

**MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL  
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON  
ON MONDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 2017 AT 2.15 PM.**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Orla Leyden, Cathaoirleach      **PRESIDED**

**MEMBERS:** Cllr R. Doherty, Cllr T. Ward, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr I. Connaughton, Cllr D. Connolly, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr M. Creaton, Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr P. Kilduff, Cllr M. Mulligan, Cllr J. Murphy, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher and Cllr L. Callaghan.

**OFFICIALS:** Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive  
Derek Caldbeck, A/Director of Services  
Majella Hunt, Director of Services  
Martin Lydon, Director of Services  
Cait Kenny, Assistant Staff Officer  
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator

**Apologies:**

**109.17 ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Connaughton  
**SECONDED** by Councillor Ward

It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of the Monthly Plenary Meeting held 24.07.2017

**110.17 MATTERS ARISING**

**Lough Funshinagh**

Cllr. Ward requested an update in relation to Lough Funshinagh, and inquired if there was any progress in relation to funding from Office of Public Works. The C.E. advised that he had no update but expecting correspondence in the next two weeks.

**Castlerea Fire Station**

Cllr. Dineen requested an update in relation to Castlerea Fire Station.

The Chief Executive advised that the Council is making arrangements for the re-opening of the Fire Station at the earliest opportunity and applications have been received for the post of part time retained fire fighter. Following the recruitment process, training of successful applicants will take place at the earliest possible opportunity. Appointment and training of a Station Officer and Sub-Station Officer are required to be in place before the station can re-open and return to operational duties. Roscommon County Council has endeavoured to complete a number of staff related processes prior to and since the fire station closed. These processes fall within a number of workplace and industrial relations frameworks and we can't predict a date for their conclusion. The Council made the decision to close down the fire station in Castlerea on 20<sup>th</sup> January when the number of staff available to work from the town fell to a compliment of four. This decision was made in consideration of the statutory duty of care to our employees under the Health & Safety and Welfare at Work legislation. In response to the closure of Castlerea Fire Station, Roscommon County Council activated alternative Fire Brigade arrangements. Fire Service resources from Ballyhaunis,

Ballaghaderreen, Elphin and Roscommon Town have dealt with all requests for assistance in Castlerea and surrounding areas. The availability of efficient fire service for Castlerea continues to be in place. The process for members seeking emergency assistance in the Castlerea area remains unchanged. The 112 / 999 emergency contact numbers continue to be in place. The Chief Executive advised that he is fully committed to the re-opening of Castlerea Fire Station and noted that he has been carrying out comprehensive improvement works to the fire engine, equipment and the fire station building during this closure. All of these are significant parts of our commitment and investment to the future provision of a fire brigade response based at Castlerea and assured all that it will be returned to service the first chance he gets.

The members made the following comments:

- Welcome the announcement from the Chief Executive and his commitment to re-opening the fire station in Castlerea.
- Seek confirmation that the positions of Station Officer and Sub-Station officer are vacant.
- Members appealed to Chief Executive to do everything in his power to re-open station as soon as possible and take whatever action is necessary in order to achieve that.
- How many applications were received for the position of Fire Fighter?
- If no candidate qualifies for the position what is the next step given that the winter months are imminent?
- Is the Chief Executive confident that he can appoint a Station Officer and Sub-Station officer from existing staff at Castlerea Fire Station?
- It is important to point out that Councillors have been working hard to resolve this issue since the station closed and because they are not debating this issue on social media does not mean they are not doing their best to get the station opened.
- Fires on Frenchpark Road and Ballymoe Road highlights the dangers of not having a fire station.

The Chief Executive responded as follows:

- The positions of Station Officer and Sub-Station officer are vacant.
- Three applications were received for the post of fire fighter and if unsuccessful in the process, it will be advertised more extensively again.
- The Chief Executive advised that the appointment of a Station Office and Sub-Station Officer are both open to interview and suitability requirements although there is no guarantee of filling the positions from existing staff, he is hopeful of doing so.

#### **111.17 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS TO DISCUSS SLIEVE BAWN WINDFARM**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Leyden

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Keogh

It was **AGREED** to suspend Standing Orders to discuss **Sliabh Bawn Windfarm**

Following a number of representations from the public, Cllr. Murphy highlighted issues concerning noise, flooding, broadband and phones for residents living on Sliabh Bawn. Cllr. Murphy said families cannot sleep in their homes from the noise from nearby wind turbines and is calling on Coillte to investigate and resolve this matter. Cllr. Murphy also noted that comments made recently by the Chief Executive in criticising local protestors at the opening of the community facility were hurtful, despite this group not objecting at planning stage. He also said there was an opportunity for tourism development at Sliabh Bawn but the people of the area must be helped out first.

The members made the following comments:

- A number of members were contacted by the residents in the area regarding the ongoing issues with the Windfarm
- Welcome to the Sliabh Bawn residents in the public gallery.
- Back again with the same complaints concerning noise, interference with phones affecting peoples businesses and rights.
- Current guidelines are out of date and new guidelines around height, noise and shadow flicker are required.
- Houses devalued and if they wish to move they would find it very difficult.
- Protesters were misrepresented, they were there on the day to represent their feelings with the windfarm rather than the development. We live in a democratic society and people are entitled to protest.
- Comments made by the C.E. were unhelpful and inappropriate and he should apologise.
- Coillte recognised there was problems and were working with residents.
- There is an obligation on Members to ensure issues are addressed in the most expedient way. Roscommon county council will benefit in rates of €1.2m annually from the windfarm and must lead the way in ensuring the people affected are helped.
- The 2006 guidelines are based on the 1996 UK guidelines and are completely out of line with today's guidelines. Coillte should take this into consideration and apply the new guidelines to their windfarm.
- Trees were creating a buffer but since cutting of timber has started, noise levels have increased.
- If issues cannot be resolved, compensation should be considered for people who cannot live there any longer.
- Ongoing issue in relation to wind energy in the county and the messages being sent out that we are wide open for wind energy.
- There should be an independent study to address the issues. There is new technology than can minimise noise.
- Motion previously sent to Department in 2014 proposing set back distances of 1.5km but this has been ignored by the various Ministers of the day.
- The new guidelines will not solve the problems of the Sliabh Bawn residents – the current situation is what needs to be addressed today.
- Subsidising onshore wind energy is not sustainable in the future.
- The elected members must work with the residents of Sliabh Bawn to address their concerns.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Byrne

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Murphy

It was **AGREED** to write to Minister for Communications and Natural Resources to introduce proper legislation with regard to windfarms that will allow people to live in their homes without interference.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Connolly

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Byrne

It was **AGREED** that a deputation from the Council and the Sliabh Bawn residents to meet with Coillte and the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment to address the issues that have arisen.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Fallon

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Naughten

It was **AGREED** that an independent study be carried out on noise levels and shadow flicker on Sliabh Bawn.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Leyden

It was **AGREED** that in view of the Bill currently going through the Oireachtas in relation to the proposed new Wind Energy Guidelines, a letter be written to the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment outlining the wishes of the councillors in County Roscommon that the set back distance would be 1,500m for wind turbines.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Fitzmaurice

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Keogh

It was **AGREED** to call on the Government to introduce noise level guidelines immediately which should be adhered to by all windfarms regardless of age.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Leyden

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Byrne

It was **AGREED** to call on the Government asking that the subsidisation of on-shore wind energy be ceased immediately.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Creaton

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Dineen

It was **AGREED** to call on Coillte requesting that all logging of timber ceases until the review is complete.

It was **AGREED** that a copy of all proposals to be sent forward to Coillte and Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

The Chief Executive responded as follows:

- The Chief Executive has a much bigger role to play in developing the county and in letting it be known out there that the county is open for business, and open for green energy. A lot of companies when deciding on where they are going to locate, the first thing they look at is green energy, and is the county open for green energy.
- The primary purpose of the Chief Executive on the day of the opening of the amenity was to send out a very clear message to people who are willing to invest in the county that Roscommon is open for green energy and that no group of individuals will represent either the whole county, the region or indeed the country.
- Coillte are fully engaged with the community at Sliabh Bawn and there is a realisation that that engagement needs to continue and also there is a study of the noise being done and he looks forward to seeing that completed.
- The comments made that day were in the context of the opening of the amenity. Everyone has to be very careful in what they say and what they interpret to be the facts and context.
- The development at Sliabh Bawn at the moment is fully compliant, is authorised and is a legal development
- The Chief Executive assured the meeting that when the noise study is completed, and the findings are published and the recommendations made, he will ensure they are implemented. Also if breaches of planning permission or any finding from an external agency, or any finding from any independent study that may be carried out on foot of the request by yourselves, he will ensure that they are fully implemented to the letter of the law.

- He would be making no further comment on the matter

The Cathaoirleach then stated she wanted to reiterate the views of the elected members present at the meeting. Cllr Keogh stated that it is the remit of the elected members to make policy and make decisions on behalf of the public in cooperation with the executive following consultation.

#### **112.17 MANAGEMENT REPORT**

Members noted the Management Report for July and August 2017.

#### **113.17 DISPOSAL OF LANDS - COMMUNITY & ENTERPRISE**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Dineen

**SECONDED** by Councillor Creaton

It was **AGREED** that the Council consent to the disposal of lands pursuant to the provision of Section 211 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 and Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001. Particulars of the land which the County Council proposes to dispose of:-

**The land:** 0.1984 ha. at Ballyboughan Industrial Estate, Ballyboughan Townland, Roscommon

**The persons from whom the land was acquired:** Eircom Ltd., Harcourt Centre, 52 Harcourt St, Dublin 2.  
Joseph Kelly, Tremane, Co. Roscommon

**The person to whom the land is to be disposed:** Eddie Naughton and Enda Naughton

**Consideration:** €35,000 plus VAT

**Conditions:** None

#### **114.17 LEASE OF LANDS - ASSETS AND ENERGY MANAGEMENT**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Mulligan

**SECONDED** by Councillor Byrne

It was **AGREED** that the Council consent to the lease of property pursuant to the provision of Section 211 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 and Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001. Particulars of the property which the County Council proposes to lease:-

**The Property:** Part of Ballaghaderreen Courthouse

**The person(s) to whom the property is to be leased to:** The Commissioners of Public Works (OPW).

**Consideration:** €3,935/annum

**Term of Lease:** 10 years

#### **115.17 UPDATE ON EMERGENCY RESPONSE ORIENTATION CENTRE, BALLAGHADERREEN**

The meetings administrator advised the members that due to a family bereavement this item has been deferred to the next meeting.

#### **116.17 LOCAL PROPERTY TAX ADJUSTMENT FACTOR 2018 AND BUDGET PROCESS 2018**

Mr. Derek Caldbeck, A/Head of Finance informed the members of the dates proposed at the Corporate Policy Group meeting for 2018 Budget.

The following dates were unanimously agreed by the members:

- Budget Meeting on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November commencing at 10.00 am
- Municipal District Budgetary Plan meetings to be held on week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> October.

Mr. Caldbeck then addressed the members on his report on the Local Property Tax (Local Adjustment Factor) 2018. He outlined the estimated Income and Expenditure for 2018 as compared to 2017 which would see a net revenue Expenditure increase of €200 to €300k. This figure is however without the benefit of confirmed income figures. There is a risk in establishing the rates income due to the appeals procedure on the revaluation exercise that will apply in the coming weeks. The CPG will be updated as more information comes to hand.

He also noted the lack of submissions received from the public, businesses etc. in relation to the L.P.T. variation and because of this it is difficult to ascertain public opinion on the matter. He also mentioned that as a net beneficiary of the Equalisation fund, there is a risk to this income in the future as it is money coming from other Local Authorities and there is a view that all Local Property Tax should be held locally.

In summary, a 10% increase or decrease in the LPT would increase/reduce income by €399,000 and 5% would similarly equate to €199,000, and 15% (the maximum allowed) equates to €600,000. Finally, the Chief Executive's recommendation is for no change in the rate for 2018 taking all of the factors into consideration.

The following points were raised by the members:

- Concern regarding the review of the Local Property Tax in 2019 by Government especially with regard to increasing house prices.
- Positive not to have to increase the rate at this time but important that services are delivered on the ground

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Ward  
**SECONDED** by Councillor Keogh

It was **AGREED** to that Local Property Tax Adjustment Factor remain unchanged for 2018.

#### **117.17 OVERDRAFT APPROVAL 2018**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Cummins  
**SECONDED** by Councillor Connaughton

It was **AGREED** to approve an Overdraft Facility for 2018 in the sum of €6,000,000.

#### **118.17 APPROVAL OF MAKING OF LOAN PURSUANT TO SECTION 6 OF HOUSING (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1992**

Mr. Derek Caldbeck, A/Head of Finance sought the approval of the members to make a loan in pursuant of Section 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous and Provisions) Act 1992 available to:

- Tuath Housing Association for the purchase of one dwelling house for Social Housing Accommodation for disabled persons in Roscommon Town for €208,650.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Connolly  
**SECONDED** by Councillor Fitzmaurice

It was **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council approves the raising of a loan of €208,650 for the

purchase of one dwelling house at Galway Road, Roscommon Town for the purpose of providing three units of Social Housing Accommodation for Disabled Persons.

#### **119.17 APPOINTMENT OF NEW SECTORAL REPRESENTATIVE TO HOUSING AND CORPORATE SPC**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Cummins  
**SECONDED** by Councillor Dineen

It was **AGREED** to appoint Ms. Maria Harris as the Roscommon PPN (Social Inclusion) Representative on the Housing & Corporate SPC to replace Ms. Gail Murray.

#### **120.17 APPOINTMENT OF NEW MEMBER TO STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Kilduff  
**SECONDED** by Councillor Keogh

It was **AGREED** to appoint Cllr. John Cummins to the Standing Orders Committee following the resignation of Cllr. Rachel Doherty.

#### **121.17 APPOINTMENT OF NEW SECTORAL REPRESENTATIVE TO ENVIRONMENT AND EMERGENCY SPC**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Murphy  
**SECONDED** by Councillor Naughten

It was **AGREED** to appoint Mr. Michael Ewing to the Environment & Emergency SPC (Environment Conservation) to replace Ms. Teresa Keegan.

#### **122.17 EXTENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Keogh  
**SECONDED** by Councillor Kilduff

It was **AGREED** to extend Standing Orders to the close of business.

#### **123.17 COMPLETION OF REVALUATION OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL RATING AUTHORITY AREA**

In light of the completion of the Revaluation of the Roscommon County Council Rating Authority the members discussed the matter as follows:

- Many businesses in the county have received exuberant increases in their rates bill.
- Inconsistencies in how the rates figures were calculated. Many businesses that followed the process and sent in the requested details appeared to have been penalised with higher rates bills while others who did not were rewarded with a decrease.
- The overall rates figure is going to be the same for the county– is this the case?
- North of county has seen a reduction in rates while South has seen an increase
- Public Houses with large lounges at the back are being overcharged
- A Soccer club will have a rates bill next year of approx. €2,000
- Valuation office should deal directly with the customers issues and minimise appeals to the Tribunal. They are not accepting their mistakes and are directing people to the Valuation Tribunal.
- From the outset there has been a lot of confusion resulting in high percentage of appeals

- Concerns outlined here today should be relayed to Valuation Committee
- Valuations are not real and working off Dublin prices – the process is wrong
- Need to address the Comparable Rents Prices, as they are overvalued
- Filling stations and convenience stores have received increases - need to protect small businesses. While there are winners and losers, do not want to see small traders losing out.

The Acting Head of Finance, Derek Caldbeck advised that every ratepayer with an issue should attend the walk in clinics tomorrow and Wednesday in Áras an Chontae. The feedback from all ratepayers after the last walk in clinic was positive. The preliminary results show 2,088 valuations issues, 488 representations received and 447 valuations changed as a result of the reps. Also 63% of the ratepayers had a decrease in rates and 33% increased as a result of indicative values from earlier this year. Roscommon County Council always work with rate payers and cannot increase rates but this does not include any new ratepayers.

#### **124.17 ROSCOMMON MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES REPORT**

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Orla Leyden informed the meeting that she requested the item be included on the agenda following representations from a number of the members including herself. She opened the discussion regarding the Roscommon Mental Health Services Report recently published by the H.S.E as follows:

- Disproportionate focus on budget savings as opposed to an adequately staffed and safe service
- Terrible reflection on the state of our mental health services in County Roscommon
- Cost cutting measures by senior staff to further their careers and the culture of control, negativity and blame
- Well meaning staff frustrated at lack of resources to allow them to do their jobs properly
- Public demand answers to unanswered questions such as
  - When will the €17.67m be given back to the mental health services in the county? This was money allocated, unspent and returned to central HSE funds.
  - Is there an Action Plan for the Report, timelines for progress and who will monitor the implementation plan?
  - Who is on recommendation implementation body and the importance of an independent chair
- Importance of the restoration of confidence in the mental health service in the county and a first step is the attendance of HSE representatives at public meeting to brief the community on the report

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cathaoirleach Cllr. Orla Leyden,  
**SECONDED** by Cllr. Rachel Doherty

It was **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council requests Mr. Tony Canavan, Chief Operations Officer, and Ms. Anne O'Connor, Director of Mental Health to attend a public meeting in County Roscommon to discuss findings of the recently published "Roscommon Mental Health Services – Report of a Service Review commissioned by the Health Service Executive"

A letter is to be sent to Mr. Canavan and Ms O'Connor requesting suitable dates for a meeting.

The following points were raised by the members:



- Roscommon County Council are two years waiting for HSE to attend a meeting
- The report is no surprise to the staff who would confirm services have been ran into the ground.
- The Councils representatives on the HSE committee will have a number of questions for the scheduled monthly meeting tomorrow
- No mention of the patients in the report – these are very vulnerable people.
- It is not frontline staff but management that should be called to account for the report
- Shocked at findings, that some staff did not engage with the report and the return of money while services were not of an adequate standard while local voluntary groups raising money for basics such as toiletries.
- HSE questioned in 2013 about the return of the funding and it was denied on many occasions that the money was returned.
- Total lack of accountability from HSE needs to be questioned.

#### **125.17 CORRESPONDENCE**

- Letter from Mr. Shane Ross, T.D., Minister for Transport concerning reclassification of the N61 to National Primary Road status.
- Letter from Minister John Paul Phelan, T.D., Minister for Local Government and Electoral Reform regarding resolution from members on Athlone Boundary Review.
- Letter from Dept of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government regarding IWIL Scheme and the RLS Scheme.
- Letter of acknowledgement from Mr. Damien English, TD, Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal regarding “a deep retrofit pilot programme to replace storage heating and grant aid from the SEAI as a top up”.
- Letter of acknowledgement from TII regarding meeting requests from Municipal Districts.
- Letter from TII regarding TII’s policy in relation to meeting requests from Municipal Districts.
- Letter from Mr. Paschal Donohoe TD, Minister for Finance regarding the restoration of the Telephone Allowance to senior citizens.
- Letter from Ms. Regina Doherty T.D., Minister for Social Protection regarding Telephone Allowance to senior citizens.
- Letter of acknowledgement from Mr. Shane Ross TD, Minister for Transport regarding meeting request from Municipal Districts.
- Letter from Limerick City & County Council RE: resolution on TV rights for GAA fixtures.
- Letter from Monaghan County Council RE: resolution regarding school transport system.
- Letter from Dept of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government regarding Wind Energy Guidelines.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Naughten  
**SECONDED** by Cllr. Kilduff

It was **AGREED** to write to Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) requesting a meeting with Roscommon County Council to discuss issues in regard to roads under their jurisdiction in County Roscommon.

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

It was **AGREED** to write to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government requesting an update on the Athlone Boundary Report

#### **126.17 NOTICE OF MOTION**

##### **14.17. Change System of Home Help Hours**

###### **Notice of Motion from Councillor Ward - 14/17**

"I am calling on the Minister for Health Mr. Simon Harris TD, the Government and the HSE to change the present system of putting people on waiting list for a number of months for home help hours after they have been assessed and approved by the HSE. I am also calling for increase home help hours from two and quarter hours per week to seven hours per week."

###### **REPLY:**

**This motion requires a resolution of the Council.**

Cllr. Ward outlined the necessity of his motion to reflect the fact that even though a person may have a medical condition, have an assessment carried out and have the home help hours granted, they are put on a waiting list. These people need attention and support immediately and should not have to be on a waiting list that could vary from three to eight months. Home help means keeping people in their own homes and is also a much cheaper alternative to nursing homes. As the home help hours were reduced, it is also desirable that they be increased to previous levels as it is impossible to provide for the needs of the person at the current hours.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Shanagher

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister for Health Mr. Simon Harris, and to the Head of the HSE, Mr. Tony O'Brien to end the system of a having waiting list for home help hours once approved for, and to increase the hours form two and a quarter to seven per week.

##### **15.17. Home Care Support Scheme**

###### **Notice of Motion from Councillor Leyden - 15/17**

"That Roscommon County Council support increased home help hours and home care packages through the Home Care Support Scheme to be made available in County Roscommon."

###### **REPLY:**

**This motion requires a resolution of the Council.**

Cllr. Leyden outlined the fact that the number of home help hours have decreased by 1.58million as the number of older people in the community has increased by 18% since 2010. As Roscommon has an aging population, this is an acute issue for the county that needs to be challenged. We need a person centred approach to community care and to move away from nursing homes by providing adequate care with home help and to increase the number of packages available in county Roscommon. Cllr. Leyden asked the members on the HSE committee to ask why Roscommon are not getting sufficient number of home care packages.

Cllr. Kilduff confirmed that they already have such a motion in for tomorrow's meeting, but only

the member that submitted the motion can speak on it so there is no debate. Cllr Keogh asked that Standing Orders of the HSE meeting be questioned to allow each member of the committee to speak and requested that a report from the HSE meetings be circulated to the members so they are fully briefed.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Leyden

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Kilduff

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister for Health Mr. Simon Harris, and call on the Government and the HSE to release the number of hours needed in County Roscommon and increase the number of home care packages available.

#### **16.17. Verge Trimming**

##### **Notice of Motion from Councillor Connaughton - 16/17**

“That Roscommon County Council provide sufficient funding from 2018 to ensure all roadsides in the county are trimmed annually (including hedging) in the interest of safety to the public. The option of full privatisation to a large number of contractors should be considered as the current number of outdoor staff is not sufficient to carry out the proposed increased workload.”

##### **REPLY:**

**Landowners are responsible for the cutting, trimming and maintenance of roadside trees and hedges which are a hazard or potential hazard to road users or interfere with the maintenance of the road. A public road means from fence to fence and includes grass margins. It is the policy of the Council to carry out hedge trimming where it is required to facilitate road works or safety works only.**

**The Council also carries out verge trimming. This operation is targeted at the most heavily trafficked roads and at junctions where sight distance is impeded by vegetation. Each Municipal District Engineer examines the budgets and local situation and takes whatever action considered necessary within the resources available. The trimming of verges is done during the spring and summer months. It will not be possible, having regard to the resources available, to carry out this work on all local roads. Priority will be given to locations where sight distances are restricted by vegetation.**

**Hedge and verge cutting operations in the county are partially privatised. The service is carried out through the hire of machinery and driver or the hire of machinery with a Council driver. The funding of hedge and verge trimming is financed from road maintenance allocations which are not adequate to meet all maintenance requirements. These limited allocations also fund pothole repairs, drainage etc.**

Cllr. Connaughton stated that this is now the single biggest issue from his constituents. He has been told on many occasions that this is a funding issue and perhaps 25% of income from the Sliabh Bawn Windfarm rates can be put aside to deal with the problem of overgrown hedges. He estimated that €300k could fund all of the work that has to be done (4,000km) and proposed this be allocated. He stated he would not support any Budget that will not take into account work to be done on roads and hedges. He quoted a letter from the Minister of Transport in 2013, Mr. Varadker where he stated that Local Authorities are responsible for getting hedges and verges cut.

Other members supported the motion with the following comments:

- Dangers to cyclists and cars at various locations throughout the county especially on narrow roads

- No issue with what is being done but current system is not working so it needs to be reassessed
- Costs of hedgecutting could be paid per km cut as opposed to per hour would be better value for money
- In the interests of road safety need private contractors in addition to the work done by the Council
- Need clarification on who is responsible for what as grass is cut but not tops of hedges.
- Concern that those in rural areas are not getting value for property tax
- Welcome LIS scheme reintroduction but very small allocation for this year
- Need joined up thinking and work with the community and the Department of Agriculture and all of the local stakeholders.
- There needs to be an assessment of value for money in relation to hedgecutting and a new system to be put in place.

In reply the Chief Executive stated that the landowners are responsible for hedges and trees and the law is clear on this as the Local Authorities are responsible for small fraction of trees as most are inside the boundary. With regard to the Notice of Motion, the members will have the opportunity to address the funding during the Budget discussions. He raised the issue of Health and Safety compliance for contractors and asked if hedge cutting should be fully privatised and pointed out the difficulties this would bring.

Cllr Connaughton stated that he is putting forward the proposal of spending €300k as he wants to ensure the works are done, whether by the Council or if necessary by private contractors. Cllr Keogh outlined the directives from the Department in 2013 regarding where dangers persist, the Local Authority can direct works to be done and asked have any notices been issued to landowners directing them to cut hedges?

The Chief Executive agreed that the issue of verge trimming/hedgecutting warrants a longer answer and he would arrange that the Head of Roads make a presentation on the matter at the next Plenary Meeting in view of the forthcoming Budget. He reiterated the increasing costs Health and Safety requirements add to the works.

#### **17.17. An Garda Síochána Recruitment Process**

##### **Notice of Motion from Councillor Kilduff - 17/17**

In light of technological developments and indeed the widespread use of social media both of which are extensively used and sometimes abused Roscommon County Council calls on the Minister for Justice to develop robust screening and selection processes for recruitment and graduation to An Garda Síochána in order to ensure that only individuals with the right character, integrity and moral compass are allowed to enter the force."

##### **REPLY**

**This motion requires a resolution of the Council.**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Kilduff

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Ward

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister for Justice requesting to develop robust screening and selection processes for recruitment and graduation to An Garda Síochána in order to ensure that only individuals with the right character, integrity and moral compass are allowed to enter the force.

It was also **AGREED** that a copy of the letter be forwarded to Ms. Josephine Feehily, Head of the Joint Policing Authority.

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

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Ward

**SECONDED** by Councillor Keogh

It was **AGREED** to adopt the list of payments for attendance at conferences as circulated to the members.

#### **128.17 VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS AND SYMPATHY**

Votes of Sympathy were extended to:

- Hanily family on the death of Riat Hanily, Kanepark, Ballanagare
- O'Corcoran Family on the death of Mary O'Corcoran, Frenchpark
- Sweeney family on the death of Micky Sweeny, Castlerea
- Burns family on the death of Alan Burns, Tulsk, Co. Roscommon
- Fox family on the death of Freda Fox, Castlerea.

#### **129.17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- ***CIVIC RECEPTION***

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Fallon

**SECONDED** by Councillor Leyden

It was **AGREED** to award a Civic Reception to the Roscommon U17 Gaelic Football Team for their achievements in 2017.

- ***TIDY TOWNS 2017***

Cllr. Shanagher congratulated all the Tidy Towns Groups who were successful at the Awards Ceremony at the Helix in Dublin earlier today. She also thanked everyone who contributed to the works.

**List of award winners included:**

Roscommon Town, Castlecoote and Keadue	- Gold Medal
Ballintubber	- Silver Medal
Cloontuskert and Tarmonbarry	- Bronze Medal
Strokestown	- Endeavour Award
Ballyleague	- 2 <sup>nd</sup> in Renewable Energy Section

- ***LAMA MEETING***

Cllr. Ward reminded members that the LAMA conference takes place next weekend in Clonmel.

- ***TURLOUGHES***

Cllr. Connaughton queried if Roscommon County Council have to wait for the Hydrogeological study in order to apply for funding from the OPW, as they have stated that it is open for applications for funding. He

also asked why Roscommon County Council received the lowest amount of funding in the county for the LIS schemes. In the event of more funding next year, can we look for new applications?

The Chief Executive stated that he would give a more comprehensive answer at the next meeting.

- **LETTER TO MARY ROBINSON**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Keogh

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Creaton

It was **AGREED** to send a letter to former President Mary Robinson, and UN Ambassador for Human Rights, complimenting her on the stance she has taken at the United Nations speaking out against President Trump in relation to his interactions with the President of North Korea.

It was further **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council request that the Taoiseach should also write to the President Trump to encourage him to refrain from using inflammatory language in relation to recent world situations.

- **TRAIN SERVICE LONGFORD TO SLIGO**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Doherty

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Cummins

It was **AGREED** to send a letter to Mr. Seamus Kilgallon from Iarnrod Eireann in Sligo to investigate further the possibility of a morning commuter train from Longford to Sligo.

- **MEETINGS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator advised the members of the new Meetings Management System, whereby the Agenda and associated documentation would be sent by email in the future. It was envisaged that there would be training for the members in the coming month with a view to going live for the October Meeting.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

**The next meeting will be on Monday, 23rd October, 2017.**

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are  
Confirmed and Signed:



Meetings Administrator

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Cathaoirleach

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Countersigned

