

**MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON
ON MONDAY, 27TH APRIL, 2020 AT 2.15 PM.**

PRESENT:	Councillor Paschal Fitzmaurice	PRESIDED
MEMBERS:	Cllr D. Kilduff, Cllr T. Crosby, Cllr M. McDermott, Cllr A. Waldron, Cllr O. Leyden, Cllr T. Ward, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr I. Connaughton, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr J. Keogh, 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 Tieman, Chief Executive Liam Bergin, Director of Services Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator	

Apologies:

27.20 TRIBUTES TO THE LATE CHARLIE HOPKINS AND ANTHONY MURRAY, FORMER ELECTED MEMBERS OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL

The Cathaoirleach led tributes to former Councillors Charlie Hopkins and Anthony Murray who passed away recently.

Charlie Hopkins served as a Councillor from 1991 to 2009 and served as Cathaoirleach in 1995-1996 and 2006-2007. He represented the Boyle Area on the Council. Anthony Murray served as Councillor for the Mid Roscommon Area from 1985 to 1991.

The members joined the Cathaoirleach in paying tribute to both former members. They said that both men worked hard for the constituents they represented and had contributed enormously to their local communities throughout their lives. The expressed their sympathy to Joan and the Hopkins family and Evelyn and the Murray Family.

The Chief Executive expressed his sympathy on behalf of himself and the management team and staff to the Hopkins and Murray Families.

28.20 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Murphy
SECONDED by Cllr. Crosby

It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of the Plenary Meeting of 24.02.2020

29.20 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

30.20 MANAGEMENT REPORT

- The Management Reports for February 2020 and March 2020 were noted.

31.20 DRAFT ANNUAL SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2020

Mr. Liam Bergin presented the Draft Annual Service Delivery plan. He noted that the plan had been prepared for the March meeting and while the plan details the proposed activities for 2020, the current COVID-19 pandemic will have an effect on some of the deliverables, it can be reviewed later in the year.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Connaughton

SECONDED by Cllr. Shanagher

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Draft Annual Service Delivery Plan for 2020

32.20 DIRECTORS UPDATES

32.20a ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES, HEALTH & SAFETY, HR AND BOYLE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

Mr. Shane Tiernan reported on his Directorate as follows:

Significant resources for remote working have been mobilised in the delivery of essential services in the NRRO, Emergency Services, Building Control, Health and Safety and Human Resources departments. Staff are also attending offices through rotation arrangements with outdoor and emergency service staff being deployed where necessary. Across all Directorates, everything is being done with health and Safety as paramount in complying with Government Directives and HSE Guidelines. The Health and Safety department continue to develop Risk Assessed Safe Systems of work taking account of HSE guidelines in the context of COVID-19 and are supporting all departments in the safe delivery of essential services including PPE supplies, office safety, outdoor safety and staff support and advice.

Emergency Services & MEM

Under the Western Region MEM Framework where the principal response agencies of the Local Authorities, HSE and An Garda Síochána from counties Roscommon, Galway and Mayo collaborate on major incidents, I am chairing a COVID -19 response Group consisting of senior officials from all three principal response agencies. This consists of weekly webinar meetings and ensuring that the HSE is fully supported by the other agencies in whatever way possible to allow a fully collaborative response to this crisis. This involves examination of the emerging numbers, pressure points in the health service facilities, testing centres support, communications with the public and ensuring compliance with national guidelines. The Local Authority is providing support through the Emergency Services Department by having a plan for mortality management and Civil Defence are assisting in areas such as test sample transfer to test laboratories and intermediate patient transfer between care facilities. We are collaborating with Leitrim County Council in this regard to ensure the mandatory number of paramedics are available for ambulance operation.

Fire stations continue to respond to emergency calls via the 999/112 system.

Human Resources

The HR Department continues to operate in the delivery of staff support functions, payroll and superannuation administration, HRM System pilot development and workforce planning. Some essential appointments have been completed including the Art Officer Post, Housing Liaison Officer, and Healthy Ireland Coordinator.

Roads and Transportation

The Roads Quarterly Report as detailed in the Management Report to members gives a full update on roads projects throughout the county.

Our National Regional Roads Office continues to administer and progress significant Roads Infrastructure Projects in the county.

Roads capital and restoration projects continue through planning, design and contracts stages subject to restrictions on construction following Government direction.

The Roads Programme is currently suspended but emergency road repairs are being attended to with our velocity patchers. Roads crews are also attending to emergency verge trimming where road safety may be hampered. Area staff are attending to public waste bins and street cleaning and monitoring bottle banks. Civic Amenity sites continue to be manned in a safe manner.

The Local Improvement Scheme will proceed on the same policy basis as last year, including the maximum 10% administration costs to be claimed by each Local Authority and the €1,200 cap on the local contribution per individual household/landholder. Applications under this Scheme are being examined and a return will be made to the Department by 24th April 2020 for review. The Department has asked the Council to note an amendment with regard to eligible and non-Eligible road projects and in particular placing the onus on individual applicants to submit the required documentation in support of their eligibility. Reference is now also made to providing documentation in cases where the occupier is not the registered owner.

Also in circumstances where beneficiaries express an interest in undertaking part of the work themselves or through a third party that this is covered however, in exercising such discretion, a Local Authority will have due regard to its obligations under health & safety legislation. Section 11 also prohibits Roads where US works are completed being subsequently taken in charge by the Local Authority.

Broadband

The Broadband Officer continues to work on a number of initiatives and contracts as detailed in the management report.

Building Control

The Building Control Department has continued to operate with Fire Safety Certificates, commencement notices and completion certs being applied for, assessed and granted.

32.20b COMMUNITY & ENTERPRISE, ARTS, LIBRARIES, REGENERATION PROJECTS AND LEO

Ms. Majella Hunt gave an update on services in her Directorate:

Staff have been deployed to work at home or remotely and covering their duties remotely and some have taken on additional duties including manning of the Community Forum helpline on a rotational basis for the COVID 19 response and supporting the work of the Forum

LCDC meetings have continued with meetings being held remotely on Zoom /Microsoft team where projects have been considered and moved on to the next stage. The evaluation of the projects from article 48 are continuing as well in relation to the

The Community Forum is a new initiative that was announced by the government in mid-April. Phase 1 is the provision of a 24hr. helpline call centre staffed by our own staff and also in association with the Gardaí this provides a service through a network organised by LEADER in the delivery of groceries, medicines pensions and other services to the people that are cocooned and isolating in this crisis. The second phase was announced on Friday

Each of our Departments will be providing online services. The Arts Centre, while closed to the public, its services are continuing online where a number of programmes have been devised either nationally or locally and are available all age groups and the list is available on their website with Phase 2 starting this week.

The new Arts Officer will be appointed in May and that will enable some of the programmes to be recommenced and a number of their programmes will be rescheduled towards the end of the year or in 2021. Similarly the libraries are closed but also providing online services and their work is continuing remotely and a number of the staff have been redeployed to other Departments and to the COVID response line. They also have a continued online programme and the details are on the library Facebook page and our websites. Many of these programmes are devised in-house by the staff themselves and some of them are available through national networks.

The Local Enterprise Office are providing support to small businesses and it has an extensive programme devised by Enterprise Ireland and in-house by our own local office. The staff in the office are in constant contact with the businesses. All business are encouraged to contact them regarding difficulties encountered during the COVID-19 crisis but not in relation to rates where difficulties should be directed there. Mentoring, training and dealing with trading vouchers are being facilitated in addition to dealing with small business loans on behalf of Enterprise Ireland.

The regeneration of villages and towns projects paused during the crisis but will be a significant step in stabilising and revitalising towns and villages throughout our county going forward. There are currently thirty projects being rolled out under various funding streams. We are continuing to work on projects that are at various stages of progress and we are moving to design stage and tender stage of delivery. A number of older projects at construction stage are on hold because contractors on the ground are under restriction and not working at present but we hope to resume as soon as such restrictions are lifted.

There are calls out at the moment under RDF or for the projects and where we have prepared those and sent them in and we also have a call under you our D F which is the Orbán the urban fund for and Roscommon town is the designated town for that and also partnership with a lawn in relation to Monson that has now moved to the ordeal femme category so we are working with with me and we'll also working here on the next phase for Roscommon town so these are projects that will be resumed after the restrictions are be new projects that we hoped that we will get further funding and as stated they are vital for the revitalisation of our communities and our towns and villages.

32.20c HOUSING, FINANCE, PLANNING, ICT AND ROSCOMMON AREA OFFICE.

Mr. Martin Lydon, Director of Services gave an update on current services in his Directorate:

Housing: HAP, homelessness and travellers accommodation are considered emergency services in emergency situations dealing with repairs, anti-social behavior and allocations to houses. Regular meetings with the HSE to deal with vulnerable groups who may be at risk and where we may need to make accommodation available and where needed they have been made available. The mortgage payment break was launched by the government and was launched online by the Cathaoirleach on 17th April and advertised on social media.

Planning: The only emergency services to relate to planning are the acceptance and validation of planning files. Since the 29th of March we received 24 applications but the clock in relation to those applications has

stopped. The Minister signed an Order which stated that following the emergency measures planning matters had been extended and applied up to and including the 9th of May i.e. in relation to any planning application received after the 21st of February, 42 days are added to the timeline involved in relation to that any planning application. This timeline could be extended if the lockdown period is extended.

The pre-draft consultation stage for the Roscommon County Development Plan, the issues paper, was launched on the 27th of March and because of because of the emergency legislation an additional 42 days will also apply. We are undertaking pre-planning meetings over the phone and hope to move to Microsoft teams in the near future. It is important to note that there have been a number of calls about inspecting files. File received prior to 21st February can be inspected on line. Applications since then will be made available online but people should not panic in relation to inspecting files because of the 42 day period - there will be the opportunity for the public to make any submissions they should wish to do and it is important to get the message to the public.

ICT: IT services of being deemed to be emergency services. 132 of our staff are working remotely with IT equipment and thanks to the library service and the LEADER company who made additional computers available.

IT section has worked closely with the C&E Department to set up a case management system and mapping app for the community response system which was useful to everybody.

ICT has also set up a remote customer service programme which allows people to working from home deal with customer service issues as customers who ring the main phone number are dealt with.

Finance: The emergency services in finance are in relation to procurement, payments, receipts, receipting income and analysing the budget. All postal motor tax applications are fully up to date. Payments of over €7 million euro have been made since the emergency which is good to get money into the real economy. Post is in relation to customers rent accounts and rate accounts are fully up today lastly.

Tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock an online form for ratepayers is being launched that will allow rate payers to inform us formally if their business is fully or partially closed. This will be very useful information for us so that we can see the impact of COVID-19 not only on the ratepayers of Roscommon County Council but a potential impact on future service delivery. This is part of our digital transformation programme and all information will be treated in a private and confidential manner.

32.20d ENVIRONMENT, WATER, ASSETS & CLIMATE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND ATHLONE MD

Mr. Liam Bergin gave an update on services in his Directorate:

Civic Amenity Sites:

Roscommon County Council has maintained the opening hours of Civic Amenity Sites which are a critical waste infrastructure in Roscommon, given the high number of households who do not have a waste collection service.

Volume of waste being generated.

We are monitoring all waste services in the county and there has been a significant increase in the waste being generated in the County. Bottle-banks are experiencing significant volume increases compared to the same period last year (17th March to 23rd April inclusive.) The comparison is as follows:

2019 – 146.4 tonnes

2020 – 214.1 tonnes = an increase of 68%.

In order to avoid littering at these bottle banks we are monitoring them closely and emptying them regularly, in the unlikely event that a bottlebank is full it is important that the public:

- a. Use the text number on the bottle bank to report that it is full
- b. If there is evidence of littering to report the littering to the litter Freephone number 1850548837 or ideally with a photograph to environment@roscommoncoco.ie
- c. Return at a later date with their recyclables.

Littering and Dumping

We continue to monitor illegal dumping and while there have been a number of high profile incidents the general trend is consistent with previous years 93 complaints in the period versus 96 in the same period last year, though we do have concerns that there may be underreporting as a result of quarantine measures. Roscommon County Council waste enforcement, as a designated essential service, is ongoing and complaints lines remain open. The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment on the 20th of April have increased the availability of funds for the installation of CCTV or other monitoring and surveillance equipment by €1 million euro.

While all Local Authority staff are constantly on the lookout for illegal dumping, we do need the help of the Public in identifying litter and dumping and the reports that we receive are critical to us identifying these illegal and antisocial activities. To remind the public of the need to report such instances the sector has produced a radio ad emphasising the continuity of waste services and enforcement arrangements to discourage illegal dumping and littering. The ad is running across national and local radio.

In relation to the blight of Roadside Littering, it is noticeable that discarded waste from commuter traffic has noticeably decreased, in line with the closure of hot food retail outlets and the decline in commuting.

Recycling and treatment of waste:

Recovery at composting and bio stabilisation plants is continuing uninterrupted. The plants report an approximate 25% increase in household biodegradable waste arising and an approximate 25% decrease in commercial biodegradable waste arising.

In relation to household waste collection services the reduction in the demand for cement from the construction industry has led to the decision by the The Irish Cement Plant (Platin) to suspend the production of cement this week until the end of May. The Platin plant accounts for 140 kt of SRF annually or over 16000 tonnes during the closure period. The RWMO's have liaised with the principal SRF producers and are satisfied that a combination of reduced production, baling, storage and export will be adequate for the period.

The interruption to cement production has also had an impact on recovery options for certain contaminated and blended fuels from the Biopharma and Chemical industries. A number of export options have been identified which should alleviate the problem in the short term.

There has been a reduction in international outlets for textile waste which impacts on the business model which underpins the provision of textile banks nationally. Local authorities are encouraged to maintain these services in cooperation with service providers. The RWMO's will consult with the textile sector to explore potential solutions.

The drop in oil prices has impacted on virgin polymer with a potential consequential impact on recyclable plastic while paper is moving well at the moment.

There remains a good demand for white paper at the moment

Waste collection from Householders and businesses:

Waste collectors have expressed concern about the potential for bad debts arising during this period. Exceedance of weight allowances may increase costs for a limited number of households. There is no evidence of an increase in the termination of accounts due to non payment during this period.

Waste collectors continue to service a range of nursing home / long stay facilities with handling of MDR a key component. Where facilities are managing the clinical waste stream in line with guidance it is considered that there is no elevated risk due to the handling of MDR however it is advised that appropriate PPE be used.

Summary:

The decision to keep our Civic Amenity Sites open, we feel has led to less dumping than we feared may be the case, however there is no room for complacency. We expect reporting of dumping and littering to increase with the gradual lifting of restrictions and remain committed to prosecuting, in full, those who commit this antisocial crime against our communities

32.20e QUERIES FROM ELECTED MEMBERS IN RELATION TO DIRECTORS REPORTS

The Elected members welcomed the update reports from the Directors of Services and raised the following matters:

- Importance of the Local Enterprise Office that is providing support to the small business at this time. The Project Ireland 2040 needs to be reconsidered as a result of the COVID Pandemic where rural living has to be given a new priority but emphasised the need for improvement in Broadband facilities across rural Ireland that would allow many people to live and work from home. Every village should have hub to facilitate remote working.
- Ringfence funding for projects from MD funding in 2020 for community employment schemes.
- Preserve and allocate Amenity Grant funding in 2020
- Take in Charge of roads resurfaced under LIS schemes.
- Can facilities in Áras an Chontae be made available to second level students studying for leaving cert?
- Many older people who are cocooning have a difficulty in getting household waste to amenity site that they normally use – can any assistance be provided to them?
- Who checks that social distancing guidelines are being implemented in shops that are open?
- While tidy town competition is cancelled, communities are anxious to continue to keep their local areas tidy.
- Complement the people of Roscommon for the low level of COVID-19 currently in the county.
- Need to support local communities and pay grants as soon as possible.
- The increasing incidence of illegal waste dumping is a national scandal and legislators are failing to deal with the matter in terms of inadequate fines and penalties. What is particularly disappointing is the amount of waste being dumped that can be recycled.
- Is it possible to extend and promote an Adopt the Road project, in light of all those walking now who could participate.

- When will the WEE Recycling programme be available?
- There is a need to consider the extension of planning permissions that are about to expire by a period of one year.
- The level of Broadband service from Eir has reduced due to the number of people working from home and the challenge is to at least maintain the same level of service.
- Compliment the level of service currently provided by the Council staff and in particular the Community Helpline that is a vital resource for over 70's.
- Thanks to the frontline staff for all of their work in very difficult circumstances. Thanks to the communities for all of their help to the vulnerable in their local areas.
- On the assumption that the restrictions will continue until the end of the year, can projects that need to be finished by year end resume as soon as possible when it is safe to do so.
- With Government formation talks ongoing, it is important that rates, subsidy grants are put in place as soon as possible and EU funding is directed to the regions.
- Government need to ensure PPE supply for family carers.
- There is currently illegal camping on the Suck Valley Way.
- The Government need to concentrate on helping small businesses in reopening when they are due to open in the National Roadway.
- Appeal to everyone to shop local and support local businesses.
- Thanks to all groups assisting in the Community forum.
- Need to look at provision of WIFI outside our buildings.

In response to queries raised, the Directors of Services replied as follows:

- The Department have issued an outline of the 2020 Local Improvement Scheme that are consistent with other years but there are some specific stipulations that have been highlighted on completion of a project or beneficiaries should be notified that the responsibility of the local authority has ended and all future maintenance of the works is their responsibility in line with Section 81.5 of the Local Government Act 2000 where Local Authority works are completed should not subsequently be taken in charge by the Local Authority. Roscommon County Council have made significant inroads in the Local Improvement scheme. A review of the schemes on hand to see which of those schemes would comply with the criteria which those that may no longer be required and that would give us a very good visibility for 2021 and revert with a report to the relevant SPC later in the year.
- Our broadband officers continuing to work with broadband providers to help accelerate and facilitate the roll out of broadband in the county. The national broadband plan is the only route for what are deemed to be the non-viable areas for commercial activity. The commercial activity in the county at this point has provided about 52% of premises with broadband and the remainder will have to be rolled out under the Broadband Ireland Scheme. 12 Public access points connection points will be installed in remote areas of the county. We as a Local Authority have secured the four Wi-Fi vouchers which will allow us to install Wi-Fi in a lot of our towns and villages and this is currently going through the tendering process.
- In relation to persons cocooning who cannot travel to their civic amenity site, they should contact the Community Call forum. The WEE recycling programme is facilitated by the bulky goods collection from time to time but some of this electrical waste can be brought back to the retailer. A

programme for will be developed for this facility.

- The Adopt a Road scheme is a part of the National Spring clean initiative that is currently suspended and is subject to funding becoming available.
- The 24 Hour Community call helpline was set up on 1st April is being operated 24/7 with Roscommon County Council on duty from 8am to 8pm and An Garda Síochána 8pm to 8am. A number of local organisations are involved in the forum including community groups, Leader, Dept. of Social protection, An Post, the PPN and the farmers association. Six forum meetings have been held under the Chairman Mr. Eugene Cummins and to date 1,560 calls have been received. Services provided include collection and delivery of groceries, prescriptions, pensions.
- Guidelines in relation to social distancing and sanitising of trolleys etc. is the responsibility of the individual shops and customers. However this will become a more pressing issue and employers including shopkeepers have a responsibility as individuals expect to be safe when entering any premises. This has been and will continue to be raised at the forum and they will endeavour to get a strong message out on this matter.
- The Joint Policing Committee is expected to be established shortly.

33.20 CHIEF EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

There was no Chief Executives business for the meeting.

34.20 CORRESPONDENCE

Replies to Resolutions from Roscommon County Council:

- Email dated 25th February, 2020 from Department of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform in reply to a recent resolution letter regarding the proposal of a Christmas Day exemption from all taxes for public and private sector workers – Ref: 8.20b (Dec19);
- Letter dated 17th April, 2020 from Office of Public Works in reply to a resolution letter regarding reference to made when assessing cost benefits including lost income for farmers etc – Ref:130.19 (Sept19).

Resolutions from other Local Authorities:

- Letter dated 28th February, 2020 from Cork County Council-
“That we write to the Department of Health, the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and request recognition be given to Parental Alienation as a child welfare issue and to call on the Government to implement the recommendation of The Report on Reform of the Family Law System, October 2019.”;

Other Correspondence:

- Letter dated 2nd March 2020 from Sláintecare Executive Director, Laura Magahy detailing the progress made in implementing the Slaintecare 10-year plan since the Slaintecare Programme Implementation Office was established.
- Email dated 10th March from Jenny Lawlor, Senior Communications Exec with Irish Water,

detailing the postponement of the Irish Water Councillor Clinic on 27/04/2020 as all non-critical travel and attendance at meetings are postponed in order to continue the focus on preparation and safeguarding in light of the Coronavirus outbreak.

35.20 COUNCILLORS CONFERENCES - PAYMENT/ATTENDANCE

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Keogh

SECONDED by Cllr. Ward

It was **AGREED** to adopt the list of payments for training and conferences as circulated.

36.20 VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS AND SYMPATHY

- Vote of Sympathy to Shiela Glennon and family, Taughmaconnell on the passing of Gerry Glennon
- Vote of Sympathy to Caroline and Gerry Menton, Brideswell of the passing of their daughter Bridgetta
- Vote of Sympathy to family of the later Conor Connelly, Creggs, former Roscommon Inter County footballer
- Vote of Sympathy to Julie Ann Finan and family on the passing of her father Joseph Flynn, Oran and Taughmaconnell.
- Vote of Sympathy to the McCormack family, Castlerea
- Vote of Sympathy to Darragh Kelly on the passing of his father Donal Kelly, Tulsk.
- Vote of congratulations to Eugene Dwyer on his forthcoming retirement as the Roads Section Senior Engineer next month. The members paid tribute to the work done for Roscommon County Council during his tenure as senior engineer.

37.20 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Cathaoirleach indicated the Cllrs. Ward, Keogh and Shanagher requested to speak under any other business.

37.20a LOUGH FUINSHINAGH AND FLOODING

Cllr. Ward raised the matter of the reply he received in relation to the ongoing situation of the flooding of Lough Funshinagh.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward

SECONDED by Cllr. Keogh

It was **AGREED** to write to the Office of Public Works to carry out a feasibility study on installing a pipe to drain excess water from Lough Funshinagh.

38.20 DOG FOULING BYE LAWS

Cllr. Keogh raised the matter of dog fouling in Monksland and in particular the difficulties being experienced for people using wheelchairs at the new walkway. He requested that bye-laws be introduced to place an obligation on a dog owner to carry evidence that they can pick up dog litter. He also stated that

the Dog Control Act must be amended to allow for on the spot fines as the current fines are not sufficient.

The Director of Services, Mr. Liam Bergin replies that Urban areas do have byelaws and the matter should be referred to the relevant SPC.

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

It was **AGREED** to immediately proceed to introduce byelaws in relation to dog fouling, similar to those in place in other Local Authorities.

39.20 ROSSIE WAY RADIO

Cllr. Shanagher asked to speak on Rossie Way, a radio programme for locals broadcast from 3pm to 5pm Monday to Friday supported by the Lions Club and local businesses. She also stated that 100 radios have been distributed to people cocooning to facilitate tuning in to the station.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Monday, 25th May, 2020.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are
Confirmed and Signed:

Patrick Bohan

Meetings Administrator

Paschal Fitzmaurice
Cathaoirleach

Patrick Bohan

Countersigned