

**MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON
ON MONDAY, 27TH MARCH, 2023 AT 2.15 PM.**

- PRESENT:** Councillor Tom Crosby **PRESIDED**
- MEMBERS:** Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice, Cllr D. Kilduff, Cllr M. McDermott, Cllr A. Waldron, Cllr T. Ward, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr J. Murphy, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher and Cllr L. Callaghan.
- OFFICIALS:** Shane Tieman, Chief Executive
Majella Hunt, Director of Services
Caitlín Conneely, A/Director of Services
Sean Mullarkey, Acting Head of Finance
Fiona Ni Chuinn, A/Director of Services
Greg O'Donnell, A/Director of Services
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator
Claudette Collins, Staff Officer
Darragh Kelly, Communications Officer
- Apologies:** Cllr E. Kelly, Cllr O. Leyden and Cllr M. Mulligan

34.23 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.
Cllr. Fitzmaurice left the meeting during the discussion on Tidy Towns and Amenity Grants.

35.23 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Murphy
SECONDED by Cllr. Shanagher
It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of the Plenary Meeting of 27.02.2023

36.23 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

37.23 MANAGEMENT REPORT

- Management Report for February 2023 noted.

38.23 TIDY TOWNS AND AMENITY GRANTS 2023

Ms. Majella Hunt, Director of Services presented the Allocations under the Tidy Towns and Amenity Grants Scheme for 2023:

The total budget for 2023 is €60,000. The scheme is available to community groups and voluntary organisations wishing to undertake small scale projects in their local area.
A total of 86 applications were received of which 83 were deemed eligible. In accordance with the scheme, funding for Tidy Towns Associations who enter the National Tidy Towns competition is prioritised. Funding of Local Development Associations who are carrying out small scale enhancement works is recommended. An allocation to Roscommon Community Games and Roscommon Underwater Search and Recovery Club is also recommended.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the Director for the allocations proposed which will be very welcome to all the groups who do excellent work throughout the county. The money allocated is well spent and Roscommon County Council should increase the allocations in line with inflation on an annual basis.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Byrne

SECONDED by Cllr. Shanagher

That money unspent last year in respect of councillors conferences be paid as a top up to the proposed grants.

In reply Mr. Sean Mullarkey informed the members that this will be part of the 2022 AFS process that will be completed at the end of the month and the money can be distributed then.

Cllr. Callaghan proposed that all voluntary groups, including unfinished housing estates that remain of that status for a number of years, should be included in the scheme for receipt of grants. This was seconded by Cllr. Murphy. In reply the Director Ms. Hunt stated that unfinished estates are the responsibility of the developer and must remain so and cannot be part of the scheme.

39.23 PRESENTATION ON THE GROUP WATER SCHEME DRINKING WATER SOURCE PROTECTION PILOT PROJECT -PHASE II- FINAL REPORT

Mr. Sean Corrigan, Source protection Pilot Project Programme Lead from the National Federation of Group Water Schemes (NFGWS) was introduced to the Elected Members to give a presentation. He was accompanied by colleagues Anthony Lee and Noel Carroll managers of two of the private group water schemes in Roscommon.

- Introducing his presentation, Mr. Corrigan paid tribute to the staff of Roscommon County Council involved with the promotion of the work of the NFGWS, including Laboratory staff and Catherine Finlay of Rural Water Section. He said they were instrumental in an integrated catchment management which had received considered acclaim at national and EU level, winning a European Pollinator Award for its work.
- Over 200,000 people across the country have their water supplied by private schemes that are community owned and managed.
- The NFGWS's work is heavily focused on consultation with local farmers with different committees such as expert groups; sub-groups focusing on materials, source protection, risk assessment and management and monitoring, all working collaboratively as a network.
- Compliance with the Water Framework Directive and the Drinking Water Directive are at the heart of NFGWS's work working with locally elected, trusted and respected community leaders, using individual source protection plans, based on science.
- Through the network, farmers collaborating in schemes became influencers for other farmers and neighbours, in turn generating pride among communities and reducing the potential for isolation among its farming members, producing guidelines that are socially acceptable.
- The process of change had taken time to gain the trust of farmers and local communities, often involving direct action with local communities and individual landowners.
- A 'Let it Bee initiative' whereby farmers were encouraged to manage hives to measure water quality was closely aligned to monitoring local water quality as well as establishing links to biodiversity and climate. The initiative won an EU award, highlighting the negative impact of pesticides on bees and the links between the health and well-being of bees and water quality.
- Mr. Corrigan informed Members of efforts to encourage schoolchildren to plant hedgerows, also as a means of monitoring water quality through a 'Plant a Tree' initiative, sponsored by Ballymore Properties, whereby 9,000 trees were handed out to local schoolchildren as part of a piloted scheme.
- He highlighted a mental health initiative, led by local Group Water Scheme member Thomas Rushe, in collaboration with Roscommon Men's Shed, noting that due to Roscommon's karst based limestone landscape, slurry continues to be a problem affecting water quality. As a consequence,

contractors are paid to attend training programmes to highlight the benefits of water monitoring for farmers, the environment and for the adoption of socially acceptable practices which promoted farmer well-being as well as good environmental practice.

The Chief Executive paid tribute to the NFGWS whose work illustrated the wider work of Group Water Schemes and is an integral part of communities, generating considerable well-being among the members. He said the work of Group Water Schemes is firmly rooted in the future with over 80 Group Water schemes countrywide and emphasised the importance of continued support for GWS's and farmers in ensuring best quality waters.

The Members complemented the work of GWS's from their inception in the 1980's, generating considerable pride in ensuring local water quality remained of the highest standard:

- The model of community collaboration enjoyed by GWS's is a model that could be adopted by other service providers to local communities.
- The delegation was commended not just not for the quantity of water delivered, but also for its quality and the level of delivery with the potential to be rolled out to other areas.
- The role of GWS's supporting biodiversity and involvement with local Tidy Towns Groups was also commented upon as well as the continued transformation of local water quality, which empowered and encouraged farmers to work harder to maintain high quality water in the future.
- The group water scheme model has worked well in county Roscommon, supplying a significant proportion of the county with quality water.
- The stakeholder engagement with the community is key to the success of the sector.

Thanking the executive and elected members, Mr. Corrigan concluded his presentation by requesting the continued support of the local authority. He said the use of pesticides remained a challenge, yet Roscommon had reduced their use by over 20% in recent years. He said the work of GWS's would further consider the use of 'bee and 'bug Hotel's' to monitor water quality, encouraging younger people to do so.

40.23 PROTOCOL FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS MADE AGAINST ELECTED MEMBERS OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL

The Protocol was noted by the Members.

41.23 CHIEF EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

The Chief Executive referred to new planning guides in respect of the provision of Social Housing, as part of the Part 8 planning process.

The main features of the provision were outlined to the Members by Acting Director of Services with responsibility for Housing, Fiona Ní Chuinn.

- Recent changes in planning regulations were to come into effect in respect of building of new houses on local authority and state owned land. The commencement date of this new order is March 8th 2023.
- The measure, though temporary, was being introduced to expedite the delivery of housing whereby the Chief Executive must inform members of such housing plans and also through the publication of public notices.
- The new measures apply to Part 8 housing developments only, otherwise normal planning procedures would apply for the likes of private housing developments.

Members responded favourably to the new proposals, believing the measures will create further housing availability and also raised the following:

- Have the Council any emerging housing plans?
- The Council needs to avail of every opportunity to develop lands for housing.

- It is good move to expedite the process
- What is the current position with the 250 houses identified to be developed in the county under the National Planning Framework?

Ms. Ní Chuinn replied the Council was currently developing sixteen (16) new units in Boyle with a further four (4) units earmarked for Elphin, which were being notified through these new channels. A new housing development was in the pipeline for Monksland within the next five years with a further 'turnkey' development near fruiting in the area. However, no developments are being planned for the area under these new measures. A target of 250 houses have been identified for social housing with the plans at different stages.

Commenting, the Chief Executive said these houses would typically be in urban settings where there was the greatest need and where population was largest, citing Roscommon Town and Monksland as examples.

The Cathaoirleach said derelict buildings and former licensed premises that have closed were exempt from planning if being redeveloped but still had to apply for building regulation approval.

42.23 NOTICE OF MOTION - 5.23 CLLR. WARD - COMPENSATION FOR FARMERS AFFECTED BY FLOODING AT LOUGH FUNSHINAGH

"I am calling on the Government, the Minister for Finance, Mr. Michael McGrath T.D and the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Mr. Charlie McConalogue T.D to provide the necessary compensation to the farmers that have lands on or adjacent to Lough Funshinagh that are badly affected by the flooding since 2015"

The Meetings Administrator read the following reply:

This Motion requires a resolution of the Council.

Proposing the motion, Cllr. Ward said this is the second time he has proposed this motion and eight years since the flooding of Lough Funshinagh has affected the farmers in the area. Forty families in community are affected and farms with an average acreage of 150 acres had been reduced in size to 50-55 acres, due to ongoing flooding. As a result, many farmers were receiving only 75% of their grant entitlements due to ongoing flooding issues. Seconding the motion, Cllr. Naughten stated that Minister McConalogue called to the area a couple of weeks ago and is aware on the ongoing situation. He supported the motion that farmers should be compensated.

The Acting Director of Services Mr. Greg O'Donnell updated the Members with regard to the Councils efforts with regard to the Lough Funshinagh flooding issue.

He stated that planned works hadn't been addressed due to legal constraints. The Expert Advisory Group was working under the direction of the Steering Group with the priority of protecting local roads and dwellings not impacted by flooding up to the present time and which don't impact upon local ecology and the environment.

He said the issue was still not considered as an emergency and still designated as an SAC (Special Area of Conservation) and the Council must establish a study base line for hydro ecology works to proceed on the Lough, which was the initial focus of the work of the Expert Group. Solutions are required to protect both the ecology and hydrology of the lake while also protecting local infrastructure. A study of local ecology will require at least one season of investigation.

After this, Mr. O'Donnell said a contract would be issued by the end of March, following which the Expert Group will progress to engage a consultation to look at the options to consider a planning solution, which meant a likely two-year time frame for a solution.

Cllr. Fallon thanked the Director for the update and reiterated that everyone wants a permanent solution at Lough Funshinagh and supported the proposal the farmers should be compensated. This is a complex situation and relocation is not an option.

Cllr. Kilduff encouraged the executive to do as much as possible to find a lasting solution.

Cllr. Ward thanked the members for their support and welcomed the recent visit of the Minister. He proposed amending the motion to include that any compensation paid should be backdated to 2015.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward

SECONDED by Cllr. Naughten

It was **AGREED** to send a letter **to** the Minister for Finance, Mr. Michael McGrath T.D and the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Mr. Charlie McConalogue T.D to provide the necessary compensation to the farmers, backdated to 2015, that have lands on or adjacent to Lough Funshinagh that are badly affected by the flooding since 2015.

43.23 CORRESPONDENCE

Replies to Resolutions from Roscommon County Council:

- **3rd March, 2023** – Acknowledgement of correspondence from Mr Eamon Ryan, Minister for Transport regarding the Local Improvement Scheme.

Resolutions from other Local Authorities:

- **23rd February, 2023 – Resolution, Kerry County Council**
“That Kerry County Council calls on the new Minister for Defence to award the medals as recommended by Commandant Pat Quinlan to the veterans of Jadotville. Failure to do so is a strain on the reputation of the State.”
- **27th February, 2023 – Resolution, Cavan County Council**
 - (i) That Cavan County Council request further protections for family farms by writing to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine demanding him to urgently intervene and prevent Semi-State body Coillte from entering into joint venture arrangements with the Gresham House Fund.
 - (ii) That Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue and Minister of State Pippa Hackett to outline that the forestry deal between Coillte and Gresham House and selling Irish lands to an outside fund is not in the best interest of the people of Ireland.
 - (iii) That Cavan County Council call on the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine to review the relationship between Coillte and Gresham House and the proper control of commercial afforestation.
- **3rd February, 2023 – Resolution, Westmeath County Council**
“That Westmeath County Council would write to the Finance Minister to request immediate action using the expertise available to design and implement a comprehensive regional public banking system that makes full use of the remaining financial services infrastructure in local towns and other areas in this county to deliver an essential local banking service to local communities and businesses that would augment the work of post offices and credit unions and give local people and businesses real finance and borrowing options and keep local towns thriving.”
- **6th March, 2023 – Resolution, Cork County Council**
“That rather than its apparent aims of limiting public participation and access to justice, the new Planning & Development Bill would take the opportunity to address identified concerns with regard to Ireland’s need to meet the requirements of the Aarhus Convention, to which it is a signatory.”

- **15th March, 2023 – Resolution, Clare County Council**
“In the context of the acknowledged desire, necessity and urgency to bring derelict and vacant properties back into use, Clare County Council to write to the Minister for Housing and Local Government requesting that the laudable Croi Conaithe scheme targeted to assist this objective is adjusted to allow owners of qualifying properties to access the scheme subject to conditions that the property is subsequently used for long term occupancy either through sale or long term lease.”
- **15th March, 2023 – Resolution, Tipperary County Council**
“That Tipperary County Council explores the possibility of offering apprentice schemes within the Council and in addition looks at the possibility of including an apprenticeship clause for contractors tendering for large council led construction projects”.
- **15th March, 2023 – Resolution, Tipperary County Council**
“That Tipperary County Council request the Government to amend the Mother and baby Homes redress scheme to include the 24,000 survivors who were excluded from the redress scheme”.
- **20th March, 2023 – Resolution, Sligo County Council**
“That Sligo County Council will write to the Minister for health asking him to make the CF medication Kaftrio available to all patients who require it within the State.”

44.23 COUNCILLORS CONFERENCES - PAYMENT/ATTENDANCE

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Naughten

SECONDED by Cllr. Murphy

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

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Naughten

SECONDED by Cllr. Shanagher

It was **AGREED** to approve Elected Members attendance at the training and conferences list as circulated.

45.23 VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS AND SYMPATHY

46.23 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

46.23a S254 LICENCES FOR MONOPOLES IN WEST ROSCOMMON - CLLR. FITZMAURICE

Cllr. Fitzmaurice raised the issue of Section 254 planning notices regarding mobile communication mono-poles. He stated two such structures were located in Gortaganny and at the Eire Óg GAA grounds outside Loughglynn:

- Local concerns had been expressed over the location of both structures
- Concern about lack of consultation with locals
- How can this be appealed?
- One of the structures is located outside a boundary wall on the roadside with a question as to who owns the road where the structure is located, between the boundary wall and the road itself.
- Should there not have been a wayleave sought?
- The locals are not opposed to the masts, just to their locations.
- A woman offered a location on her lands away from houses for a mast and since this mast was erected, she has a problem with her television working.
- If this process can be appealed, why was there not a notice in place to allow people the opportunity to do so?
- Clarification on who owns the ground from the boundary to the public road?

Acting Director of Services Greg O’Donnell replied, stating Section 254 planning provisions were introduced to expedite the roll-out of broadband. He said there were a lack of suitable locations for the erection of such structures. Where possible, Local Area Engineers engage informally with local communities where such structures were being considered to assess suitable locations. However the structures were erected subject

to licence. He said he was not in a position to comment on specific locations and said there was an appeal process in place to An Bord Pleanála in legislation.

Mr. O'Donnell said that if the n Bord Pleanála. find against the local authority, then a licence for such a structure could be revoked. He said boundaries of properties in the normal planning process where folios go to the centre of the road, boundaries are set back and technically in the ownership of the owner. It could be dedicated to public use.

The Chief Executive said the structures in question were exempt from the planning acts to expedite the roll-out of broadband with certain telecommunications criteria to make them exempt from the planning acts and treated the same as additional communications poles. He stated Comreg ensures compliance with national guidelines, claiming there was no obligation under Section 254 that public notices were required. He said there is an appeals process, and such poles are considered in the same manner as street lighting in respect of planning regulations.

Members said similar issues with communications infrastructure have also arisen in Dangan where a Community Centre and Church and national school are located, believing the structure in question should be placed at the rear of the Church. Notwithstanding the need for such infrastructure, there needs to be more consultation and a site notice erected.

Arguments were also made for undergrounding wiring to replace over ground poles with claims that poles as large as 50 to 60 feet, featuring drop wires, were unsightly.

The debate concluded with claims that communities affected were not opposed to new communications infrastructure being erected but concerns remain over the lack of consultation and the location of such poles, which were being erected as being the cheapest option, but instead should be more sympathetic to residents living in the areas concerned.

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

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister seeking a review of exemptions currently in force in relation to Section 254 planning provision in relation to erection to monopoles in order to allow more consultation with local communities.

46.23b SUCK VALLEY WAY CONFERENCE

Cllr Waldron invited members to attend the forthcoming Suck Valley Way Conference taking place on April 5th and 6th in Roscommon town. The Conference would focus on music therapy and the development of infrastructure in the region and Minister Humphreys is opening the conference.

46.23c ACCESS TO APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME

Cllr Waldron requested that Roscommon County Council to consider sponsorship of Access to Apprenticeships programmes as an entry point to professionals through practical vocational training.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Waldron
SECONDED by Cllr. Dineen

It was **AGREED** Roscommon County Council would consider sponsorship of the Access to Apprenticeships programme

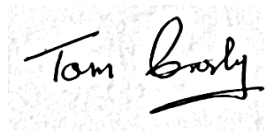
NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Monday, 24th April, 2023.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are
Confirmed and Signed:

Petrizio Bohan
Meetings Administrator



Cathaoirleach

Petrizio Bohan
Countersigned