

**MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON
ON MONDAY, 25TH MARCH, 2019 AT 2.15 PM.**

PRESENT: Councillor Ivan Connaughton **PRESIDED**

MEMBERS: Cllr O. Leyden, Cllr R. Doherty, Cllr T. Ward, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr V. Byrne, 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
Majella Hunt, Director of Services
Martin Lydon, Director of Services
Shane Tiernan, Director of Services
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator
Michelle Carney, Staff Officer

Apologies:

27.19 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Dineen

SECONDED by Councillor Ward

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Minutes of the Plenary Meeting held on 25.02.2019

On the **PROPOSAL** of Councillor Mulligan

SECONDED by Councillor Kilduff

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Minutes of the Special Plenary Meeting held on 25.02.2019

28.19 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

29.19 MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Management Report for February 2019 was noted.

30.19 SECTION 11 OF THE ROADS ACT 1993 AND ROADS REGULATIONS 1994, PART 2

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Naughten

SECONDED by Cllr. Keogh

It was **AGREED** to have the road located at Crancam, Drum, Athlone, Co. Roscommon declared to be a Public Road in accordance with Section 11 of the Roads Act 1993 and Part 2 of the Roads Regulations 1994.

31.19 TIDY TOWNS AND AMENITY GRANTS 2019

The Director of Services, Ms. Majella Hunt presented the list of Tidy Towns and Amenity Grants recipients for 2019 to the members for approval. There were a total of €60,000 allocated to 87 applications including 16 new applicants with priority given to the Tidy Towns, Development Associations and local Sub Aqua clubs.

The members welcomed the allocations and fair administration of the scheme. They agreed that the value to the county of the work carried out by the volunteers of the groups is incalculable. There was concern expressed that the Athlone MD appeared to have received only 25% of the total allocation.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Byrne

SECONDED by Cllr. Murphy

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Tidy Towns and Amenity Grant Scheme 2019.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Byrne

SECONDED by Cllr. Shanagher

It was **AGREED** that an extra €10,000 be added to the allocation in the 2020 Budget for the Tidy Towns and Amenity Grant Scheme.

32.19 CHIEF EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

The Chief Executive informed the members that he had been approached by members of the Roscommon Municipal District regarding the ongoing issue of the continued closure of the Fire Station in Castlerea. He said that he is fully committed to reopening the Fire Station and it will open by the end of this year.

The statement was welcomed by Cllrs. Fitzmaurice, Dineen, Creaton, Connolly, Leyden and Shanagher.

33.19 CORRESPONDENCE

- Letter dated 13th March from Cork County Council – Resolution to ask the Government to bring the Petroleum and Other Minerals Development (Amendment) (Climate Emergency Measures) Bill before the Dáil.
- Letter dated 5th March from Limerick City and County Council – Resolution to call on the Dept. of Housing to consider a grant aid scheme for granny flat extensions for persons on the housing list.
- Letter dated 27th February from SEAI – Reply to letter from Roscommon County Council regarding ‘Warmer Homes Scheme’
- Letter dated 14th February from Mr. Jim Daly T.D. Minister of State with copy letter from HSE – Community Health Care West regarding New Community Nursing Unit on the Site of the Sacred Heart Hospital., Roscommon.
- Reply from the Department of Rural and Community Development dated 6th March regarding the Local Improvement Scheme.

While the Members welcomed the LIS scheme and the work that had already been done, they expressed disappointment with the reply as it discriminates against some people who live on roads that are not entitled to grant funding. Many of these roads have only one house or farm and the scheme must address this as upgrade work is only necessary every 10 – 15 years. Failure to include all roads in need of works will lead to a situation whereby Roscommon County Council will be forced to take these roads in charge.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward

SECONDED by Cllr. Naughten

It was **AGREED** to write again to Minister Ring and the Taoiseach to look at the eligibility criteria again for the Local Improvement scheme to ensure that it is fair and balanced.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward

SECONDED by Cllr. Naughten

It was **AGREED** that the reopening of the Local Improvement Scheme to new applications be considered.

The Director of Services, Mr. Shane Tiernan stated that the Council are obliged to comply with the memo from the Department. There has been significant works carried out as a result of the reopening of the scheme with 56 projects completed from the €300,000 funding received to date. He has written to the Department regarding turf cutting season. He suggested that the Roads and Infrastructure Department will assess the work that can be done for the grant funding and revert to the relevant SPC regarding the reopening of the scheme.

34.19 PRESENTATION ON 'THE QUAD YOUTH PROJECT'

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Mr. Sean Fleming, Project Worker with The Quad Youth Project Foróige to give a presentation on Roscommon Youth STEAM Project.

Mr. Fleming outlined the progress of the project and their ambitions for the future. He detailed the many and varied projects that are provided in the Quad centre for youths up to age 18 with particular emphasis on STEM:

- Leadership for life, LGBTQI+ Group, Letter to President group, Career Fair, Tus Nua Community Art Group
- CAMHS Transition Programme, Photography and Film Making, Comic Book Making, Science Experiments, Youth reach, Makerfest, Gaming Workshop, Sound surfers, Makey Makey and Quad Coding events in the Quad
- Trips were undertaken to Techfest (Google) XHale filmmaking in Helix, Dublin
- In Strokestown events were organised in the Library for science week and Engineers week
- There have been intercultural events, Electronics/Engineering programme
- In Ballaghaderreen a Lego Club and Comic Book club, Coding club and darts club events were organised.
- In Castlerea Comic Book, Darts and Coding sessions were organised.
- In Boyle Darts, Bike and water Safety and Photography sessions took place
- There have been a number of volunteers training sessions throughout the county in twenty four different types of events

The members welcomed the presentation and queried

- Are there any plans to open a similar project in South Roscommon Area?
- Coding should be considered on primary and Secondary school curriculum.
- The development and use of The Quad is welcomed and all projects that involve youth are to be welcomed

In response Mr. Fleming welcomed the feedback and acknowledged the need for similar projects in other areas of the county but at present he is at the limit of what he can achieve on his own and said that a second similar position would be needed to expand the services.

The Chief Executive welcomed Sean and compliments the work being done with the youth of the county and he looks forward to a future update.

35.19 NOTICE OF MOTION - 04.19 CLLR. SHANAGHER: FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR EMPLOYMENT OF APPRENTICES

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Shanagher

SECONDED by Cllr. Ward

It was **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council write to the Minister for Trade and Employment to introduce financial incentives for companies who are prepared to employ apprentices.

Cllr. Shanagher advised that the Board of the GRETB are facilitating a new stream of apprenticeships and also encouraging female apprentices. On Wednesday next in Áras an Chontae there will be an evening showcasing apprenticeships available while recognising the importance of completing the Leaving Certificate first.

36.19 NOTICE OF MOTION- 05.19 CLLR. LEYDEN: SOCIAL HOUSING RENT CAPS

"That Roscommon County Council re-instate Social Housing Rent Caps for all tenants who are in receipt of a state benefit, allowance, subsidy or supplement in line with other Local Authorities."

The following reply was read by the Meetings Administrator:

The maximum rent cap was removed after discussions with the Housing Strategic Policy Committee and was implemented to:

- encourage optimum use of local authority social housing stock;
- facilitate the allocation of social housing to applicants who qualify for social housing and can't afford to rent property on the open market; and
- address inequities with regard to household income and applicable rent.

The Differential Rent Scheme means the maximum rent that is paid equates to 18% of all income. In general, households with incomes of € 32,000 or less are not affected by the removal of the rent cap. The Differential Scheme also includes a Hardship clause, should applicants wish to apply.

Cllr. Leyden spoke on her motion:

- There is a new National Framework for Differential Rent scheme being developed by the Department whereas at present each Local Authority approves its own scheme which is unfair. There will be a transitional phase for this nationally.

- The removal of the cap in Roscommon has had an unexpected negative affect financially for some families and in some cases rents have increased up to 100%.

Cllr. Leyden was proposing to amend the motion to state that the Council introduce a rent cap whereby there is a maximum increase of €25pw or 25% increase of the 2018 rent, whichever is the lesser – this is in line with the Westmeath model. This should be a one year transition and tenants should not have to be making a plan to pay back arrears.

Members spoke in favour of the motion as follows:

- There appears to be a larger contingent of people affected than was originally thought.
- The hardship clause is not being utilised by tenants.
- There was considerable discussion on the matter at the SPC last year but the figures on how many people would be affected and to what extent was not available at that time.
- The rent increase should be referred back to the Housing SPC for consideration with all of the figures made available.
- Need to review rent on annual basis going forward.
- Need to take into account those on disability or social welfare

Mr. Martin Lydon, Director of Services confirmed that the last rent review took place in 2015 and would welcome and fully engage with a new National scheme. The D.R. scheme is based on income and the onus is on tenants to inform the council of any changes to income but rarely does this happen. This is a progressive scheme based on income and the Council deals with its tenants in a fair and considerate manner.

He outlined the figures of 68% of rents assessed led to less than €40pm increase; 75% - €80 or less pm; 82% - €100 or less pm and 217 tenants moved off maximum rent. The rents are also based on 18% of income figure.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Cummins

SECONDED by Cllr. Murphy

It was **AGREED** to refer the matter of the Differential Rent Scheme and review to the Housing SPC to be convened before end of May 2019

37.19 EXTENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Cummins

SECONDED by Cllr. Kilduff

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

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38.19 NOTICE OF MOTION - 06.19 CLLR. KEOGH: INSURANCE REFORM PROGRAMME

That Roscommon County Council, in view of the damage that spiralling insurance costs are causing to community groups, voluntary organisations, charities and small businesses, call on the Government to accelerate its insurance reform programme and immediately establish an Insurance Fraud Unit within AGS and insist on greater transparency in relation to claims and premiums from Irish insurers and that the

government demand the insurance sector to provide a detailed breakdown of where insurance profits are derived from in light of very significant profits made by insurers operating in this jurisdiction at a time when insurance premiums are increasing each year.”

The Meetings Administrator read the following reply:

This motion requires a resolution of the Council

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Keogh

SECONDED by Cllr. Naughten

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister for Justice, Mr. Charlie Flanagan T.D. to ask the Government to accelerate its insurance reform programme and immediately establish an Insurance Fraud Unit within AGS and insist on greater transparency in relation to claims and premiums from Irish insurers and demand the insurance sector to provide a detailed breakdown of where insurance profits are derived from in light of very significant profits made by insurers operating in this jurisdiction at a time when insurance premiums are increasing each year. This motion is to be circulated to all Local Authorities.

39.19 NOTICE OF MOTION - 07.19 CLLR. CONNAUGHTON - NAMING OF ROUNDABOUTS

“That Roscommon County Council name all roundabouts in the county after historic people and attractions that are associated with County Roscommon. This would be of major benefit to the promotion of cultural and historical tourism, particularly as we endeavour to increase the footfall of tourists visiting County Roscommon under 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands'. There are currently 19 roundabouts in the county (7 in Roscommon Town, 4 in Creagh, 4 in Monksland/ Bogganfin, 2 in Boyle and 1 each in Cortober and Strokestown.”

The Meetings Administrator read the following reply:

The Roads and Transportation Department is currently assessing road signage throughout County Roscommon in order to prepare a signage improvement programme, funded under the current budget. The naming of all roundabouts can also be considered under this programme and an assessment of the costs involved will be carried out.

It should be noted that approval of the TII must be sought in relation to naming roundabouts. The Department Traffic Signs Manual states that the naming of roundabouts is used principally to assist in guiding and directing traffic and names used should bear some geographic significance to the location of the roundabout.

Cllr. Connaughton said that the time is now opportune to name the roundabouts in the county after historic places or famous Roscommon people. This could tie into the Hidden Heartlands tourism initiative but some thought must be given to how the names are chosen.

The members welcomed and supported the motion.

The Director of Service Mr. Shane Tiernan advised the members that initial observations indicate that it could cost €1,500 to €2,000 per roundabout to install signage. A reasonable level of public consultation would be required for the naming process. He confirmed that he will commence the process under the signage improvement programme and revert to the SPC to progress the project.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Connaughton

SECONDED by Cllr. Creaton

It was **AGREED** That Roscommon County Council name all roundabouts in the county after historic people and attractions that are associated with County Roscommon.

40.19 NOTICE OF MOTION- 08.19 CLLR. WARD: GAELIC GAMES FREE TO AIR

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward

SECONDED by Cllr. Creaton

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister for Communications Mr. Richard Bruton T.D to bring the process under the Broadcasting Act 2009 to designate all Gaelic Games as being Free to Air given their special resonance and distinct cultural significance and importance for the people of Ireland. Currently, only the Hurling and Football All-Ireland Final are designated as Free to Air. The letter should also be circulated to the President of the GAA, Mr. John Horan and the Director General, Mr. Tom Ryan and the Roscommon County Board.

41.19 NOTICE OF MOTION - 09.19 CLLR. NAUGHTEN: SECURITY OF ABANDONED SITES

That Roscommon County Council take immediate measures to secure and clear and the Parkway Site in the interest of public safety, which is located on the New Tuam Road, Monksland, Athlone and other sites in a similar condition throughout the county.

The Meetings Administrator read the following reply:

Consideration will be given to making this site safe under the Derelict Sites Legislation.

Cllr. Naughten welcomed the reply as this situation has been ongoing for some time and there is concern that the hoarding that is in place could cause damage on the busy regional road. It is concerning that this is a private site and any costs to the Council should be sought from the developer.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Naughten

SECONDED by Cllr. Ward

It was **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council take immediate measures to secure and clear and the Parkway Site in the interest of public safety, which is located on the New Tuam Road, Monksland, Athlone and other sites in a similar condition throughout the county.

42.19 COUNCILLORS CONFERENCES - PAYMENT/ATTENDANCE

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Keogh

SECONDED by Cllr. Shanagher

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

43.19 VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS AND SYMPATHY

- Congratulations was extended to Cllr. Cummins on becoming a grandfather
- A Vote of Sympathy to Michelle Carney on the passing of her grandmother Mrs. Margaret Burns

44.19 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- The Cathaoirleach notified the members that there may be a Special Meeting in May to consider Casual Trading Bye-Laws.
- The Cathaoirleach's Award for 2018 is a Photography competition with a photograph to be taken on Saturday 30th March to represent "My Roscommon".
- Cllr. Shanagher welcomed the allocation of funding for the construction of 19 houses in Ballyleague but was critical of the fact that the councillors were informed via the media.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Monday, 29th April, 2019.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are
Confirmed and Signed:

Petrizio Bohan
Meetings Administrator

Áine Connaught
Cathaoirleach

Petrizio Bohan
Countersigned