

**MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON
ON MONDAY, 28TH FEBRUARY, 2022 AT 2.15 PM.**

PRESENT:	Councillor Joe Murphy, Cathaoirleach 2021/2022	PRESIDED
MEMBERS:	Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr E. Kelly, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice, Cllr D. Kilduff, Cllr T. Crosby, Cllr M. McDermott, Cllr O. Leyden, Cllr T. Ward, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr M. Mulligan, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher and Cllr L. Callaghan.	
OFFICIALS:	Shane Tieman, Director of Services Majella Hunt, Director of Services Sean Mullarkey, Acting Head of Finance John O'Rourke, Senior Engineer Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator Claudette Collins, Asst. Staff Officer Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator	
Apologies:	Cllr A. Waldron	

17.22 DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST (SECTION 177 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 AS AMENDED)

No declarations of interest from the Members.

18.22 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS - RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

The Cathaoirleach requested that Standing Orders be suspended to offer support for the Ukrainian people following the recent invasion of the country by Russia.

The members thanked the Cathaoirleach for the opportunity to discuss this.

- Senseless destruction of ordinary people and their homes and cities
- The Council should not conduct business until this is discussed
- Cut diplomatic ties with Russia – the Russian ambassador should be expelled for his lies
- As a militarily neutral country, we agreed to assist in funding €8m non-military goods.
- The EU was set up to prevent war and it vital that it can do something by way of sanctions.
- Heartening to see the world is supporting the Ukrainian People
- What everyone wants is peace – we live in a diverse community and all we want is peace “ the power of love overcomes the love of power”
- The sanctions are 5-6 weeks too late it should have been done as soon as the troops massed on the border.
- Ireland needs to support all efforts by the EU and the sanctions proposed need to be stronger but will take time to impact
- Dialogue needs to happen and sense prevail.
- Commend the leadership of the Ukrainian President at this time – for too long Europe has entertained the Putin regime after the 2014 annexation of Crimea – a change in leadership of Russia and Belarus is warranted.
- The Irish Government should encourage the return of Irish citizens from Russia, if they wish to do so.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Keogh

SECONDED by Cllr. Crosby

It was **AGREED** that the elected members of Roscommon County Council unanimously condemn the invasion by Putin and his Russian Military on Ukraine, a sovereign, free and independent nation and the resultant assault on the Ukrainian people, a peaceful people.

We call on the Taoiseach, Foreign Minister and the Government of Ireland to immediately request all Irish Citizens currently working and/or residing in Russia to return home now and unanimously call on the Government of the Ireland to proceed expeditiously to expel the Russian Ambassador in light of Russia's aggression and the blatant lies told to the Irish People by the Russian representative.

19.22 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Shanagher

SECONDED by Cllr. Fallon

It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of the Plenary Meeting of 24.01.2022

20.22 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

21.22 MANAGEMENT REPORT

- Management Report for January 2022 noted.

22.22 DISPOSAL OF LANDS - ASSETS

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Shanagher

SECONDED by Councillor McDermott

It was **AGREED** that the Council consent to the disposal of property pursuant to the provisions of Article 206 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, Section 211 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001 of particulars of property which it is proposed to dispose of at the location in County Roscommon and to the persons set out in the schedule hereunder. Particulars of the property which the County Council proposes to dispose:

The Property: Site No. 15 comprising 0.2823 hA (0.6975 acres) at Ballyboughan Industrial Estate, Ballyboughan Townland, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon.

The person(s) from whom the land was acquired: Eircom Ltd, Harcourt Centre, 52 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2

The person(s) to whom the land is to be disposed of: Nexus Heavy Plant Services Ltd

The consideration proposed in respect of the disposal: €51,000 plus VAT

23.22 LEASE OF LANDS - ASSETS

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Fitzmaurice

SECONDED by Councillor Dineen

It was **AGREED** that the Council consent to the lease of property pursuant to the provisions of Article 206 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, Section 211 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001 of particulars of property which it is proposed to lease at the location in County Roscommon and to the persons set out in the schedule hereunder. Particulars of the property which the County Council proposes to lease:

The Property: Site comprising 0.0036 hA (0.0089 acres) at Castlerea Business Park, The Demesne, Castlerea, Co. Roscommon.

The person(s) to whom the land is to be leased: National Broadband Ireland Infrastructure Designated Activity Company, 3009 Lake Drive, Citywest, Dublin 24.

The consideration proposed in respect of the lease: €750.00 per year

Term of the Lease: 25 years

24.22 LEASE OF LANDS - ASSETS

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Fallon

SECONDED by Councillor Kelly

It was **AGREED** that the Council consent to the lease of property pursuant to the provisions of Article 206 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, Section 211 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001 of particulars of property which it is proposed to lease at the location in County Roscommon and to the persons set out in the schedule hereunder. Particulars of the property which the County Council proposes to lease:

The Property: Site comprising of Folio RN19044F at Glebe Townland, Athleague, Co. Roscommon.

The person(s) to whom the land is to be leased: Roscommon Women's Network, Unit 6, The Old Mall, Main Street, Castlerea, Co. Roscommon.

The consideration proposed in respect of the lease: €100.00 per month

Term of the Lease: 3 years

25.22 AMENDMENT OF STANDING ORDERS - REMOTE MEETINGS

The Meeting Administrator informed the members that the proposed change to the Standing Orders is to allow hybrid meetings, which would allow remote attendance at meetings. In order for this to happen in the long term, the facilities in the Chamber will have to be upgraded. Other Councils have and are considering investment in their meeting facilities.

The members welcomed the change:

- More flexibility will be required in the future for meetings.
- The lack of flexibility is often a deterrent for women entering politics – this would allow more women and minorities to consider serving in Local Government.
- The Council should investigate the upgrade of the chamber.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Crosby

SECONDED by Cllr. Kilduff

It was **AGREED** to adopt the revised Standing Orders to allow for hybrid meetings.

26.22 SECTION 26(1) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (FINANCIAL PROCEDURES AND AUDIT) REGULATIONS

Mr. Sean Mullarkey, A/Head of Finance presented the schedule of uncollected rates at 31st December 2021:

- The arrears amounted to €1.33m, a decrease of €1.4m on 2020
- The total rate demand for 2021 was €12.62m with €9.64 collected.
- As part of the Government Covid19 stimulus package a rates waiver of €m was applied to eligible accounts in 2021
- Adjustments accounted for €1.3m and the collection rate 88%
- There have not been many closure of premises
- 22 cases are with the valuation tribunal
- Over 75% of customers have signed up to the Rates App
- The Council continues to engage with rate payers in difficulty

The report was noted by the Members.

27.22 PRESENTATION ON TOWN CENTRE FIRST POLICY

Ms. Majella Hunt, Director of Services made a presentation to the Elected Members on the “Town Centre First Policy”, a Government Policy launched on 4th February by Minister Heather Humphreys.

- The policy aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning at the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.
- It builds on existing best practice in a co-ordinated way to gain maximum investment from our towns (generally with pop >400)
- There is cross government priority with strong partnership with local government that is locally led with significant investment.
- Policy is to avail of opportunities from climate change and adaptation; digital transformation and remote working; demographic change and housing choice; experience-led retail; regeneration of public spaces; realising cultural assets and empowered, inclusive and engaged communities.
- The focus and process is a tailored approach as every town is unique – a bottom up, plan led, place based process underpinned by investment, structures and support.
- The implementation structures include a national oversight and advisory group and National TCF office. The Local Authority will employ a Town Regeneration Officer and the town teams will be part of the structures with A total of 33 identified actions will be assigned to the stakeholders.
- The Plan for each town will follow a consistent methodology with future funding, inclusion of the economic and social dimension, underpinned by a health check and align with the NPF and statutory spatial plans.
- Building better data will be a keystone to the success of the projects with research, agreed measurement requirements and impact assessments undertaken.
- A toolkit will be developed to support the implementation of the policy
- The Town Regeneration Officer will have a key role in community engagement including with town teams and linking to the expertise of the Local Authority.
- The town teams will be the local experts and will consist of diverse groups. Capacity building with training and mentoring will be facilitated
- Phase 1 includes the allocation of €100,000 for a town in each county and Strokestown is the town assigned in county Roscommon. The outcomes of Phase 1 will inform future TCF plans.
- Finally, in this year's call for URDF/RRDF funding, the emphasis has changed

The Members welcomed this new initiative and the funding for Strokestown. The initial funding is to design the Plan for the town and local knowledge is so important for the success of the projects:

- Welcome a dedicated Town Regeneration Officer.
- All backlands need to be assessed first to develop possibilities to open up the spaces – both domestic and commercial premises
- Availability of jobs in the area are crucial to bringing people to live in towns.
- Footfall is decreasing in small towns due to changes in retail – need ways to open up these towns to make more attractive
- Thanks for the work done on Roscommon Town Carpark recently
- People are moving back from large urban centres to rural towns
- Initiatives on dereliction need to be progressed as soon as possible and change of use from commercial to residential to be planning exempted.
- A scheme similar to S23 should be initiated by the Government – it will necessitate very little cost.
- Do not agree with the town teams having a big input into this initiative as they are not always representative of the town as is the case in Ballaghaderreen – local politicians should be

consulted first.

- There is a need to identify black spots in towns – all towns need support
- Unfinished estates need to be addressed
- Councillors have to be involved in all plans and more resources made available to town teams.
- Lights over shops and people living in the town centre would be very welcome
- This has to be a combined effort of all stakeholders. A lot of money has been invested in towns around the county in the past number of years.
- Irish Water have to facilitate more development of new houses in towns with water and sewerage services.
- Do not agree with S23 properties – mostly investor led and has to be people looking to buy.
- Most of the town teams are working well and representative of the towns and there is no exclusivity in relation to structure and they are democratic

In response to the comments, Ms. Hunt said that the Town Teams were set up by Roscommon County Council at the request of the Members. People should be encouraged to become involved and it should be noted that the new policy will dictate that more people will be needed to become active in the committee and participate in the process. In parallel with this process, the Government is assessing dereliction and vacancies and what additional measures can be taken and we await these deliberations.

Mr. Shane Tiernan, Director of Services added that Active Travel measures will complement the Town Centre First Policy and we have already received substantial funding in this area but the Council is only a facilitator. While there is exempted development for bringing buildings back to useful accommodation but all requirements will have to be checked in advance with the Planning Department.

28.22 MEMBERSHIP OF LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (LCDC)

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Keogh

SECONDED by Cllr. Callaghan

It was **AGREED** to appoint the PPN nominee Mr. Kevin Conroy to the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) to represent the Social Inclusion Pillar.

29.22 CHIEF EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

Mr. Shane Tiernan, Deputy Chief Executive provided an update for the Members on the Knockcroghery to Ballymurray N61 Project.

- It is 5 years since the inception of the project, to develop a 14km new road from Ballymurray to Lecarrow and it is currently in Phase 1&2. The estimated cost of the project is €80m.
- Since April 2021 the TII have stated that further development of projects will be contingent in their inclusion in the new National Development Plan 2021-2030. When the new NDP was released in October last there was no mention of the N61.
- The Council officially sought approval from the TII to move to Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation) at the end of 2021. Confirmation has been received from TII that they are not in opposition to give approval at this time as allocations for major road projects are being made according to the priority set out in the revised NDP and the limited exchequer funding they have for these projects.
- Some funding €300k will be allocated to the project under the minor funding programme for 2022. While this could be used to prioritise a section (2-4km) of the new road to complete, it would not

make any sense to do unless all of the work is completed in one project as the new road is all offline. It is considered more prudent to spend this money on specific upgrade works on sections of the existing road.

- The TII have outlined to the Council priorities of roads to be funded as per the NDP and notes considerable restraints on funding for 2021-2025 and set out the basis under which funding will be allocated for Major Schemes going forward - the N61 will not be considered for progressing any earlier than 2026 and more likely it will be 2030.
- The Council have asked the consultants to look at the project to consider is sections of the road could be prioritised, but this is unlikely to have a favourable outcome as most of the new road is off line and railway crossings are included.
- The Chief Executive and Director of Services have recently met with the TII at the highest level and have made very strong representations in relation to approval of the scheme but unfortunately as it stands it is not approved to proceed any further.

The Members expressed their disappointment and frustration at the update:

- Over the years there have been a number of motions on safety issues on the N61 and in particular the section at Ganleys to St Brigid's turnoff. There are a substantial number of houses, a school and church on the busy road that no footpaths or pedestrian crossing.
- The N61 needs to be upgraded its full length and in fact a new road from Athlone to Boyle to join the N4 is necessary.
- The Council needs to get clear direction as to when or what will be done.
- What are the implications for the sterilisation of the lands?
- Safety measure on the road are a priority in any case
- WE cannot have unsafe roads that are still used as heavy carriageways with huge volumes of traffic that has far exceeded its capacity. This decision is disheartening and unacceptable.
- We need to write to the Minister for Transport and the Government regarding the following:
 - How much has been spent to date on the project?
 - Who made the decision to remove the project from the NDP? The most recent update is that this project was to proceed to Planning.
 - Roscommon has been bypassed as a county and has lost the opportunity to link Athlone to the West of Ireland. The project must be reinstated in the NDP
- This has been discussed at length in the past and we have received no resolutions from the TII
- A lot of time was spent on the plan. There is a gap in rural transport and by improving our roads and consequently public transport there will be less cars on the roads. More investment is required in Local Link and it should be expanded.
- There is no other county that has a county town with no proximity to a National Primary route - we will not get the necessary funding unled this road is upgraded.
- If we are ambitious, we need a full scale motorway – there are 250 openings onto the N61
- If Athlone is a regional growth centre, this road needs to be upgraded.
- The N60 is also ignored for funding
- What is the position with a meeting with the TII?
- If we get €360k for upgrades on the road, it is important that this be used.

The Director replied that a lot of work has been undertaken on the project to date. A traffic study is underway and will inform the traffic volumes. A resolution was passed at the CPG meeting this morning to request that the TII come to Roscommon to attend a meeting to discuss the N61.

The following resolutions were proposed:

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Kilduff

And **SECONDED** by Cllr. Ward that a Letter be written to the TII to reconsider their decision on the N61.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Leyden

And **SECONDED** by Cllr. Cummins that a letter be sent to the Minister for Transport and the Taoiseach regarding the following:

- How much has been spent to date on the N61 project?
- Who made the decision to remove the project from the NDP? The most recent update is that this project was to proceed to Planning.
- Roscommon has been bypassed as a county and has lost the opportunity to link Athlone to the West of Ireland. The project must be reinstated in the NDP.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Cummins

And **SECONDED** by Cllr. Ward that consideration be given by the TII to upgrading the N61 current status to a National Primary Route.

30.22 NOTICE OF MOTION - 03.23 CARERS ALLOWANCE EXEMPTION FROM A MEANS ASSESSMENT - CLLR. WARD

"I am calling on the Government, the Minister for Finance, Mr. Paschal Donohoe T.D. and the Minister of Justice and Social Protection and Rural and Community Development, Ms. Heather Humphreys T.D., to bring forward legislation in the Dáil which will exempt Carers Allowance from a means assessment if the person who is being cared for has a full detailed medical report in support of their condition."

Cllr. Ward stated that it was nearly impossible to get staff to work in this area and he has raised this at the HSE Forum meeting. This is a small amount of money and would save a significant money from the health service and provide support and recognition from the State.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward

SECONDED by Cllr. Naughten

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister for Finance, Mr. Paschal Donohoe T.D. and the Minister of Justice and Social Protection and Rural and Community Development, Ms. Heather Humphreys T.D., to bring forward legislation in the Dáil which will exempt Carers Allowance from a means assessment if the person who is being cared for has a full detailed medical report in support of their condition.

31.22 CORRESPONDENCE

Resolutions from other Local Authorities:

- **25th January, 2022 - Resolution from Galway County Council**
That Galway County Council supports the campaign of Epilepsy Ireland to address long-standing issues that continue to impact on people with epilepsy and their families in Ireland today.
- **14th February, 2022 - Resolution from Sligo County Council**
Given that building materials and labour has gone up by more than 60% Sligo County Council call on the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage to increase the maximum grant from €8,000 to €15,000 and from €30,000 to €45,000 for housing adaption grant for people with a disability and to also increase the maximum grant under the older persons grant scheme by 50% to reflect building inflation and also to increase the overall allocation to the county a pro rata amount.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Shanagher

SECONDED by Cllr. Dineen

It was **AGREED** to write to Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage to increase the maximum grant from €8,000 to €15,000 and from €30,000 to €45,000 for housing adaption grant for people with a disability and to also increase the maximum grant under the older

persons grant scheme by 50% to reflect building inflation and also to increase the overall allocation to the county a pro rata amount.

- **14th February, 2022 - Resolution from Sligo County Council**

That Sligo County Council unequivocally supports the retention of a full-time air sea rescue service at Sligo Airport as currently provided by the crew of Rescue 178 and also calls on the Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan T.D. to ensure Sligo Airport is put on a level playing field and supported with the capital investment needed in line with funding given to other airports.

- **17th February, 2022 - Resolution from Sligo County Council**

That Tipperary County Council supports the "Women of Honour" campaign for a statutory Commission of Investigation into alleged issues within our Defence Forces surrounding dignity in the workplace, bullying, harassment, discrimination, assault, sexual harassment and sexual assault.

- **22nd February, 2022 - Resolution from Clare County Council**

That Clare County Council on the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Minister for Transport to put in place a system of compensation and indemnity as a component of the licensing system for forestry while also making it a requirement that forestry license holders - prior to commencing licenced forestry activities - consult with the relevant local authority with a view to minimizing damage to the public road network.

- **22nd February, 2022 - Resolution from Clare County Council**

That Clare County Council call on the Minister for Finance to broaden the Household Benefits Package and include exemption from property tax for those people that are under extreme pressure to meet day to day expenses in light of the rising cost of living and their struggle to survive on a very low level of income.

Other Correspondence:

- **15th February, 2022 – Circular from the Department of Transport**

Department of Transport Circular RW 2/2022 Regional and Local Road Grant Allocations 2022

32.22 VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS AND SYMPATHY

- Congratulations to boxer Aoife O'Rourke for recently winning a gold medal at the 73rd Strandja international boxing tournament in Sofia.
- Cllr. Shanagher paid tribute to the late Ena Staunton, Ballaghaderreen and formerly Kiltewan. She was a former winner of a Roscommon Person of the Year award in 2002 and a recipient of the County Volunteer of the Year award. The late Ena was instrumental in the Ballaghaderreen Special Olympics Club and represented Ireland as a delegate at Special Olympic competitions domestically as well as in Europe and the United States.

33.22 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

33.22a PROPOSED PRESENTATION FROM SEAI

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Byrne

SECONDED by Cllr. Naughten

It was **AGREED** to invite the SEAI to give a presentation to the members on the new retrofit home energy grants.

33.22b CIVIC RECEPTION

The Members were advised that it is proposed to hold a Civic Reception in June and that nominations should be proposed at the March Municipal District Meetings.

33.22c DELEGATION VISIT TO NEW YORK

The Cathaoirleach advised the members that he and Cllr. Laurence Fallon accompanied by the Deputy Chief Executive Mr. Shane Tiernan would travel to New York from 15th to 19th March to meet with and continue to keep the links with the Roscommon people in the city.

33.22d COMMEMORATION CEREMONY - 20TH MARCH

Director of Services, Ms. Majella Hunt notified the members that a local Commemoration Event for those who lost their lives in the pandemic would take place on Sunday 20th March. This is part of a Nation Commemoration weekend and will involve frontline workers and will consist of wreath laying ceremony with some prayers, music and poetry. The Members will be informed of the details of the event.

33.22e FUNDING FOR AN CHISTIN, CASTLEREA

Cllr. Fitzmaurice informed the members that there was a shortfall in funding for Phase 2 of the An Chistin Project but extra funding was awarded last week and he thanked all staff in the Council working on the project for their work in this matter. The Director of Services noted that the large increase in costs of materials was the main reason for the increase and the contractor will be appointed in the coming days.

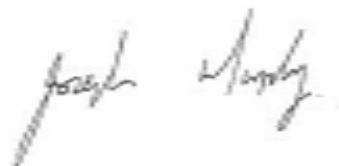
NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Monday, 28th March, 2022.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are
Confirmed and Signed:

Petrizio Bohan
Meetings Administrator



Cathaoirleach

Petrizio Bohan
Countersigned