

**MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON
ON MONDAY, 26th July, 2021 AT 2.15 pm.**

- PRESENT:** Councillor Joe Murphy, Cathaoirleach 2021/2022 **PRESIDED**
- MEMBERS:** Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr E. Kelly, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice, Cllr D. Kilduff, Cllr T. Crosby, Cllr M. McDermott, Cllr A. Waldron, Cllr O. Leyden, Cllr T. Ward, Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr M. Mulligan, 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 Tieman, Director of Services
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator
Michelle Carney, Staff Officer
- Apologies:** Cllr N. Dineen and Cllr J. Keogh

79.21 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. McDermott

SECONDED by Cllr. Fallon

It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of the Annual Meeting of 21st June 2021

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Shanagher

SECONDED by Cllr. Ward

It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of the Plenary Meeting of 28th June 2021

80.21 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

81.21 MANAGEMENT REPORT

- Management Report for Quarter 2 2021 noted.

82.21 LOCAL PROPERTY TAX VARIATION FOR 2022

Mr. Martin Lydon, Director of Services presented the Chief Executives Report on the Local Property Tax Variation for 2022 to the members for consideration:

The Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2021 dated June 2021 revises the method homeowners calculate their LPT liabilities. Valuation bands are being widened and a number of currently exempted/excluded properties are being brought into the LPT system.

This approach differs from previous years given that a revaluation of LPT is expected to take place later this year, which will lead to changes in both the overall LPT yield and to the yield in each local authority area. When detailed information on the 2022 yield is available, the matter will be reviewed. The date for the revised revaluation is the 1st November 2021. Homeowners will have to pay their 2022 liability based on the revised revaluation of their property.

2021 figures have indicated an estimated breakeven position being achieved in the current financial year. This breakeven position is being achieved despite additional costs in relation to Covid 19 and reduced income from rates. The losses in relation to income and additional costs have been offset by a detailed analysis of budget headings and redistribution of funds. The LPT at 2020 levels (€10.2m + 15% LAF of 609K) has contributed to achieving a forecasted breakeven position for 2021.

The budgetary position for 2022 currently shows a breakeven position. This breakeven position assumes that the LPT will remain at 2021 levels.

The impact of the new revaluations from 1 November 2021 will affect the amount homeowners will pay in 2022. The effect of the widening bands and the inclusion of currently exempted properties is impossible to predict at this stage but could result in a lower LPT collection in Roscommon. The Department have indicated that local authorities requiring equalization will receive funding up to the baseline in 2022 – in Roscommon’s case €10.2m. Local authorities that increase the basic rate of LPT shall retain 100% of the resultant income – in Roscommon’s case +15% is €609k. The full impact of the widening bands/exempted properties will only be fully known for the 2023 budget.

The report sets out the financial position of the Council as required by regulations.

The Department has indicated that Roscommon’s base line funding from the Local Property Tax Fund for 2022 is to be €10.2m, the same amount for each year from 2016 to 2021. This allocation includes €6.9m from the central Equalisation Fund, of which Roscommon is a net beneficiary.

If a decision is taken to vary the LPT basic rate upwards (by up to 15%) for the year 2022, 100% of the resultant additional income will be retained while if a resolution is passed to vary the LPT basic rate downwards (by up to 15%), the resultant loss in LPT income will not be covered by any additional funding from the Equalisation Fund.

The value of each % increase or decrease in variation of LPT is equal to + or - €40.6k. An increase/decrease in LPT of 15% would correspond to increased/reduced income of €609k with an increase/decrease of 10% corresponding to increased/reduced income of €406k while an increase/decrease in LPT of 5% would correspond to increased/reduced income of €203k.

Following public consultation two submissions were received as follows:

- 1) A general reduction should be contemplated due to the fact that households are currently struggling to pay their LPT.
- 2) The maximum reduction in LPT should be considered as there are a number of additional taxes already facing households.

The Chief Executive notes that Roscommon County Council is a net beneficiary of €6.9M from the Equalisation Fund as the level of funding yielded from LPT locally is not adequate to cover the current cost of services provided. Despite the on-going pressures on budgets, the Council continues to play an important role in the local economy and community and is committed to achieving value for money and efficiencies in the delivery of services.

He has consulted with the Corporate Policy Group, outlining the need to maintain LPT at 2021 levels to meet customer expectations and provide improved infrastructure, using a balanced distribution of investment and projects throughout our towns and villages.

The following details the proposed expenditure from the 15% variation income:

Estimated Income/ Expenditure	
Total LPT Income from +15%	

	609,500
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Expenditure	
Match Funding for Projects	255,000
Street Cleaning	150,500
Local Roads	120,000
Upkeep of local parks	50,000
Tidy Town Works	34,000
Total Expenditure	609,500

The impact on LPT from the revised valuation date of 1 November 2021 cannot be quantified at this stage but it may well result in a lower LPT amount being collected locally in 2022. This will not affect the 2022 budget but will impact on the 2023 budget.

To deliver the plans and objectives for 2022, the Chief Executive has recommended that the LPT be maintained at this year's levels.

The Cathaoirleach thanked Mr. Lydon for the presentation and informed the meeting that the CPG is also recommending that the 15% increase be maintained for 2022. All of the ongoing works in the county, it is vital to have matched funding to continue and complete projects.

Cllr. Leyden proposed that the rate would be maintained at the 2021 level and this was seconded by Cllr. Crosby.

Cllr. Ward spoke on behalf of the independent group:

- Would like that the MD funding be increased to €100k per area
- Increase in Tidy towns funding and towns and villages in general
- Acknowledge the need for match funding and the group will support the proposal to maintain the rate as 2021.

Other members contributed as follows:

- Has there been a survey on the number of new houses that will be liable for LPT?
- Expenditure on verge cutting and tidy towns must be maintained.
- All areas should benefit from the LPT
- The Government should give a commitment to a 5-year plan for LPT to enable Local Authorities to plan funding commitments.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Leyden

SECONDED by Cllr. Crosby

It was **AGREED** that when letters of offer are issued for successful projects under the Municipal District Funding Scheme, it is notified that the funding is made available through the Local Property Tax.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Leyden

SECONDED by Cllr. Crosby

It was **AGREED** the Local Property Tax basic rate be increased by 15% for 2022 as provided under Section 20 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 as amended by Section 5 of the Finance Act (Local Property Tax) Act 2013.

83.21 CORRESPONDENCE

Resolutions from other Local Authorities:

- **25th June, 2021 - Resolution from Waterford City & County Council**

That Waterford City & County Council write to Minister Simon Harris, and cc Ministers Michael McGrath and Norma Foley, and Minister of State Niall Collins, to call for the implementation of the Labour Court recommendation in respect of regularising the terms and conditions of Adult Education Tutors employed by Education and Training Boards, to be treated with the importance and urgency that it deserves.

- **25th June, 2021 - Resolution from Meath County Council**

That Meath County Council call on the Government to explore the German Sparkasse Community Banking model, to provide balance for the Irish Banking system.

- **25th June, 2021 - Resolution from Meath County Council**

That Meath County Council call on the Department of Health to prioritise the establishment of the Transport Support Scheme.

- **25th June, 2021 - Resolution from Clare County Council**

That Clare County Council call on the Minister for Health and the Department of Health to recognise the need to address all forms of women's health.

- **29th June, 2021 - Resolution from Kerry County Council**

That Kerry County Council calls on The Department of Education to give all schools an allocation of hours for a dedicated Home School Liaison Officer.

- **5th July, 2021 - Resolution from Donegal County Council**

That Donegal County Council calls upon the Dublin Government to expel the Israeli Ambassador and staff in the Israeli Embassy.

- **5th July, 2021 - Resolution from Donegal County Council**

That Donegal County Council make serious representation to An Taoiseach and the Department of Foreign Affairs as regards the treatment of the families and friends of the Ballymurphy 10.

- **5th July, 2021 - Resolution from Donegal County Council**

That Donegal County Council write to the Minister of Health, Stephen Donnelly, Chief Clinical Officer, Colm Henry and HSE Director General Paul Reid, calling on them, as a matter of urgency, to make Patisiran available to everyone in the 26 Counties who require this life-changing drug.

- **5th July, 2021 - Resolution from Sligo County Council**

That Sligo County Council call for funding to be made available for the provision of small wastewater treatment systems in local villages throughout the country.

- **6th July, 2021 - Resolution from Wicklow County Council**

That Wicklow County Council write to the Minister responsible for Local Government & Planning to propose that as part of the conditions for a planning application for new housing estates, developers must install Automated External Defibrillators.

- **13th July, 2021 - Resolution from Clare County Council**

That Clare County Council call on the Minister for Health Mr Stephen Donnelly to seriously consider using our vaccination centres along with our vaccinators and pharmacists to administer the HPV vaccine.

- **13th July, 2021 - Resolution from Clare County Council**

That Clare County Council call on the Department of Health provide funding to all communities throughout County Clare for defibrillators and training. There needs to be more than one covering each area.

- **14th July, 2021 - Resolution from Limerick City & County Council**

That Limerick City & County Council support the campaign of Epilepsy Ireland to address longstanding issues that continue to impact on people with epilepsy and their families in Limerick today, namely: (1) Access to Free Travel; and (2) Provision of Reasonable Accommodations for State Examinations for students with epilepsy

Other Correspondence:

- **9th July, 2021 – Letter from Senator Robbie Gallagher**

Correspondence regarding a recent Debate in the Seanad where Senator Gallagher raised concerns

of 3,500 Local Authority water services staff in relation to the service level agreement with Irish Water.

84.21 CHIEF EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

Resignation of Martin Lydon, Director of Services: The Chief Executive informed the members that Friday is Mr. Lydon's last day in Roscommon as he departs to take up the Chief Executive position in Sligo Co. Co. on 30th August. Ms. Caitlin Conneally will take up the role as Acting Director of Services and Mr. Sean Mullarkey will be Acting Head of Finance. He detailed other changes in the Directorates effective from 30th August.

He congratulated Martin on his achievement and paid tribute to him for his contribution to Roscommon County Council during his time. He leaves with the respect of the Elected Members, his colleagues and in particular the Management Team. He is known as a great communicator with a complete and total understanding of his brief who made complex problems look simple and will be a huge loss to the organisation.

The Elected Members also paid tribute to Mr. Lydon:

- Very deserving of this success due to hard work and ability
- Contributed greatly to the improvements in Roscommon over the past 10 years.
- Has shown empathy, determination and courage and made sure that the citizens of the county are number one priority.
- Held in very high esteem by all of the Elected Members.
- Thanks from the Members of Roscommon MD for his contribution as manager of the MD over the past number of years.
- Many community groups have benefited from his assistance.
- Has looked after the finances of the county in the best possible manner and always made prudent and calculated decisions.

Director of Services, Majella Hunt and Shane Tiernan also paid tribute to a great colleague who could always see the bigger picture for Roscommon – a professional with personality and great leadership skills.

Mr. Lydon thanked everyone for their kind words and paid tribute to his team in Roscommon. He acknowledged his working relationship with the elected members and the unseen work that they do for the people of the county. He thanked the Chief Executive, Management team and staff who work for Roscommon and while he will be sad to leave but is looking forward to a new challenge.

85.21 NOTICES OF MOTION

86.21 15.21 NOTICE OF MOTION FROM CLLR. CROSBY

Tax Incentive Scheme for Derelict Residential and Commercial Properties:

"Roscommon County Council call on the Minister for Finance and the Government to introduce a tax incentive scheme similar to the very successful section 23 tax incentive scheme in order to create an effective incentive to bring all the closed down and derelict residential and commercial properties back into full use, estimates confirm that there are tens of thousands of such properties throughout our cities, towns villages and rural areas. Such a scheme would have a major impact on addressing the current housing crisis in our country"

The Meetings Administrator read the following reply:

This motion requires a resolution of the Council.

Cllr. Crosby referenced a previous Notice of Motion discussed in the chamber in the mid 1990's that led to the Upper Shannon Rural Renewal scheme. The success of that scheme could be replicated to bring back the closed down and derelict residential and commercial properties into full use with a tax incentive scheme that would cost very little.

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

It was **AGREED** to write to the Ministers of Finance and Housing to introduce a tax incentive scheme similar to the very successful section 23 tax incentive scheme in order to create an effective incentive to bring all the closed down and derelict residential and commercial properties back into full use, estimates confirm that there are tens of thousands of such properties throughout our cities, towns villages and rural areas. Such a scheme would have a major impact on addressing the current housing crisis in our country.

86.21a 16.21 NOTICE OF MOTION FROM CLLR. NAUGHTEN

Verge Trimming

"That Roscommon County Council ensure adequate funds are provided for Verge Trimming throughout County Roscommon over the coming months, as overgrown grass and noxious weeds are a hazard for pedestrians and other road users at present"

The Meetings Administrator read the following reply:

Funding is in place for verge trimming in line with the agreed budget and this will be expended accordingly to cover verge trimming where most required. All roads in the Roads Programme are verge trimmed in parallel with the works progressing. The Municipal Districts have hired extra contractors during the summer period to complement the existing council fleet.

Cllr. Naughten welcomed the reply. He said there currently a significant deficit in verge trimming that needs to be addressed immediately at junctions and bends I roads that is causing a danger to all road users and additional verge trimmers will be necessary in all areas over the coming six weeks.

Cllr. Fitzmaurice supported the motion and stated this is an annual problem and the system of tendering appears to add to the difficulties. The biggest concern is with the smallest roads and they will be the last to be done.

The Director of Services, Mr. Shane Tiernan stated there are four machines currently working in Boyle and seven hired machines about to commence work and the work programme for verge trimming is ahead of schedule. There are over 4,000km of roads and these have to be prioritised and the Council is doing the work in the most effective way it can.

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

It was **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council ensure adequate funds are provided for Verge Trimming throughout County Roscommon over the coming months, as overgrown grass and noxious weeds are a

hazard for pedestrians and other road users at present

87.21 17.21 NOTICE OF MOTION FROM CLLR. LEYDEN

Noticeboard at St. Comans Cemetery, Roscommon Town

“That Roscommon County Council supports the provision of a large information board at St. Coman's Cemetery, Roscommon town to orient visitors to the graveyard with a map of the graveyard illustrating the location of different graves.”

The meetings Administrator read the following reply:

The Council has very limited resources for the maintenance and repair of the cemeteries in their ownership. The Council is dependent on voluntary groups and the budgeted funding is used to support these groups along with caretaker payments, cemetery upkeep and essential works which are priority risk based across the approximately 100 owned cemeteries.

Several cemeteries in the county have participated in community training projects to survey and record their headstones as part of a community project funded by the Heritage Council and Roscommon County Council. The records are uploaded to www.historicgraves.com This information is also available on Roscommon Cemeteries Mapviewer which can be found on www.roscommoncoco.ie/cemeteries This is an online mapviewer, launched in 2019, with all available information on all cemeteries in the county and is under constant update.

The request for an information board at St. Coman's Cemetery, Roscommon Town, albeit desirable, is dependent on the availability of both financial and human resources. The project would require a survey of the graveyard with the numbering and mapping of each grave and a digital map of the graveyard compiled. The most likely way this project can be completed is for a voluntary group to train for and complete the survey with the support of the Council. In the absence of any grant funding being available the cost of such a project and training would have to be met from the Council's own resources.

Through the mechanism of the Roads and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee, the feasibility of this project for St. Coman's could be discussed. In the interest of equity, similar projects in other cemeteries would need to be considered. Input from the Heritage Officer would also be beneficial at the SPC.

Clr. Leyden welcomed the positive reply on the matter and the training for community groups. Ardcarne cemetery has completed a similar project in 1995. St. Coman's cemetery is very important to the town and this would be a great addition and a valuable resource for relatives and connections of those buried there.

The members spoke in favour of the motion and thanked community groups and historical societies that have worked on similar projects on other cemeteries. The website mentioned is a great resource and every cemetery should try to be included in this resource.

Clr. Kilduff spoke on a motion he had previously brought forward to seek a national capital fund for repairs of old cemeteries. The Department had replied that the maintenance of cemeteries was a matter for local authorities but he was not satisfied with the reply.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Clr. Kilduff

SECONDED by Clr. Ward

It was **AGREED** to write to the Department to reconsider their position on funding for capital works in cemeteries.

Cllr. Leyden thanked the members for their support of the motion and the Council for their interest in working on it and acknowledged the funding that is provided for cemeteries.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Leyden

SECONDED by Cllr. Crosby

It was **AGREED** that that Roscommon County Council supports the provision of a large information board at St. Coman's Cemetery, Roscommon town to orient visitors to the graveyard with a map of the graveyard illustrating the location of different graves. Through the mechanism of the Roads and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee, the feasibility of this project for St. Coman's could be discussed. In the interest of equity, similar projects in other cemeteries would need to be considered. Input from the Heritage Officer would also be beneficial at the SPC.

88.21 VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS AND SYMPATHY

The Cathaoirleach and Members passed a vote of sympathy to the family of the late Michael Fitzmaurice, a founding member of the Roscommon Association in Dublin in 1952, was its Treasurer until 1965 when he took over as Chairperson, a position he held until 2004. Since then, he has been a very active Life President. During his tenure in the chair, he was responsible for founding and editing 21 annual issues of the *Roscommon Association Dublin Yearbook*.

Cllr. McDermott proposed a vote of sympathy to the family of the late Martin Finan, retired staff member of Roscommon County Council who passes away recently. The members paid tribute to Mr. Finan, his many achievements including his footballing skills as a player and later a coach with young people, his community work and his involvement in the organisation of the Local Elections over a long number of years. The Chief Executive, on behalf of the staff and management team also paid tribute to both Mr. Fitzmaurice and Mr. Finan.

89.21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Cathaoirleach informed the members of the visit of Minister Heather Humphreys to Strokestown on Saturday to launch the redevelopment of the Strokestown Park House Museum.

Best wishes were recorded to Aoife O'Rourke who represents Ireland in Boxing at the Olympic Games in Tokyo next week and to Richael Timothy who is also representing Ireland at the Paralympics later in August in cycling. Both ladies are a credit to the county.

NEXT MEETING

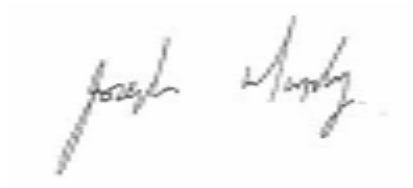
The next meeting will be on Monday, 27th September, 2021.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are
Confirmed and Signed:

Petrizio Bohon

Meetings Administrator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph Murphy", is written on a light-colored rectangular background.

Cathaoirleach

Petrizio Bohon

Countersigned