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**To: The Cathaoirleach and Each Member of Roscommon County Council**

**Date: Wednesday, 20 November 2019**

**Re: Notice of Monthly Meeting**

Dear Member,

Notice is hereby given that the Monthly Meeting of Roscommon County Council will be held in the Council Chamber, Áras an Chontae, Roscommon on **Monday, 25th November, 2019 at 2.15 pm** to discuss the agenda set out below.

The Register of Chief Executive Orders will be available for inspection at the meeting.

You are hereby requested to attend.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Patricia Bohan'.

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Patricia Bohan  
Meetings Administrator

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## PAIDIR

## AGENDA

1. Adoption of Minutes
  - Minutes of Plenary Meeting on 21.10.2019
  - Minutes of Special Meeting on 11.11.2019
  - Minutes of Budget Meeting on 18.11.2019
  - Minutes of Special Meeting on 18.11.2019
2. Matters Arising

3. Management Report
  - October 2019
4. Multi Annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021
  - Presentation by Water Services Section
5. 2018 Audited Annual Financial Statement and Audit Report
6. Roscommon County Council Audit Committee Report on the Audited Annual Financial Statement (AFS) 2018 and Local Government Auditor's Report (pursuant to section 121 of the Local Government Act)
7. Appointment of Elected Member to Strategic Policy Committees
  - Appointment of Cllr. John Naughten to the Housing, ICT and Rural Water SPC following the resignation of Cllr. Donal Kilduff.
  - Appointment of Cllr. Donal Kilduff to the Roads, Transportation and Emergency Services SPC following the resignation of Cllr. John Naughten.
8. Appointment of External Members to Strategic Policy Committees
9. Chief Executive Business
10. Correspondence
11. Councillors Conferences - Payment/Attendance
12. Votes of Congratulations and Sympathy
13. Any Other Business

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**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ON MONDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER, 2019 AT 1.30PM.**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Paschal Fitzmaurice **PRESIDED**

**MEMBERS:** Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr L. Callaghan, Cllr I. Connaughton, Cllr T. Crosby, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr D. Kilduff, Cllr O. Leyden, Cllr M. McDermott, Cllr J. Murphy, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher and Cllr A. Waldron and Cllr T Ward.

**OFFICIALS:** Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive  
Liam Bergin, Director of Services  
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator  
Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive

**Apologies:** Cllr M. Mulligan.

**1.19 PROPOSED CLOSURE OF LOUGH REE AND SHANNONBRIDGE POWERSTATIONS IN 2020**

The Cathaoirleach welcomed the Members to the special meeting that was requested last week to discuss the proposed closure of the peat burning ESB power stations in Lanesboro (Lough Ree) and Shannonbridge in 2020.

The members expressed their disappointment at what was a very sudden announcement that was not expected for at least five years and no contingency plans have been put in place:

They raised the following matters:

- This is an opportunity to establish a National Park in the bog lands that will be closed
- 100's of jobs now gone, both fulltime and seasonal, in an area that has seen many factories with good employment over the past forty years,
- If staff do not accept redundancies, they should be allowed to work out the last five years and contract workers not be brought in.
- The Collaboration Group set up during the year met this week and there had been no indication of this announcement when the group was set up.
- No plans have been put in place by Bord na Mona or the ESB. Staff can use the resources of the GRETB to upskill.
- ESB need to explain their decision and why the Oireachtas members were not made aware of the decision at any stage.
- There is a need for strategic replacing of the jobs lost
- The Government is in the process of setting up a Just Transition Commissioner and Fund to deal with such issues but unfortunately action is required much earlier than anticipated due to the unexpected closure of these two power plants.
- Any proposal should include Offaly and Westmeath County Council and together with Roscommon and Longford, they should work together to secure any funding that is available.
- There is huge potential for the plants and it is imperative that they are not dismantles until every avenue for their subsequent usage is explored.
- A scheme must be put in place by the Department responsible for Climate Action in conjunction

with the Department of Finance to secure alternative employment for those affected by the closure.

- Climate Action and Environmental plans are hitting Rural Ireland the most and those without voices are not heard
- Bord na Mona need to accelerate their programme of rehabilitation works for the bogs to be initiated as soon as possible and the current employees be employed there.
- The dismantling of the stations is premature
- The power stations could become the museums of the future
- A proper plan needs to be put in place regarding the repatriation of the bogs in respect of flora and fauna and the current workers employed as such a facility
- The ESB previously indicated they would work with farmers to grow willow as an alternative and all of these job losses have undermined this option.
- Westmeath and Galway should be included with Longford, Roscommon and Offaly in any committee set up.
- As it has been known for many years that the stations would eventually close, it is disappointing that at least one of these plants could have been used for the production of biomass energy and it would have been good for the local farmers to have had an opportunity to get involved in the business area.
- Call on the Government to implement a proper “Just Transition” policy
- The existing plant in Lanesboro could be used as a cold storage facility.
- Elected members be appointed to a Task Force.
- Identify areas in county Roscommon that could grow products suitable for biomass to be used as a fuel

The Chief Executive spoke on the matter and he stated this was a devastating blow to the communities. He stated that it was important to remember that stakeholders, including Government, have responsibilities in this matter and they will ultimately have to provide a solution. He confirmed that he has been in contact with the C.E. of Longford County Council and agreed that a steering committee/task force be set up to look at options and responsibilities and identify stakeholders, possible new solutions including funding requirements and actions required. It is likely that Longford will take the lead on this and they will be meeting on this to establish Terms of Reference in the coming week including the possibility of including other counties affected. He hopes to be in a position to report back to the Members at the December Plenary meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Dineen

**SECONDED** BY Cllr. Leyden

It was **AGREED** to write to the relevant Government Department to seek additional funds for the area to create jobs and to develop an action plan.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Leyden

**SECONDED** BY Cllr. Murphy

It was **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council support the Lanesboro Ballyleague Strategic Development Plan 2020.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Fallon

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Ward

It was **AGREED** that a letter be sent to the Minister to give a commitment that the existing power plants in Lanesboro and Shannonbridge should be kept intact until alternative options for the usage are in place.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Byrne

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Ward

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment that the money earmarked by the Government should be spent on those working at the power plants at present and should be employed on any proposed project.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Waldron

**SECONDED** by Cllr Kilduff

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment and Bord na Mona not to demolish any plant until every avenue for its usage as explored.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Fitzmaurice

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Naughten

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment to request that the Chief Executive or nominee be appointed to the “Just Transition Team” together with elected members from Roscommon County Council, one from each Municipal District.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Fitzmaurice

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Naughten

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment to request that the Chief Executive or nominee be appointed to the “Just Transition Team” together with elected members from Roscommon County Council, one from each Municipal District.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Crosby

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Callaghan

It was **AGREED** that a proper plan be put in place and submitted to the Department Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Department of Agriculture with regard to jobs value in producing biomass and using it in the power stations. This proposal would include an option for farmers to bring the biomass directly to power stations.

It was agreed by the members that the Meetings Administrator would consolidate a single letter to the Department include all of the motions passed by the members.

**This concluded the business of the Special Meeting.**

**The foregoing Minutes are Confirmed and Signed:**



Meetings Administrator

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Cathaoirleach

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Countersigned



**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE Council Chamber - Áras an Chontae, ON Monday, 11th November, 2019 AT 2.30PM.**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Paschal Fitzmaurice, Cathaoirleach **PRESIDED**

**MEMBERS:** Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr L. Callaghan, Cllr I. Connaughton, Cllr T. Crosby, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr D. Kilduff, Cllr O. Leyden, Cllr M. McDermott, Cllr M. Mulligan, Cllr J. Murphy, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher, Cllr T. Ward and Cllr A. Waldron.

**OFFICIALS:** Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive  
Liam Bergin, Director of Services  
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator  
Michelle Carney, Staff Officer

**Apologies:** .

**46.19 PROPOSED CLOSURE OF CUISLE HOLIDAY CENTRE, DONAMON BY IRISH WHEELCHAIR ASSOCIATION ON 29TH NOVEMBER, 2019**

An Cathaoirleach Cllr. Fitzmaurice thanked the Members for their request to hold a special meeting to discuss the recently announced proposed closure of the Cuisle Accessibility Holiday and Respite Care Centre by the Irish Wheelchair Association.

He welcomed Mr. Tony Cunningham, Director of Volunteering and Housing for the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) to the meeting and invited him to speak to the members:

Mr. Cunningham outlined the position of the IWA with regard to the centre:

- IWA are promoting equal choice and equal access policy for people with disabilities as promoted by HSE and Slainte Care i.e. move on from congregated settings
- Want to move to an alternative model of provision of holiday facilities in hotels - this has been piloted in a Kilkenny hotel where they can provide the necessary facilities for clients with the assistance of integrated services
- The Cuisle facility has delivered excellent care throughout the years since it came into use in 1997 however it needs substantial upgrade works in the order of €1.5million for primarily rewiring electrical works This was made known to the IWA after an inspection two years ago . The building was leased for the sum of €125k in 1997 for a 25 year period and this sum was paid up front at the time – the lease will expire in 5 years time.
- For the past two years, the IWA has sought capital funding from the HSE and having failed to secure this and therefore a decision was taken by the IWA Board to close the centre effective from 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019 on health and safety grounds. This will result in redundancies but redeployments will be considered first
- The IWA are sourcing alternative facilities in hotels in Ballinasloe, Birr and Galway and intend to provide the same level of service.
- The IWA have deferred LEADER funding that is available for other works because they must first secure capital funding to do the electrical works and this is not forthcoming. Municipal District funding from the Council was also allocated by the Athlone Area but cannot be taken up because

of the situation. Some remedial works have taken place to address fire hazards.

- The biggest regret in this decision is the staff who have been the centre's greatest asset in the service they provide to all the visitor throughout the years that the IWA has been using it. There has also always been a good relationship with the Divine Word Missionaries – the landlords.
- The IWA have invested in Cuisle throughout the years and had intended to develop it more and have recently rebranded but the surveys that showed the works that are required to make it safe have led the IWA to make the decision it has.
- Representations were made to the Ministers Office and they were referred to seek funding from the HSE as the appropriate body to grant this type of funding.
- The IWA had no plans to close the facility until this problem became apparent that there must be substantial investment to continue its use and the IWA do not have the funds itself to carry out the works.

The members expressed their anger and disappointment at the proposed closure of the centre and had a number of questions for Mr. Cunningham:

- This meeting should have been a platform for the members to speak on behalf of the people and not a platform for IWA
- Not every user wants a hotel but wants the unique facilities that Cuisle provides to the people who look forward to meeting their friends there and the great care that the staff provide.
- The money required is not an unsurmountable amount and there has to be a way to secure this.
- This is an easy option to close the facility and we will be asking that the IWA defer the decision for 12 months to allow an opportunity to secure the necessary funding from whatever source.
- The IWA has glorified the staff and facilities in Cuisle at the same time making contradictory decision to close the place.
- The IWA is depriving some wheelchair users who have unique needs that can be met by Cuisle and not by a hotel and this is not equality
- The IWA are blaming the HSE for lack of funding but how much is the IWA able to put into the facility as they received €40m in funding in 2019.
- How much does it cost to facilitate a person in Cuisle in comparison to a hotel?
- A motion in regard to this matter will be brought to the HSE West forum later this month.
- Will the IWA reverse its decision if the funding is secured?
- The IWA must reverse their decision for the sake of their clients as taking them out of an environment they are used to will seriously upset them. They enjoy not just the facilities but the company of the staff who take the best care of them as if they were family members.
- A holiday centre such as the facility Cuisle provides is not a congregated setting – is there an issue with management and staff?
- The IWA needs a plan to run parallel services make more sense to really test what is required and to assess if it can cater for the needs of people with the full spectrum of disabilities
- This plan to close is contradictory to the IWA stated vision of equal choice and equal rights
- Have the IWA consulted with the members with regard to this decision and if not it is ignoring its own charter in this matter
- The policy the IWA refers to has nothing to do with specialist holiday centre but residential care
- The hotel model that the IWA wants to use has not been tested
- What happens to the bookings that have been made with Cuisle in the coming months/year?
- The Chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health Dr. Michael Harty has been requested to

invite representatives from the IWA to address the committee as soon as can be arranged to justify this decision.

- There is a real sense of anger from the local community and throughout County Roscommon at this decision and the four weeks notice is not acceptable
- Were local politicians not lobbied on this matter including Oireachtas members?
- The IWA must outline how it intends to satisfy needs of all its users by moving away from Cuisle including wet rooms etc.
- The €1.5m needed is a small amount in the context of such decisions
- The equipment etc. that has been provided by the local community through many years for fundraising cannot be removed from the centre
- An EGM of the members of the IWA must be held to discuss the situation
- Have contracts been signed with the hotels?
- Is there a contingency plan in place?
- Has a tender been sought for the electrical works required?
- Why was this matter not made public 12 months ago when it was known there was a difficulty in securing funding.
- Is the centre safe now?
- If funding is found shortly will the IWA keep the centre open?

Mr. Cunningham replied as follows:

- There was no long term plan to close Cuisle and this decision was taken solely because of the substantial capital funding required as previously outlined.
- The IWA do not have the funding to do this work, they have a staff of 2,500 and had a deficit of €700k from 2008 funded from its own reserves. Its current reserve is €4.6m equivalent to three weeks costs. All the funding received from is for a restricted purpose.
- Reviewing the situation is a decision for the Board of the IWA
- The IWA believe they can make the hotel model work
- TDs were lobbied by the IWA and not locally lobbied. The IWA met Ministers Finian McGrath and Regina Doherty and Deputy Denis Naughten and Michael Fitzmaurice in 2017
- No contracts have been formally signed with hotels yet but discussions are ongoing. Tenders have not been sought for the works as funding has not been secured – this is a Q.S. estimate of costs.
- A meeting is taking place with the landlord this week  
The facilities can be provided in hotels and mobile hoists can be used if required.

The Cathaoirleach read a letter from the Duty Manager of Cuisle with regard to the closure.

The Chief Executive conveyed his disappointment at the news as Roscommon is very proud of the Cuisle facility in Donamon and the service provided by the very dedicated staff to its visitors. He noted that there are many stakeholders involved in having an input into the decision that the Board made. In accepting all of the issues of costs, risk assessments and regulations of compliance and building control, the Elected Members have raised many relevant point that Mr. Cunningham should bring back to the Board of the IWA for consideration.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. John Naughten  
**SECONDED** by Cllr. John Keogh

It was **AGREED** that the Irish Wheelchair Association review their position in relation to the closure of the Cushla facility in Donamon and take a step back for a 12 month period to give an opportunity to raise the necessary funds to bring the centre to the required standard and to request that the HSE provide the necessary capital funding.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. John Leyden

**SECONDED** by Cllr. John Keogh

It was **AGREED** that the Irish Wheelchair Association should facilitate an E.G.M. Association to discuss the proposed closure.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Anthony Waldron

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Tony Ward

It was **AGREED** to request that the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health meet to discuss the proposed closure of Cuisle Centre in Donamon, Co. Roscommon as a National Holiday Centre and that the Irish Wheelchair Association be invited to this meeting to explain their decision.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Orla Leyden

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Valerie Byrne

It was **AGREED** to write to Minister Finian McGrath, Minister Simon Harris and an Taoiseach to provide the necessary capital funding to upgrade the Cuisle Facility in order to keep it open on a long term basis.

**This concluded the business of the Special Meeting.**

**The foregoing Minutes are Confirmed and Signed:**

  
Meetings Administrator

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Cathaoirleach

\_\_\_\_\_  
Countersigned

**DRAFT MINUTES OF BUDGET MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL  
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON  
ON MONDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER, 2019 AT 10.00 AM.**

- PRESENT:** Councillor Paschal Fitzmaurice, Cathaoirleach **PRESIDED**
- MEMBERS:** Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr L. Callaghan, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr I. Connaughton, Cllr T. Crosby, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr D. Kilduff, Cllr O. Leyden, Cllr M. McDermott, Cllr M. Mulligan, Cllr J. Murphy, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher, Cllr A. Waldron and Cllr T. Ward.
- OFFICIALS:** Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive  
Liam Bergin, Director of Services  
Majella Hunt, Director of Services  
Martin Lydon, Director of Services  
Shane Tiernan, Director of Services  
Michelle Carney, Staff Officer  
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator  
Sean Mullarkey, Financial Management Accountant

**Apologies:**

**148.19 INTRODUCTION BY CATHAOIRLEACH**

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Paschal Fitzmaurice welcomed the Members, Executive and staff and press to the Draft Budget meeting for 2020. He invited the Chief Executive to address the members and each of the Directors to present the draft budget in their areas of responsibility.

**149.19 CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT**

The Chief Executive presented his report on the Draft Budget for 2020. He commended the Members for supporting the increase of 15% in the LPT, as a result it was possible for the Executive to deliver a very balanced and transparent budget. The budget represents projects that were discussed in 2019 in further developing communities in County Roscommon.

In the coming year the Chief Executive looks forward to the commencement of the programme of acquiring derelict sites as in the model of Boyle, this is vital to start a process of change with significant development and matching other resources with other partners with a view to developing our towns. He referenced important projects such as the N5 upgrade and digital transformation that are progressing.

He added that recent debates in the Chamber were welcomed regarding “Climate Change” and is looking forward to working with the Members in making sure the Strategy is fully implemented and our obligations and commitments are achieved with regard to climate change.

Finally, he added that this was a well balanced budget with no surplus and would like to thanks the Cathaoirleach and member of the Corporate Policy Group for their assistance. A special thanks to Martin Lydon, Head of Finance and his team in helping to prepare this Draft Budget as presented.

#### **150.19 REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SERVICES AND HEAD OF FINANCE, MR. MARTIN LYDON**

- The maintenance and improvement of local authority housing units has an expenditure budget of €2.1m including support maintenance costs
- Maximum rent cap was removed in 2019, this additional income is included in the budget and collection rate of 92% has been maintained;
- 103 offers were made to applicants, 64 new tenancies but refusal rate is still high at 29%;
- Under the administration of Rebuilding Ireland housing loans thirty applications were received and five sales completed. It is important to note that under this Scheme the Council is not allowed to carry arrears of more than 5% as Central Government will remove the Scheme from a local authority if arrears increase;
- The expenditure figure for homelessness has increased to administer the proposals of a new Western Regional Homelessness Action Plan which will be brought to the attention of the Strategic Policy Committee's in December;
- The Council will continue to support a contribution to the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme.
- The Service Level Agreement with Irish Water remains in place. It must be noted that as part of Irish Water Business Plan and transforming water services in Ireland to 2021 there is an aim to move to a single public utility to the 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2022. As a result, the Service Level Agreement will come to an end which will bring risks in relation to staffing and budget figures.
- Budget is maintained for the Castlerea Swimming Pool with expenditure of €200,000 for Roscommon Leisure Centre;
- Recent analysis under the revaluation process resulted in 63% of all rate account holders received a reduction, 33% received an increase and 4% remained at the same rate;
- There is a continuing risk regarding the revaluation of the rates as the value of cases remaining to be appealed equate to 18% of the rates book. If these cases receive a reduction will it will impact greatly on the budget.

#### **Capital Budget:**

- Approximately €18.4m provided for the construction of new houses under the Rebuilding Ireland Programme;
- A total of €150k over three years will be required for energy improvement works on housing stock including deep retrofit of upgrading to air to air heating systems.
- In the capital budget there is provision for the PPP Contract at The Walk In Roscommon, the contract is commencing next week
- The final Draft Budget includes an increase of 7.5% on the 2018 budget which equates to €4.3m.

#### **151.19 REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SERVICES, MR. SHANE TIERNAN**

- The total budget for Roads and Transportation for 2020 is €24.3m an increase of 12% in 2019 on the basis that the Council are awaiting final allocations from the Department;
- A sum of €20,000 has been provided in the budget to progress Traffic Management Plan;
- Provision has been made for the Councils three new state of the art Velocity Patchers;
- New funding from the Councils own resources of €150,000 will be provided for street cleaning in Municipal Districts;
- In 2020, a provision of €227,000 is provided for the costs associated with the maintenance and upkeep of burial grounds in the County;

- Under the Bridge Rehabilitation Scheme the Roads Department submitted eleven applications and is currently awaiting confirmation from the Department;
- In 2020, the provision of €120,000 will be spent in Roscommon for Broadband to install WiFi in towns and villages in central locations across the County.
- In the Capital Programme, Mr. Tiernan outlined the large capital roads projects that will progress to 2022 including N4, Carrick to Dromod, N5 Ballaghaderreen to Scramoge, the N61, N60 and R362 road improvements and Bridge Rehabilitation Works at Rooskey, Castlestrange and Hartley.

#### **152.19 REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SERVICES, MS. MAJELLA HUNT**

- During 2020 Roscommon County Tourism will continue to implement actions of the Roscommon Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Programme 2017-2022;
- A provision of €50,000 for Festival and Events Scheme and a call for submissions will issue in early 2020;
- Continued development under Lough Ree, Mid Shannon and Lough Key to market as a unique tourism offering;
- Work will continue with Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) and the Discovery centre
- Irelands Hidden Heartlands continues to grow in strength in Roscommon with a recent significant investment announcement for Strokestown House;
- Funding of €400,000 has been provided as matched fund projects under the various departmental grant schemes under the Urban and Urban Town Regeneration Schemes;
- The Council continues to support the network of six town teams and is working closely with the teams to develop sustainable local development plans for the towns;
- The Council is a member of the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) with a number of other local authorities in order to develop infrastructure and attracting Irish and multinational investment in local communities;
- The budgeted provision for the operation of the Library and Archival Service for 2020 is €1,425k;
- The Arts Programme continues to develop in 2020, and intends to grow the level of engagement and participation in the arts locally for the people of Roscommon;
- Roscommon Arts Centre continues to present a year-round multi-disciplinary programme of events in the theatre, gallery and workshops spaces;
- In 2020, the Council will continue to promote King House as a vibrant historic, cultural and tourism centre;
- Provision of €50,000 has been made available to facilitate future development works on industrial sites;
- Under the Rural Regeneration Scheme the sum of €3.9m was recently announced for the development of an innovation Centre in Monksland and support phase two of An Chistin in Castlerea;

#### **153.19 REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SERVICES, MR. LIAM BERGIN**

- In the budget for 2020, €711,000 has been provided for public lighting to cover energy and maintenance costs; Almost one quarter of the Public lights have been replaced to date in the county.
- Our Assets and Energy Management Unit will develop our Partnership Agreement with SEAI the

- Council continues to achieve targets set out under the National Climate Change Strategy;
- The Council will see to deliver our first electrical vehicle in 2020 as we begin the process of transitioning our fleet.
- The Council continue to operate four recycling centres and thirty nine bring banks in the County. The direct cost of operating these facilities in 2020 is estimated at €431,000;
- There are currently 149 outstanding housing developments within the County to be taken in charge and work is ongoing;
- The formal review of the County Development Plan will commence within thirteen weeks of the adoption of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.
- The first payment of the vacant site levy is due in January 2020.

#### **154.19 DEBATE ON DRAFT BUDGET 2020**

The Elected Members welcomed the Draft Budget for 2020 and made the following observations and queries:

- Welcomed the significant importance of a no rate increase for the rate payers of the County who continue to support the Council
- Welcome the €3.9m investment for the development of an Innovation Centre in Monksland and support of phase two of An Chistin in Castlerea with positive benefits for the County going forward, investment for Castlerea Swimming Pool, funding for the energy improvement works under the Housing Programme; special fund from IPB dividend very welcome for footpath repairs; funding for drainage and pot hole repairs;
- Progress on the N5 Ballaghaderreen to Scramoge major roads project is very positive which will benefit the County for investment and development going forward;
- Concerns of the level of traffic on the N61 coming from Athlone that it warrants a high grade single road;
- Significant lack of housing in Monksland area, particularly regarding new developments;
- There are significant issues at R362 regarding safety and the investment in upgrading of road infrastructure at this location needs to be progressed as a matter of urgency;
- The Shannon Master plan a very positive initiative
- Welcome the upgrade of the Street Lighting but is it possible to change the colour of the LED lighting at some locations?
- Reference to the investment for the extension to Kilbegly graveyard is welcoming;
- Can the Executive provide an update regarding black spot on the Scramoge Cross and can sufficient signage be put in place along this route to compensate the losses of towns and villages that will be by-pass as a result of the N5 project?
- Welcome any progress on improvements for Rooskey Bridge and can an update be provided when these works will commence?
- Funding is essential for the opportunity to join Roscommon with the green way from Dublin to incorporate a cycle/walkway to enhance the county;
- Welcome the budget for street cleaning and litter control in the County;
- Concerns over refusal rate on housing offers especially with the increase in rents whereby applicants are struggling
- Can the County Development commence in Elphin as there are no facilities regarding broadband and this is impacting on the community;
- Welcome the funding from Ballymurphy to Knockcroghery bypass but can the preferred routes be identified as quickly as possible as planning applications are frozen pending this project;



- Welcome the quality and speed of the work completed by the new velocity patchers, a great investment for the County;
- Welcome the Urban Area Plan for Athlone as this will determine the future for this area;
- Welcome the direction the Council is taking for electric vehicles and generation of our own power;
- Concerns about the impact of Irish Water will create regarding staffing issues and needs to be monitored;
- It is important to mention going forward how are we proposing to fund the ever increasing number of retirements, this will be a growing drain on the day to day budget going forward;
- Welcome the recent announcement for Strokestown House;
- Important that we identify all the small towns and villages and make sure that every village is included and we don't want to see any village left behind.
- Can the Executive provide information on the substantial allocation received from IPB?
- Landowners that are involved in the N5 project have received no payment, can this be addressed as quickly as possible?
- Welcome N61 Tulsk to Clashaganny road project;
- Welcome funding for older people so that upgrading of houses can be completed;
- Concerns of the variation within the three Municipal Districts for the Roads budget?
- Welcome the proposal for derelict properties across Roscommon in order to enhance towns;
- Can the Executive provide more details regarding applications under the Tenant Scheme for housing ?
- Is the Executive worried that due to the increase number of houses secured under RAS being sold by landlords, that this will reduce accommodation numbers or will we be under pressure to purchase these properties?
- Is the NPPR charge accurate for 2020?

The Executive replied to the queries raised.

#### **155.19 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - CATHAOIRLEACH AND LEAS CATHAOIRLEACH**

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Leyden

**SECONDED** by Cllr. McDermott

And **AGREED** pursuant to Section 143(a) & 143(b) of the Local Government Act, 2001, that Roscommon County Council pay an Annual Allowance of €20,000 and €4,000 in 2020 to the Cathaoirleach and Leas-Cathaoirleach of the County Council respectively to cover the reasonable expenses incurred in respect of attendance at functions.

#### **156.19 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - CATHAOIRLEACH OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS**

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Cummins

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Keogh

And **AGREED** pursuant to the Local Government Act, 2001, and the Local Government Reform Act 2014 that Roscommon County Council pay an Annual Allowance of €6,000 in 2020 to the Cathaoirleach of the Athlone, Boyle and Roscommon Municipal Districts respectively to cover the reasonable expenses incurred in respect of attendance at functions.

#### **157.19 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEMBERS**

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Naughten

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Crosby

And **AGREED** pursuant to the Local Government Reform Act 2014 that Roscommon County Council pay an Annual Allowance of €1,000 in 2020 to each Elected Member to reflect the additional work carried out and expenses incurred in the new Municipal District structure.

#### **158.19 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON**

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Keogh

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Murphy

And **AGREED** pursuant to Local Government Reform Act, 2014, that Roscommon County Council pay an Annual Allowance of €6,000 in 2020 to each Chairperson of the four designated Strategic Policy Committees.

#### **159.19 SECTION 76 OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 - ENTERTAINMENT EXPENDITURE**

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Dineen

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Shanagher

And **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council authorise the incurring of reasonable expenditure in connection with receptions, entertainment and the making of presentations to distinguished persons and in connection with the holding of special events relevant to its functions during 2020.

#### **160.19 ADOPTION OF BUDGET 2020**

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Leyden

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Crosby

And **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council by resolution adopt for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2020, the Budget as set out in Tables, A, B, C, D, E & F.

#### **161.19 ADOPTION OF ANNUAL RATE OF VALUATION**

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Leyden

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Callaghan

And **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council determine in accordance with the Budget, as adopted the rates set out in Tables A and C to be the annual rate on valuation to be levied for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2020, for the purposes set out in those tables, as amended.

#### **162.19 SECTION 135 OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001**

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Leyden

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Keogh

And **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council set the rate of refund in relation to vacant properties at 100% as per Section 31 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and the Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) Regulations 2014.

#### **163.19 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020-2022**

The Capital Programme 2020 – 2022 was considered and noted by the members.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are  
Confirmed and Signed:

*Petrizio Bohan*

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Meetings Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Cathaoirleach

\_\_\_\_\_  
Countersigned

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## **Roscommon County Council Audit Committee Report on the Audited Annual Financial Statement (AFS) 2018 and Local Government Auditor's Report (pursuant to section 121 of the Local Government Act<sup>1</sup>)**

The Audit Committee considered the 2018 Audited Annual Financial Statement (AFS) and the Local Government Auditor's report at its meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

The Auditor's opinion, is **unmodified**, as the annual financial statement has been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice and Accounting Regulations and presents fairly the financial position of the Council at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 and its income and expenditure for the year reported.

The Committee's deliberations included a review of management responses to audit findings and related matters as presented by the Director of Services for Finance and Local Government Auditor.

Based on these deliberations, the Committee consider that the following areas be brought to the attention of the Council:

### **Revenue Account**

The Revenue Account reported a surplus of €6K after net transfers to reserves of €3.1m with an accumulated surplus at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 of €190K.

### **Income Collection**

The 86% collection yield for Rates was a 3% improvement on the previous year's performance (83%), resulting in an additional €1.7m cash collected and was 1% ahead of the target set by the County and City Management Association (CCMA). As members are aware, 2018 was the first year for rate charges impacted by the revaluation process. There are still €2.45m of appeals outstanding with the Valuation Tribunal, which if successful could result in a reduction in the rates warrant. The Audit Committee, therefore, supports the decision to provide €0.5m towards future adjudications.

At 92% the collection rate for Rents and Annuities shows a marginal increase on the previous year (91%). The Council continues to be among the best performing local authorities in this income stream.

The loans collection yield, at 55% was down on the 56% collection rate for 2017. The collection rate is disappointing, however, it is important to note that the majority of the arrears relate to a small number of customers who require support in the current housing climate. All new loans issued under the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan (RIHL) Scheme are performing.

### **Debt Collection**

A new contract for legal services relating to debt collection has been in place since October 2018. Management decided against the option of a centralised debt collection unit as highlighted in an Internal Audit report, but have implemented a consistent approach including

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<sup>1</sup> As amended by Section 60 of the Local Government Act 2014

bespoke software for the collection of debt in the main income streams i.e. rates, rents and development contributions.

#### **Bad Debt Provision**

The bad and doubtful provision for the Council at the end of 2018 represented 51% of gross debtors and is deemed to be adequate.

#### **Irish Water**

The local authority is currently in a service level agreement (SLA) to deliver water services. Under the Irish Water Transformation Programme it is planned to end the SLA in 2021 as Irish Water becomes a single utility.

To date 173 (83%) of water related assets have transferred to Irish Water. Roscommon County Council are promoted as an exemplar within the sector.

#### **Water Loans**

The Council has one water related loan included in its 2018 AFS valued at €2m. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) continue to fund repayments of both principal and interest due on this loan.

#### **Fixed Assets and Recording of Way Leaves and Right of Ways**

The Asset and Energy Management Unit continued reconciling assets during 2018. The Unit in its 2020 work plan and in partnership with Finance, will ensure new procedures are implemented regarding the disposal and purchase of assets, including the subsequent recording of information on the Fixed Asset register (FAR).

The €5k minimum value limit for recording assets as documented in the Code of Practice, means a separate system is required to record way leaves and right of ways, by the target date of December 2021.

#### **Credit & Debit Balances**

The Council has €1.76m debit balances at the end of 2018, relating to jobs that require funding or have outstanding recoupment claims.

There was also a credit balance of €20.7m on a number of other jobs, as outlined in the Audit Report. Of this amount €3.7m has been earmarked for ambitious projects requiring match funding to tackle dereliction in towns and villages and investment in infrastructural projects.

#### **Reserves**

Included in the capital account are reserves of €5.3m. The most significant amounts related to (a) €1.6m from the Rental Accommodation Scheme/Tenant Purchase Scheme, which is ring fenced for future housing projects and require DHPLG approval; (b) €1m reserves for IT refresh projects and machinery replacements; (c) €0.5m for rates revaluation appeals and (d) €0.4m provision for footpath repairs.

### **Development Contributions**

Development Contributions debtors were €6.1m at year end. This represents a €0.7m decrease when compared to the previous year.

### **Procurement**

The level of procurement compliance within the Council has improved considerably over recent years. There is however, a need to review of policies and procedures, which will take place during 2020.

### **Companies in which the Council has an Interest**

Roscommon Leisure Centre (RLC) Ltd is 100% owned by the Council. The Council provided subvention of €226k during 2018. At the end of 2018 the audited accounts of RLC recorded an accumulated loss of €213k, a reduction of €18k on the reported 2017 figure. The Council will continue to financially support RLC as it delivers benefits to the local community and provides significant public value.

Moylurg Rockingham Ltd is 50% owned by Roscommon County Council with 50% owned by Coillte. The Company recorded a profit of €183K for 2018. The Council in partnership with Coillte, will review the joint venture agreement during 2020 as it is an action point in the recently procured masterplan.

Back Lane Management Ltd is 50% owned by Roscommon County Council with 50% owned by Boyle Chamber of Commerce. No subvention or other financial supports were provided to this Company during 2018.

### **Internal Audit and Audit Committee**

The member of staff allocated to the Internal Audit Unit was assigned to finance duties from February 2018 until November 2018 and provided training to the new Financial / Management Accountant until after the preparation of the draft AFS in March 2019. Management made this decision, based on resources available, the risk profile of the Council, the need to maintain financial standards and meet deadlines as stipulated by DHPLG.

The Audit Committee held the required four meetings during 2018. Senior members of staff and the Local Government Auditor met with the Audit Committee during the year.

### **Ethics Returns**

Significant improvement was recorded in compliance compared to previous years.

### **Trade Creditors**

Invoices valued at €1.6m were included in trade creditors at year end, despite goods not being received. This matter has been highlighted in previous audit reports and relates to the drawdown of grant funding by the Council at the request of a funding authority. This issue is not unique to Roscommon and the Council have requested a resolution to this situation, which requires a whole government approach as there is a conflict between the local authority accounting system (accrual accounting) and funding authority's that operate on a cash basis.

**Unfinished Housing Estates**

At the end of 2018, the Council held financial bonds to the value of €1.6m and cash bonds totalling €903k.

There were 149 unfinished estates in the county, consisting of 3,393 houses (in 2017 there were 152 estates with 3,447 units).

**Signed**



**Audit Committee Chairperson**

**Date** 14/11/2019



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