

**MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL  
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON  
ON MONDAY, 24th April, 2023 AT 2.15 pmPM.**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Tom Crosby      **PRESIDED**

**MEMBERS:** Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr E. Kelly, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice, Cllr D. Kilduff, Cllr M. McDermott, 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 K. Shanagher and Cllr L. Callaghan.

**OFFICIALS:** Shane Tiernan, Chief Executive  
Majella Hunt, Director of Services  
Caitlín Conneely, 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

**Apologies:** Cllr J. Naughten

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

There were no Disclosures of Conflict of Interest declared by Members.

**48.23 ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

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

It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of the Plenary Meeting of 27.03.2023

**49.23 MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

**50.23 MANAGEMENT REPORT**

- Management Report for Quarter 1 2023 noted.

**51.23 PRESENTATION ON REGENERATIVE TOURISM SCHEME 2023-2026 UNDER EU JUST TRANSITION FUND**

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Mr. Paddy Matthews from Failte Ireland – the Hidden Heartlands to give a presentation to the Elected Members on the Regenerative Tourism Scheme funded by the EU Just Transition Fund.

Mr. Matthews outlined the strategy and process for securing funding for tourism initiatives from the fund for the Hidden Heartlands region:

- In response to an invitation from DECC, a funding scheme proposal was made in March 2022 – “A regenerative Tourism and Place Making Scheme for Ireland’s Midlands” to form part of Irelands EU Just Transition Plan.
- Government approval of Irelands EU Just Transition Plan in the sum of €169m included €68m for tourism.
- The key challenges and response include:
  - Impact on jobs and communities, direct and indirect as the peat industry is wound down
  - Key task for JTF is to provide new employment opportunities.
  - The JTF can help to create inclusive, attractive, healthy and sustainable place to live, work and visit.
- Priority 1 – generating employment for former peat communities by investing in the diversification of local economy by:
  - Supporting productive investments in microenterprises SMEs and economic stakeholders in key sectors
  - Support bottom-up local and regional economic strategies
  - Support research and development and innovation activities to contribute to development of the green and circular economy.
  - €87m allocated to economic diversification, LECT/REP schemes and Biodiversity actions
  - Delivery partners – Fáilte Ireland, Pobal and Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Marine
  - Key Indicators: 427 Enterprises, 5 LECP/REPs, 16 enterprises
- Priority 2 – supporting regeneration and repurposing of peatlands and related lands by:
  - Supporting a set of actions for the lands that will no longer be used for the extraction, transport and processing of peat and will complement the activities in Priority 1
  - €57m allocated to peatland restoration, farming wet peat soil and network of trails
  - Partners - National Parks & Wildlife, Dept of Agriculture and Fáilte Ireland
  - Key Indicators: 2,500 Ha rehabilitated peatland, 10,000 Ha restored, ecosystems, 30 Ha trails
- Priority 3 – providing former peat communities with smart and sustainable mobility options to benefit directly from the green transition by
  - Focusing on decarbonisation of transport to provide clean transport solutions
  - This is essential to ensure the population can access jobs and training to participate in the activities proposed.
  - €18m allocated to electric buses, support to transport and charge points.
  - Partners – NTA, ZEVI
  - Key Indicators – 27.5 tonnes Co2 gone, 12 enterprises, 60 recharging points

Regenerative Scheme 2023-2027 Strands:

Strand 1 – Trail Development on old railways through rehabilitated wetlands

- Deliver a strategic Network of connected walking, cycling and water trails
- Emphasis on cycling, e-biking, walking and boating
- Hubs – Entry and exit points to network, car parks, accommodation, catering, accommodation
- Stand Out trail features

Strand 2 - Support for SME and Amenity Development

- Grant schemes for tourism SME's – state aid rules will apply
- Expansion of existing enterprises & establishing new ones
- Launch target date July 2023

Strand 3 – Low Carbon alternative accommodation

- Small scale accommodation developments
- Trails network
- Carbon neutral developments
- Capacity building

Strand 4 - Smart Solutions/digitisations programme for tourism sector

- Supporting entrepreneurship, skills development and capacity building
- Appointment of Tourism activators
- DT Programme and digital innovation in tourism

Next steps include consultation with communities, local authorities and tourism SME's; work up details of schemes and appoint tourism activators The launch of funding schemes is expected to be July/August 2023

The Cathaoirleach thanked Mr. Matthews for the in-depth presentation on behalf of the members the members had a number of questions and comments on the initiative:

- What is the situation with Bord na Mona and disused railway lines?
- The council have been very progressive with communities and a number of projects identified but raising matching funding is an issue e.g. the board walk project in Ballyleague. Government need to heed the message that matched funding will have to be re-examined.
- Tourism activators are like rural activation officers and it's important to make what we have work
- There are so many places that can be opened up including the area from Ballyleague to Rooskey (Kilglass lakes)
- Welcome Just Transition and Bord Failte collaborating for this project
- Where will the tourism activators be based?
- Can assistance be provided to finalise an accommodation project?
- Can the presentation be circulated to the elected members after the meeting?
- The Ballyforan – Shannonbridge area should also be included.
- West Roscommon is not included. There should also be provision for extension of trails from Rooskey to Rathcroghan to Ballagherreen
- East Roscommon/Longford area seems to be prioritised
- Will the cycle route Dublin to Galway be integrated into this scheme?
- Derryglad Folk museum in South Roscommon would be a great attraction and its accessibility to the Dublin Galway greenway/cycleway should be considered
- There are many valuable sites in Roscommon – Roscommon County Council should complete an audit of these sites.
- The MD's of Roscommon, Athlone and Ballinasloe have met to generate ideas for projects
- Welcome progress on Just transition – we have a unique area with bogs and it is good to see funding being considered through JT. Co Funding is important but the thousands of hours given by volunteers should translate into part of the matched funding.
- Where trails are proposed through private farmland, early consultation is essential and trails should where possible be off road.
- Is there funding available for towns and villages where there is a deficiency of facilities?
- Where trails are developed, with Fáilte Ireland fund the maintenance?
- The N5 could facilitate the Roscommon Sligo Greenway – also a concern there is no visitor

accommodation in Tulsk

Mr. Matthews Thanked the members for their feedback and responded to a number of the queries raised:

- There are ongoing discussions with Bord na Mona to identify the lands available and not every rail line will be required. It is envisaged that 70 to 80km of trails will be developed under the scheme.
- Matched funding is constrained by state aid rules – threshold of €200k
- The consultations will take place shortly – Roscommon town on 8<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> May
- It is not yet decided where the activators will be positioned – probably in the Local Authorities
- Part of the fund will provide expertise where required
- Trails must be situated on peatlands under this fund – i.e. regeneration of peatlands
- All of County Roscommon is eligible for projects funded under Strand 2
- Funding is only available until 2026. Maintenance is something to be discussed in future with BnaM and LAs although the trails should be low maintenance.

The Chief Executive thanked Mr. Matthews for the detailed and informative presentation and there has been great collaboration with the Council and his office in recent years with other projects. There are nine counties involved in this area and we need to manage our expectations while also putting our best foot forward.

## **52.23 UNAUDITED ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT - 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

Mr. Sean Mullarkey, A/Head of Finance presented to the Members the Annual Financial Statement 2022:

- Income €50.544m, Expenditure of €67.663m - Rates €12.5m and LPT €10.825m (€6.965m from equalisation fund) and transfers to capital €6.1m
- A surplus of €26,050 delivered on the Revenue Account - general reserve is €270,000
- Combined total of €119m spend on the revenue and capital accounts delivering services
- Our Net Assets are €1,897,190m.
- Trade Debtors and Prepayments €5.18m, Creditors and Accruals €8.426m
- Loans Payable €27.311m – including loan on Áras an Chontae
- Bank investments €10.79m
- Work in Progress is €20.226m – predominantly development sites and houses
- The cash of the Council was managed prudently, with no recourse to an overdraft and 98% of invoices paid within 30 days
- The rates collection rate maintained at 89%
- The rents collection maintained at 91% a slight reduction on 2021
- The collection rate for loans increased from 65% to 71% as legacy debt reduces- all new loans performing well
- NPPR Income was €502k -€504k in 2021

Transfers between the revenue and capital account were detailed in Appendix 9 of the report and amounted to €5.437m.

The level of over expenditure was circulated to the members for approval.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Cummins

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Keogh

It was **AGREED** to approve the over expenditure in the sum of €11,847,161

The Members welcomed the presentation and raised some matters:

- The surplus shows the prudent way the financials of the council have been dealt with.
- Welcome 98% of invoices paid on time – this is important for our suppliers.
- The way we finance matched funding is something we have to be aware of in future years

### **53.23 UPDATE ON MATCHED FUNDING/ CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROJECTS**

Mr. Sean Mullarkey, Acting Head of Finance updated the members on the current and planned capital projects that require matching funding:

- There are 8 no. current projects that will be financed by the approved €5.9m loan. The loan will be drawn down later in the year and the matched funding requirements are as follows:
  - Projects underway – Total Cost €20.2m
    - Refurbished Royal Hotel Boyle - €1.005m
    - Castlerea Incubation Units - €1.220m
    - Roscommon Town Market Square - €1.591m
    - King house Redevelopment - €241k
    - Monksland superspeed hub - €1.065m
  - Development Phase – Total Cost €2.67m
    - Putting the Heart into Monksland €302k
    - Bawn St., Strokestown €140k
    - Roscommon Town – Spokes in the Wheel - €116k
- Roscommon Co. Co. Projects funded from own resources:
  - Civil Defence Building €2.75m
- Funding Projects funded from new loan (matched funding required) €8.633m:
  - Boyle Library €1.316m
  - Putting the Heart into Monksland (build phase) €2.7m
  - Bawn Street Strokestown (build phase) €800k
  - Spokes in the wheel – Roscommon (build phase) €3.8m

The Chief Executive brought to the attention of the members the amount of investment to date in the capital schemes and the matched funding that will be required to fund the schemes. The Council has attracted substantial number of schemes throughout amounting to €80m. The Council will be coming to a difficult phase with regard to funding with a possible rates increase to be considered.

Mr. Mullarkey informed the members that we have been approved for a loan of €5.9m and it will be drawn down in September and noted that there is a balance to be struck between being prudent and moving forward with projects. The rate of matched funding is generally 20% across the board.

The Members responded:

- Many businesses are getting back on their feet after Covid and any rates increase should be a matter for the new Council next year.
- We need to be prudent regarding the projects funded and ensure they are good projects.

- There is a small Regeneration team in the Council who have done great work to date. It is important to sell these projects to communities so they are aware of their benefits to them.
- 20% is a considerable amount of funding for a project to be funded.
- The dividends brought to the county by investing in this new building (Aras an Chontae) cannot be underestimated and the costs very reasonable at the time – it is a great legacy building

Mr. Mullarkey agreed that it was likely any proposed rates increase would be a matter for the next Council and such an increase tied into completion of current projects and added that the Council need to source more 100% funded projects.

#### **54.23 CEMETERY IMPROVEMENT AND MAINTENANCE GRANT SCHEME 2023**

Mr. Greg O'Donnell, A/Director of Services circulated the elected members a schedule of award of grants for the Cemetery Improvement and Maintenance Scheme 2023 for noting:

- Roscommon County Council allocated €65,000 in the 2023 budget for the maintenance of burial grounds in County Roscommon.
- The scheme was advertised the Roscommon Herald on 31<sup>st</sup> January and on the Council's website. Application forms and details were also sent to all 2022 grant recipients.
- A total of 94 applications were received from voluntary groups with requests for funding of €274,932 for ongoing maintenance and improvements of burial grounds in the county.
- The sum of €65,000 was distributed to 94 applicants ranging from €1,900 to €100.

#### **55.23 CHIEF EXECUTIVE BUSINESS**

The Chief Executive had no business for the Members.

#### **56.23 NOTICE OF MOTION - 06.23 SURFACE DRESSING AND POTHOLE REPAIR IN SETBACK AREA - CLLR. FITZMAURICE**

"I am calling on Roscommon County Council to surface dress the setback area between the homeowners wall and the public road on any road which is part of the current year's roads program. I am also calling on Roscommon County Council to fix potholes in these areas which are dedicated to public use (under a condition of planning) between the homeowners wall and the public road."

The Meetings Administrator read the following reply:

The set back of boundaries adjacent to the public road along with the associated surfacing of entrances in line with third party design proposals and/or planning condition are measures undertaken by developers to satisfy the Local Authority that a development can take place without impacting negatively on road safety and local amenity. The provision and maintenance of such infrastructure, in strict compliance with their planning application, is clearly the obligation of the developer and subsequent owner. Liability that arises on foot of the provision and maintenance of these areas lies with the developer and/or owner depending on cause and that is a matter for the courts to decide in instances where there is a dispute. In instances where liability is as a result of actions that were performed by the Local Authority, Roscommon County Council engages the services of Irish Public Bodies to insure such activities and assets. Roscommon County Council is therefore not in a position to utilise public funding to surface or maintain set back areas in line

with the proposed notion of motion.

Cllr. Fitzmaurice stated that he was disappointed with the reply and does not agree with the policy.

The Members supported the motion of Cllr. Fitzmaurice:

- In adjacent Authorities such as Co Sligo surface dressing of the setback areas is being carried out. This policy operating in Roscommon should be reconsidered.
- Owners should not be liable for this area outside their property.
- Roscommon Co. Co. previously upgraded this area provided the ground was ready and it was part of the roads programme.
- Elected members regularly receive representations regarding this matter.
- Who owns the lands between the boundary wall and the road and do we have a duty of care to repair this ground – it should be good practice.
- It is a false economy not to repair this ground in conjunction with any road improvements.
- These areas can be a road hazard for cars or vehicles pulling in on narrow roads
- Have the costs of repairing these areas in question been identified? It appears to be a grey area and should be referred to the SPC for discussion
- There arrears to be an anomaly between what is being done in adjacent Municipal District areas – one is resurfacing to the boundary wall and another is not.
- While the proposal has merit, we are not there yet and the costs involved may not allow us to do this work yet. If we get more roads resurfaced there will be a point at which this could be facilitated.

The Chief Executive stated that this motion cannot be facilitated as the Council has a budget allocated by the TII and the Department will not fund this extra work as the work is measured to the square meter and we can only surface the width of the carriageway.

Acting Director of Services Mr. Greg O'Donnell responded that when a development is carried out, the boundary is set back for sightlines and is primarily to facilitate a setback distance and when roads are resurfaced, care is taken to ensure no drainage or water pooling issues. In response to a suggestion for Cllr. Fitzmaurice if a property owner can fence off the area in question, Mr. O'Donnell confirmed that this cannot be done as per planning conditions.

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. Fitzmaurice

SECONDED by Cllr. Leyden

It was AGREED that the matter be referred to the Roads and Transportation SPC

### **57.23 QUESTION - 01.23 INSURANCE OF AREA DEDICATED TO PUBLIC USE - CLLR. FITZMAURICE**

“Can Roscommon County Council confirm if the area dedicated to public use between the homeowners wall and the public road which was a condition of planning permission is insured by Roscommon County Council and IPB?”

The Meetings Administrator circulated the following reply:

The Council's public liability insurance with IPB automatically covers lands, roads and assets owned and maintained by Roscommon County Council. Liability would be assessed on a case by case basis.

Cllr. Fitzmaurice said that he was disappointed with the reply in light of the reply to his notice of motion.

#### **58.23 COUNCILLORS CONFERENCES - PAYMENT/ATTENDANCE**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Leyden

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Keogh

It was **AGREED** to approve the list of payments to elected members for training and conferences attended as circulated.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Leyden

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Keogh

It was **AGREED** to approve the list of payments for training and conferences for attendance by elected members as circulated

#### **59.23 CORRESPONDENCE**

##### **Acknowledgments to Resolutions from Roscommon County Council:**

- **5<sup>th</sup> April, 2023** – Acknowledgement of correspondence from Ms Ivana Bacik TD, Labour Party Leader regarding the retention of local and rural post offices.
- **6<sup>th</sup> April, 2023** – Acknowledgement of correspondence from Mr Jack Chambers, TD and Minister of State regarding local post office support. Ref DTTAS-MOSC-00559-2023.
- **19<sup>th</sup> April, 2023** - Acknowledgement of correspondence from Mr Jack Chambers, TD and Minister of State regarding local post office support. Ref DTTAS-MOSC-00559-2023.
- **19<sup>th</sup> April, 2023** - Acknowledgement of correspondence from Ms Holly Cairns TD regarding local post office support.

##### **Resolutions from other Local Authorities:**

- **28<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 – Motion, Wexford County Council**  
“That **Wexford County Council** calls on the Minister to strengthen section 29/b/sub sections (1) and (2) of the planning and development, (submissions or observations in relation to planning application) to put an end to bogus submissions or objections.”
- **3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2023 – Resolution, Offaly County Council**  
“That **Offaly County Council** calls on the Government to extend the Eviction ban for all ‘No Fault’ tenants who face eviction until meaningful action is taken, to include measures that will ensure that thousands of children and their parents around the country aren’t added to the growing Homeless list.”

#### **60.23 AOB - NOTICE OF RESIGNATION OF CLLR WARD AS CHAIRPERSON OF SPC**

- Cllr. Tony Ward informed the elected members that he would be resigning as Chairperson of the



Roads, Transportation and Emergency Services SPC on 31<sup>st</sup> May. The Independent grouping will be nominating Cllr. Anthony Waldron as chair.

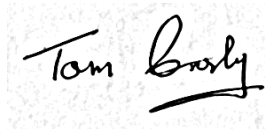
***NEXT MEETING***

**The next meeting will be on Monday, 22nd May, 2023.**

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are  
Confirmed and Signed:

*Petrizio Bohan*  
Meetings Administrator



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Cathaoirleach

*Petrizio Bohan*  
Countersigned