administrative error. The Audit Committee accepted the bonafides of the explanation that it was an administrative error and expressed their confidence in the Finance section.
- €2.3m spent in purchase of 26 houses in 2017 – how many will be purchased in 2018?
- Bonds that have been sold on - when these bonds were called in, how can they be sold on without notifying the Council and without addressing the outstanding issues? This is serious problem for estates that have to be taken in charge.
- Unfinished Estates in Ballinagare, Frenchpark and Tulsk – there has to be a deadline put on when these works will be completed.

The Cathaoirleach informed the members that he was also made aware of the VAT issue this morning but it has been dealt with and he expressed confidence in the management of the finances of the Council.

The Chief Executive thanked the Members for their input. The reporting error is a serious issue that should not have happened. Revenue did what they had to do as per their regulations. More resources have been put into the Internal Audit Function to ensure all checks and balances are now in place. As regards the error, no one person is responsible and it is regrettable that the Elected members have been put into a situation to deal with this matter today. As regards the issue of Bonds, any member that wants further information, please contact the Meetings Administrator and information will be made available at the next meeting.

Martin Lydon stated that in 2018 26 houses are expected be built and 46 acquired totalling 72.

Cllr. Leyden queried the involvement of the committees as regards governance as the CPG and Audit Committees have met many times since January and were not informed of the VAT problem.

The Chief Executive in reply stated that this is an issue about VAT only and the finances are in an excellent situation due to good governance and management not least by the Members. This matter was only closed off with Revenue on 27th July this year and it would not be acceptable to him as Chief Executive to bring the matter to any elected member or committee until the full facts were available.

In the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Connolly

SECONDED by Cllr. Fallon

And **AGREED** that The Elected members of Roscommon County Council have full confidence in the Audit Committee Head of Finance Mr. Martin Lydon, and Chief Executive Mr. Cummins.

The Chief Executive thanked the Members for the resolution.

126.18 OVERDRAFT APPROVAL 2019

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Cummins

SECONDED by Councillor Dineen

It was **AGREED** to approve an overdraft facility of €6 million for the year ending 31st December, 2019

127.18 SECTION 106 OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 - LOAN APPROVAL

Mr. Martin Lydon outlined details of the need to raise a loan of €10 million to provide matching funding for the major projects and schemes that will be funded by central government including Urban and Rural Regeneration, Outdoor Recreation etc. The loan is needed to ensure that we can maximise the investment that comes into Roscommon through the various grant schemes over the next number of years. This is not for just our six major towns but the villages and the county as a whole.

- Members welcomed the loan as it will enable projects to be undertaken that might not otherwise be done.
- There should be a facility to draw down smaller amounts such as €20,000 - €30,000 as a €100k scheme is a large scheme for a community to fund.
- This is a progressive move as all expenditure in towns and villages will affect the hinterlands too.
- Expectation that the Government will respond by funding projects in Roscommon as every

€1million provided by the Council can generate €4 million in funding

- Can different community groups or villages come together to generate a project?
- There is a need to create a plan to dovetail all these opportunities and ensure no community is excluded.
- There is a need for more long term planning at Central Government - too often there is short notice to get projects initiated and completed.
- Need to think bigger especially in the West of Ireland, major development of Rathcroghan and use of knock airport to entice multinationals to set up.
- Can Roscommon County Council help local voluntary groups to put plans together as they need the expertise of the Council?

Mr. Lydon confirmed that the loan, if approved, is not just for the Rural and Urban Regeneration Schemes but for all schemes that require matched funding e.g. Town & Village, CLAR schemes etc.

In response to a query on who decides on what projects are successful, Ms. Majella Hunt confirmed that schemes such as Town and Villages, CLAR, Festival grants etc., will continue. The Council will continue to engage with villages and the preparation of village plans. Currently expressions of interest are sought for funding and this process will continue and if new policies are required going forward, these can be dealt with by relevant SPC's and the full Plenary Council.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Ward

SECONDED by Councillor Dineen

It was **AGREED** pursuant to the Provisions of Section 106 of the Local Government Act, 2001 to approve to raise a loan of €10 million to provide match funding for major projects and schemes funded via central government grant schemes.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward

SECONDED by Cllr. Dineen

It was **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council continue to cooperate with communities by providing the necessary expertise to help put village plans in place.

128.18 UPDATE ON TOWNS AND VILLAGES RENEWAL SCHEME 2018 AND RESIDENTIAL OCCUPANCY PILOT

Majella Hunt, Director of Services updated the Members on the 2018 Town and Village Scheme:

- Following a Competitive National tendering process, Roscommon received approval for seven projects to the value of €880,000.
- 80% Funding with 20% matched funding requirement and projects to be completed in 2019
- The projects were borne out of consultations with local groups and the loan just approved will facilitate these and other schemes in the future.
- Athleague - €100,000 for village enhancement works
- Ballaghaderreen - €100,000 for study on feasibility plan for Park Area, tourism signs enhancements works of Shambles, landscaping and community gardens.
- Boyle - €200,000 for link from town centre to tourism assets including part demolition of Royal Hotel and its external refurbishment, creation of Civic space and development of riverside promenade.
- Monksland - €200,000 develop a community park area with activities for youth.
- Roscommon - €100,000 for uplighting of castle, Loughnaneane Parking, signage and Abbey

entrance enhancement

- Rooskey -€100,000 for enhancement of street buildings, enhancement of quayside, repairs to bridge parapet wall and enhancement of village
- Strokestown - €100,000 to enhance building frontage, facilitate community market Square and provide permanent lighting of Strokestown Park House gates

Ms. Majella Hunt also updated the members about the Residential Occupancy Pilot Scheme for Boyle just announced:

- Six Rural towns from six counties, including Boyle, have been invited to develop innovative proposals to encourage more people to live in rural town centres.
- Each town to receive €100,000 to engage with local communities and businesses to look at practical solutions that can be delivered to increase numbers living in rural towns.
- This study will take place over the coming months as all local groups will be asked to engage.

The members discussed the two initiatives as follows:

- Acknowledgement that a lot of work is being done behind the scenes to facilitate such projects.
- Local consultation with all stakeholders is important.
- Recent progress in Athleague with great community involvement.
- Monksland struggling to build community but can avail of new opportunities now being presented
- New funding will benefit all towns and those not included this year such as Frenchpark, Rooskey and Elphin should be included next year.
- Funding of almost €1 million is significant and there is a new sense of optimism in Boyle with Rural Regeneration funds and also this pilot scheme to look at town residency
- What is the Abbey entrance enhancement project?
- Town teams working well and a great mechanism for funding and projects such as “Light up the Roscommon castle” is excellent but lack of coach parking must be addressed.
- The proposed plans for Boyle 2040 gives great confidence to the area and we hope this will be a ‘flagship town’ while the setting up of the town teams have been a great mechanism for getting funding.
- Looking forward to the development of the Royal Hotel Site in Boyle and the “New Boyle” as this will have knock on effect to adjacent villages.
- Great tourism potential in the Rooskey, Elphin, Tulsk and Strokestown areas that should be developed.
- Welcome the project for Rooskey but it is even more important with the new playground developed on the Leitrim side, that need for a pedestrian bridge is crucial.
- Important that no village is left out of the funding process.

Ms. Hunt thanked the members for their positive feedback and replied to queries raised:

- Proposals for both Elphin and Frenchpark were submitted but not successful and will be looked at again.
- The entrance into Roscommon Abbey needs to be upgraded to allow improved accessibility.
- The executive is looking at the constitution of the Town Teams for the future and appealing for further participation and collaboration of the Members and groups.

129.18 NOTICE OF MOTION

09.18 Notice of Motion from the Cathaoirleach, Cllr Ivan Connaughton

That Roscommon County Council hold a special event to commemorate the first meeting of the First Dáil Eireann which took place on 21st January 1919 and welcome the family members of the County Roscommon representatives in the first Dáil namely George Noble Plunkett and Harry Boland.

Reply:

This Motion requires a resolution of the Council.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Connaughton

SECONDED by Cllr. Connolly

It was **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council hold a special event to commemorate the first meeting of the First Dáil Eireann which took place on 21st January 1919.

Cllr. Fitzmaurice noted that the first person who spoke in Dáil Eireann may have been a priest from West Roscommon who said the prayer.

130.18 CORRESPONDENCE

- Letter from Clare County Council dated 10th October, 2018, regarding a resolution that was adopted calling on the Minister for Education and Skills to recognise the important role that outdoor educational centres play in the education and development of our youth by funding all staff salaries of outdoor educational centres directly from department funds.
- Letter from Deputy Eugene Murphy, dated 8th October, 2018 regarding the Sterilisation Unit in Roscommon Hospital.
- Letter from Donegal County Council dated 4th October, 2018 regarding a resolution that was adopted calling on An Post and the Dublin Government to reverse their decision to close 17 Post Offices in Donegal and also to reverse their decision to close all the other Post Offices across the state. If the Gaeltacht is to survive it needs these services in the community. This Government is on one hand talking about the importance of saving "An Gaeltacht" and "Rural Ireland", but on the other hand it is taking away vital services from our community.
- Letter from Cork County Council dated 1st October, 2018 calling on the Department of Rural & Community Development, expressing its disappointment that Cork County Council was refused 2nd Round funding for 2018 Local Improvement Schemes, on the basis that it did not comply with what it considers are stringent deadlines (end of July) for completion of Round 1 Schemes, which stringent deadlines are not in accordance with normal deadlines (end November) for other Road Grants.
- Letter from Mr. Tony Canavan, Executive Chairperson, HSE dated 1st October, 2018 advising Roscommon County Council that in accordance with the Health Act 2004, Section 42 all questions must be routed through the three members of Roscommon County Council nominated to the Regional Health Forum West. Also advising that going forward the Cathaoirleach of Roscommon County Council will be formally be invited to attend any openings or official events and the Cathaoirleach will be

acknowledged by one of the key speakers at the given event.

- Acknowledgement letter from Minister for Health Simon Harris, T.D. dated 28th September, 2018 in response to letter from Roscommon County Council concerning the Sterilisation Unit in Roscommon. The Minister advised that he is having the issues raised, examined and will revert back in due course.
- Letter from Donegal County Council dated 18th September, 2018 calling on Government to
 1. Enact 'Private Members Dáil Motion of the 11th November, 2016'. (a call previously supported by Wexford County Council, October, 2017).
 2. Postpone the closure of Post Offices while the Kiwi Post Bank model for the Iris Post Office network is developed.
 3. The results of Donegal County Council motion to be promptly conveyed to the Minister for Communications, Climate action and Environment and Deputy Hildegard Naughton, Chair of Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment.
 4. This motion will be circulated to all Local Authorities.
- Letter from Donegal County Council dated 26th June, 2018 regarding a motion that was passed given the continued efforts of the Department of Local Government to undermine local authorities and the increased centralisation of power in Ireland, this Council calls on the government to establish and independent convention on the future of local government, that will examine powers, autonomy and funding. In the event of the failure of government to act, this Council calls on LAMA and the AILG to establish such a convention and to seek cross party support.

131.18 COUNCILLORS CONFERENCES - PAYMENT/ATTENDANCE

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Kilduff

SECONDED by Councillor Fallon

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

132.18 VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS AND SYMPATHY

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Murphy

SECONDED by Cllr. Doherty

It was **AGREED** that a vote of sympathy be afforded to the family of the late Emma Mhic Mathúna who recently passed away recently due to cervical cancer.

133.18 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Civic Reception 2018:

The Meetings Administrator informed the members that the Civic Reception would take place on 30th November. It was agreed that any Motions for the Reception that are to be proposed at the Municipal District Meetings in November, be advised to the meetings Administrator by Friday 9th November.

Roads Funding:

Cllr. Ward stated that following his Notice of Motion last February seeking extra roads funding for the

South Roscommon roads that are in very poor condition because of the bad weather, no funding has yet been received from Central Government. He asked that a further letter be sent to the Minister seeking funding.

Presentation on Social Car Scheme:

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward

SECONDED by Cllr. Shanagher

It was **AGREED** to invite Carmel Kenny to make a presentation to a forthcoming Plenary Meeting on the Social Car Scheme.

Presentation on Cruachain Aí Heritage Centre & Rathcroghan

Cllr. Shanagher was informed that Daniel Curley will be invited to make a presentation at the next Plenary Meeting as agreed at today's SPC.

Upgrade of N60:

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Fitzmaurice

SECONDED by Cllr. Creaton

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister of Transport and the TII to request emergency funding to upgrade the N60 between Ballymoe and Harristown as the road has sunk and is in dangerous condition. The Senior Engineer should include documentary evidence to outline the issue. Galway County Council should also be asked to support this motion and write to both parties.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Monday, 26th November, 2018.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are
Confirmed and Signed:


Meetings Administrator


Cathaoirleach



Countersigned