

**MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON
ON MONDAY, 19th December, 2022 AT 2.15 pm.**

PRESENT: Councillor Tom Crosby **PRESIDED**

MEMBERS: Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr E. Kelly, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice, Cllr A. Waldron, Cllr O. Leyden, Cllr T. Ward, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr M. Mulligan, Cllr J. Murphy, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher and Cllr L. Callaghan.

OFFICIALS: Shane Tieman, Chief Executive
Majella Hunt, Director of Services
Caitlín Conneely, A/Director of Services
Sean Mullarkey, Acting Head of Finance
Fiona Ni Chuinn, A/Director of Services
Greg O'Donnell, A/Director of Services
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator
Claudette Collins, Asst. Staff Officer
Darragh Kelly, Communications Officer

Apologies: Cllr D. Kilduff and Cllr M. McDermott

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

There were no Disclosures of Interest declared by the Members.

196.22 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

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

It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of the Budget Meeting of 24.11.2022

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

It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of the Plenary Meeting of 28.11.2022

197.22 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

198.22 MANAGEMENT REPORT

- Management Report for November 2022 notes by the Members.
- Cllr. Shanagher welcomed €68m funding announced this morning for Just Transition Projects and Roscommon is one of the Counties included. A collaborative group was set up a number of years

ago with Longford County Council and a meeting should be convened to discuss. Cllr. Leyden requested that a meeting be arranged with the Chief Executives, the Cathaoirleach and relevant Director of Services and the committee to see how funding opportunities can be maximised.

Ms. Majella Hunt, Director of Services confirmed that this funding is in relation to The Hidden Heartlands and Failte Ireland is the Lead Authority in collaboration with the Local Authorities. This is a 3-year project with very challenging deadlines and it is expected to consist of one large project. Information will be forwarded to the Elected members when detailed information is received.

199.22 ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL DIGITAL STRATEGY

The Council's new Digital Strategy was presented to members by John Freeman, Broadband Officer. The document is a digital roadmap for the county for the next four years, setting out strategic goals as to how technology will support and enable the county to grow and develop.

- The vision of the document was to enhance and further develop the county's digital innovation hubs, improve citizens' digital skills as well as supporting and adopting community, economic and cultural digital initiatives and achieving a thriving digital economy will also reduce the costs of public services.
- The pillars of an effective Digital Strategy include the provision of digital services, digital skills, community and cultural innovation, to include tourism, the digital economy and the provision of employment, innovation and entrepreneurship as well as infrastructural development.
- In respect of the community objectives of the Digital Strategy the strategy will promote the use of digital technology within the community, reduce social isolation by enabling people to stay connected as well as supporting education and training. To achieve this will result in greater Social Participation, innovation in heritage, tourism and the arts, community supports through LEADER, upskilling of citizens, the creation of 'smart villages' as well as the enhancement of Roscommon County Council's 'Online Services'.
- Among the infrastructure objectives of the strategy include greater support for BCP's, free Wi-Fi in public spaces and the support of rural regeneration, promoting a remote working strategy. Other objectives include the development of community hubs and the application of the strategy in the context of the National Broadband Plan.
- The strategy would also promote and encourage the continued development of the digital economy through WDC Connected hubs, regional collaboration, digital innovation centres, online trading and supporting the work of the county's Local Enterprise Office (LEO).
- The three key themes outlined in the Digital Strategy will have a range of objectives/actions to be delivered and achieved between now and 2026. Key will be the establishment of an oversight and monitoring committee responsible for continually tracking the progress of the implementation plan and identifying areas of further opportunity.

The Chief Executive said the Council is committed to ensuring everyone has access to high-speed broadband. He noted however that the Council were 'facilitators' of broadband roll-out and were dependent on providers of the service. Roscommon County Council is committed to providing its services online, therefore giving access to its customers 24/7.

The Cathaoirleach welcomed the strategy, claiming the document puts Roscommon County Council at the forefront of other counties in providing fast and efficient digital services.

The Members welcomed the Strategy and noted:

- Welcomed the Wi-Fi for EU' delivery in Castlerea which he said, has proved very successful. The delivery of services through 'My Online Services' is also to be welcomed but said many people didn't have access to these services. Online services should be available both in local area offices and through the local library network.
- A challenge of delivering an effective digital strategy was the county's aging population profile. Such people needed help and training in the delivery of services.
- The new Digi-Hub in Tulsk was also welcomed where a company had recently relocated.
- The EM-Call emergency service was also welcomed as a success whereby members of the public are able to access technology on their phone to access their nearest defibrillator.
- Is there an update on the roll-out of the national broadband plan?
- Older people are being disadvantaged by the lack of services and should be provided guidance when making online applications. Older exchanges needed to be updated from copper to fibre optic broadband.
- Public buildings, where available, should be used to offer supports to people unsure or uncertain of using online services. The continued provision of online vouchers through LEO (the Local Enterprise Office) is also a benefit to businesses.
- The Council's area offices be used as online hubs. People should not be debarred from engaging with the local authority if they are not computer savvy.
- Welcome the recognition of older people's needs in respect of any limitations or lack of access they may have to online services.
- Online services could be rolled out through the An Post network for a nominal fee.

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. Waldron
SECONDED by Cllr. Ward

It was AGREED to send a letter to An Post seeking the facilitation of online services in their network of post offices.

Responding to the issues raised, Mr. Freeman said the mission of the National Broadband Plan was that no property would be left behind. The latest figures indicated 19,500 properties in the county are to be covered by the National Broadband Plan. Of those properties, 59% of properties will be connected by the end of this year, which will be ahead of many other counties.

The Council's library services are well placed to upskill and provide supports for online users and BCP's (Broadband Connection Points), together with the support of local representatives and the GRETB (Galway Roscommon Education Training Board) could roll-out future training to local communities.

200.22 AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2023

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. Cummins
SECONDED by Cllr. Fallon

It was AGREED to adopt the Audit Committee Work programme 2023

Cllr. Cummins, a member of the Audit Committee, said the programme was committed to reaching its objectives and had been successful to date in carrying out its work to date. He said it was important the resources required would be offered to the committee.

Cllr. Fallon, also a member of the committee, said there were growing challenges to meet the requirements

of the committee and said the lack of funding and late funding coming into the local authority posed challenges. He said the committee has worked well and paid particular tribute to outgoing Internal Auditor Martha Kelly.

Cllr O. Leyden voiced concern over risks alluded to in the work programme and asked what these challenges were.

Responding, Acting Finance Officer Sean Mullarkey said the Council was fully committed to replacing its Internal Auditor. He said no new or outstanding risks had been identified.

201.22 DRAFT ANNUAL SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2023

- The Draft Annual Service Delivery Plan 2023 was noted by the Members.
- Cllr. Fitzmaurice requested that details of changes in Directorates be circulated to Elected members as it had not been previously received.

202.22 CORRESPONDENCE

Resolutions from other Local Authorities:

- **30th November, 2022 – Resolution, Mayo County Council**
“That **Mayo County Council** are calling on the Minister for Housing & Local Government to make a fund available to enable the taking in charge of estates across Ireland that have been taken in charge to address the legacy issue which is denying estates basic access services across the country. If supported, that the motion be circulated to all local authorities for support.”
- **12th December, 2022 – Resolution, Limerick City and County Council**
“That **Limerick City and County Council** call on the Minister for Transport to adopt a policy at national level to have bus shelters constructed where there is a bus stop”.
- **12th December, 2022 – Motion, Northern and Western Regional Assembly**
“That **Northern and Western Regional Assembly** propose and fully support Cancer care West and the National Breast Cancer Research Institute in their proposed development of Cancer Centre for the West and North West of Ireland and seek the immediate appointment of a design team to progress a fit for purpose cancer hospital at UHG and build complimentary cancer care infrastructure at regional hospitals in accordance with balanced regional development a cancer care network for the Saolta region (West, North-west) with a Cancer Centre at Galway University Hospital with appropriate infrastructure will be delivered (national Development Plan 2021-30)”.

Other Correspondence:

- **9th December, 2022 – Circular, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage**
“The Department invites applications from local authorities to fund proposals which support and encourage the increased participation of women and people of diversity in 2024 local elections, and proposals that actively support the retention of existing female councillors post 2024”.

203.22 NOTICE OF MOTION - 16.22 SPECIALIST CANCER CENTRE - CLLR. LEYDEN

“That Roscommon County Council supports the development of a Specialist Cancer Centre for the West and North West at Galway University Hospital and seeks the immediate appointment of a design team to progress this state-of-the-art Cancer Centre at UHG and complementary cancer care infrastructure at Hospitals in the Saolta Region (West and North West) in accordance with balanced regional development and as identified in the National Development Plan.”

Cllr Leyden said she and Cllr. Naughten previously supported this motion at a recent meeting of the North-Western Regional Assembly. Balanced regional development is essential to provide health care facilities for the citizens of the West and North West citizens on a par with those living in the East and South. She said there was a five-year survival rate in the East of the country of 86% among cancer patients in contrast with an 80% survival rate in the West of the country. Many of the facilities in the West are in old buildings and infrastructure needs to be upgraded to provide good facilities. It is in the national Development plan to provide a dedicated Cancer Care Centre for UH Galway but progress has been slow. She welcomes the announcement last Friday from Minister Donnelly that dedicated Cancer Care Centre for UH Galway is now listed under the HSE Capital Plan. This is of huge significance for County Roscommon.

Cllr. Ward welcomed the motion as a member of the HSE forum. He said he previously lobbied for breast check facilities for county Roscommon and this was very successful.

Cllr. Naughten supported the motion and the need to bring facilities up to standard for the people of the west. Cllrs Crosby, Shanagher and Fitzmaurice also supported the motion.

Cllr. Ward then informed the meeting that he was instrumental in setting up the Rural Car Scheme in South Roscommon and its purpose was to bring people to hospital appointments. He stated that now is the time to get this project back on track and get funding available.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr. Ward

 SECONDED by Cllr. Shanagher

That the Rural Car Scheme be reinstated and proposed the reintroduction of taxi services provided for persons availing of hospital appointments with a nominal charge for users to defray fuel costs incurred by the drivers.

Cllr. Naughten suggested that the scheme had previously been funded by the Department of Transport under the rural transport scheme. This should be rolled out across Roscommon and other counties too.

A/Director of Services Fiona Ní Chuinn said the Rural Social Car Scheme was previously operated under Roscommon LEADER Partnership. Roscommon Co Co and LEADER recently met with Local Link services about the necessity of such a service as Roscommon is a rural county. Two applications have been made for the provision of community car schemes which are currently being considered.

Cllr. Callaghan said that as the Chair of the Longford Westmeath Community Transport CLG he will request an update at the committee's next meeting in January. He also hopes to invite the manager of the Local Link in the area to a meeting of the Council to outline the services it operates and the opportunities to improve the services in the future.

204.22 CHIEF EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

There was no Chief Executive Business for discussion.

205.22 COUNCILLORS CONFERENCES - PAYMENT/ATTENDANCE

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Shanagher

SECONDED by Cllr. Callaghan

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

206.22 VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS AND SYMPATHY

- At the request of the Cathaoirleach, a minutes silence was held in memory of the late Pte. Sean Rooney who was killed while on active duty in the Lebanon last week. Pte. Rooney was a member of the Irish Army on peace keeping duty on behalf of the UN Peacekeeping Mission. The Irish Flag will fly at half- mast at Áras an Chontae on the day of his funeral.

207.22 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Cllr. Shanagher congratulated LEO (Local Enterprise Office) staff for the launch of a new publication showcasing the work of artists and designers currently working in the county, which she described as a fabulous publication.
- Cllr. Shanagher congratulated staff of Roscommon County Council for their organisation of the recent Freedom of County Roscommon ceremony, honouring boxing sisters Aoife and Lisa O'Rourke. She commended the Christmas display in the foyer that was incorporated into the function.
- Cllr. Fitzmaurice also thanked the staff for the way the Freedom of County Roscommon ceremony was organised. The O'Rourke family were very grateful to the Council and it was a very memorable event for everyone who attended and a great success.

207.22a REFUGEE PLACEMENT IN BALLAGHADERREEN

- Cllr. Mulligan voiced concerns over the recent arrival of refugees to Ballaghaderreen. He said that of a total local population of over two thousand, 937 were foreign nationals as well as those who had recently arrived in the town. He emphasised that he and the community of Ballaghaderreen were not racist in any way. He was critical of the Government's failure to provide extra services to accommodate the increased arrival of people to the town, claiming the town had only two doctors to deal with the new arrivals, which was the same level service as twenty years ago. He said local and outlying schools were bursting at the seams, and claimed it was wrong to place extra people in the town without providing extra local services. He also said there was also an absence of Garda numbers serving the town with resources being assigned from other areas.
- Cllr. Callaghan agreed with Cllr. Mulligan's comments and stated 112 people were recently relocated to the River Oaks housing estate in Ballaghaderreen. He said the absence of increased services was resulting in the burden being met by the local authority. The Councillor said there had been a lack of

consultation with members and the local community and appealed for Minister of State Roderic O'Connor to visit Ballaghaderreen and see for himself the extent of the challenges that needed to be addressed.

- Cllr. Byrne said it was not fair to place extra people in Ballaghaderreen without the provision of extra services and asked if the decision to relocate people was made solely on the availability of vacant houses in the town.
- Cllr. Byrne requested an update on the reported closure of the Area Office in Ballaghaderreen
- Cllr. Murphy said local communities are open to refugees coming to local towns but said people cannot be brought to areas without investment in communities and services and appealed for greater support from central government.
- The Cathaoirleach said Ballaghaderreen had been inundated with refugees yet this has not been matched with an increased provision of services. He criticised what he said was a lack of consultation with the local community prior to the latest arrival of refugees to the town.

Acting Director of Services Fiona Ní Chuinn said Roscommon County Council had received an email from Minister O'Gorman's Department on 8th December concerning the provision of temporary accommodation in the River Oaks area of Ballaghaderreen for international Protection applicants – the same correspondence as was circulated to the Members. She confirmed Roscommon County Council had received no consultation prior to the notification being issued. The Council had raised concerns with the Department over the lack of provision of medical and education services. This is a Government response to I.P. applicants and the most recent allocation of refugees was to forty facilities in thirteen different counties, of which Ballaghaderreen was one such location.

The Chief Executive stated that nothing has changes with regard to the position of the Area Offices since the report was circulated last year to the members regarding the provision of the services in the Area offices.

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. Callaghan
SECONDED by Cllr. Cummins

It was AGREED to formally write to Minister Roderic O'Gorman requesting he visit Ballaghaderreen, meet the communities and meet the Council and outline what services will be provided in the town.

207.22b APPOINTMENT TO LCDC

Acting Director of Services Ms. Fiona Ni Chuinn advised the Members that a vacancy has arisen on the Local Community Development Committee.

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. Shanagher
SECONDED by Cllr. Murphy

It was AGREED to appoint Ms. Helen Hunt to the Local Community Development Committee

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Monday, 23rd January, 2023.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are

Confirmed and Signed:

PATRIZIO BOHON

Meetings Administrator

TOM BOHON

Cathaoirleach

PATRIZIO BOHON

Countersigned