

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ON THURSDAY, 1ST FEBRUARY, 2024 AT 2.30PM.**

- PRESENT:** Councillor John Keogh      **PRESIDED**
- MEMBERS:** Cllr E. Kelly, Cllr M. McDermott, Cllr A. Waldron, Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice, Cllr O. Leyden, Cllr M. Mulligan, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher and Cllr T. Ward.
- OFFICIALS:** Claudette Collins, Staff Officer  
Shane Tiernan, Chief Executive  
Caitlín Conneely, Director of Services  
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator
- Apologies:** Cllr J. Murphy, Cllr T. Crosby, Cllr D. Kilduff and Cllr L. Callaghan.

**19.24 SPECIAL MEETING TO DISCUSS PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ROSCOMMON TOWN POST OFFICE**

The Cathaoirleach welcomed the Elected Members, Oireachtas Members, Chief Executive, Director of Services and support staff to the special meeting to discuss the proposed closure of the Roscommon Town Post Office.

Following a meeting of elected representatives and Oireachtas Members, organised by Cllr. Waldron on Monday evening in Hannon’s Hotel, a request to hold a special meeting was sought and facilitated this evening. The meeting on Monday discussed the actions of An Post to close the post office in its current location in the Square and to go to tender for a contractor to run the post office.

The Cathaoirleach detailed the correspondence he sent to Mr. Aengus Lavery of An Post requesting the presence of a representative of management to attend this meeting today including Mr. Lavery as PR representative and Ms. Debbie Byrne of the Management Team. Mr. Lavery declined the invitation stating “having just announced the change publicly and to our staff in the participating post offices on what is an operational matter for An Post it would be inappropriate for us at this stage. As you are aware, we have been more than willing to engage with public representatives to date. There is no question of An Post ceasing its operations in Roscommon as you say. What is happening is that Roscommon town post office will join the 850 plus other post offices across Ireland that are run by Postmasters. Certainly no diminution of service to the people of Roscommon town”

In response, the Cathaoirleach invited An Post to reconsider attendance as they could be facilitated remotely and Mr. Lavery agreed this. However, on being informed that the special meeting would be conducted in the normal manner, i.e. open to the public and via live broadcast, Mr. Lavery once again declined the invitation as “unable to attend a meeting in public session for all the reasons already outlined - staff have just been told and we are dealing with them etc. In those circumstances cannot attend”

The Cathaoirleach also read a letter of support for the retention of the Post Office in its current location from the Roscommon Older Peoples Network, written by the Chairperson Mr. Bernie Kearney.

The Cathaoirleach invited the Elected Members to speak on the matter:

- Concern was expressed that An Post referred to this proposed move as an operational matter. This is a semi state company and provides public services. This proposed change would possibly see the post office mover from a landmark building in Roscommon town – this is a mini GPO and an assault on our citizenship. This is the first county town that this has been proposed for change by An Post and we have to say no to this.
- It is extraordinary that a state service do not feel the need for a presence in our county town. The decimation of the post office service began with the closure of rural post offices and does not sit well with proposed expansion of services that could be delivered by An Post. Deputy Naughten raised this matter in the Dáil but there was no Minister in attendance to reply.
- This move also took place in Castlerea. It should be noted that a full service would still be available but An Post want to reduce staff on its books but contracting out the service.
- The post office building in Roscommon is an iconic building in the centre of town. The Council have supported Town Centre initiatives and invested heavily in The Square with public realm works – moving the post office service from its location is a retrograde step.
- Our Oireachtas Members must find out why An Post will not meet with the Elected Members.
- This is unfair to everyone, especially older people. When the bank closed in Elphin, the post office picked up the business, albeit a private contractor was running the service. Will people feel pressure to shop in a location that may be hosting a new post office?
- This move has been flagged up to 12 months ago.
- The government is paying lip service to rural Ireland with the closure of rural garda stations and post offices. Now they are moving to county towns. It look like the future is that post will only be delivered once a week.
- This is a step too far, particularly with the investment in our towns and villages, to remove the services when so much has been invested to reinvigorate them
- There is a lack of transparency in the work of An Post that they will not come to a public meeting.
- This decision cannot be accepted without the input of the people of the town and the councillors.
- It is very insulting that the public representatives were not informed in advance that this has been proposed. If the post office moves, then footfall will decrease.
- What happens if no one takes up the tender – this requires an answer from An Post and is there a timeline on a decision?
- In Boyle, an employee of An Post took up the contract and this was agreed on the understanding that the service would not move from its current location.
- Can a group of councillors arrange to meet with the An Post representatives and get a commitment that the service not move from its current location?
- The Government must make this decision – there has to be corporate governance involved and An Post is accountable to the government and the people. We cannot accept anything less that An Post remaining in control of the service in Roscommon town in its current location.
- Minister Chambers, as the responsible minister, must be at any meeting held with An Post.
- A delegation of Elected Members and Oireachtas Members should meet with An Post and the Minister
- The feeling in the town over the past few days has been one of anger.
- Need to look at the New Zealand and German banking models and change our current set up.
- Thanks to the Oireachtas Members for their attendance at the meeting on Monday and this evening and meeting has been organised for next week with the Minister.
- Roscommon needs to set a marker here in relation to the post offices services in the county town.

- An Post have a public service obligation to run the service in the building that is there for it.
- It is not acceptable to run this service in a supermarket – privacy issues
  - There is an opportunity for An Post to provide additional services in its current locations.
  - A meeting with the Minister is imperative and this proposal required direct intervention from the Government to keep the service where it is and reverse this decision.
  - The stated position will be that An Post retain the service in the current location in the square.

Senator Murphy confirmed that Minister Chambers has given him a commitment to meet with councillors and Oireachtas members from Roscommon in the next 7-10 days. He also stated that An Post had issued a public statement in June 2023 indicating substantial change in their operations.

He criticised the proposed change in Roscommon Town and supported the councillors in their fight. He cited that An Post have a healthy ecommerce business for online shopping deliveries even if young people do not directly visit the post offices.

Deputy Clare Kerrane confirmed she had raised the matter in the Dáil today with the Tánaiste. She supported the position of all public representatives in the county to seek to have this proposal overturned by An Post.

Deputy Fitzmaurice also assured the elected members that the Oireachtas members knew about this decision at the same time as everyone and expressed his disappointment that the unions did not bring the matter to their attention earlier. He suggested that the chamber of commerce in the town be canvassed about the proposal. He also confirmed that the Oireachtas members would work together on this.

In conclusion, the Cathaoirleach thanked the Chief Executive, Director of Services, Meetings Administrator and all the staff who facilitated the meeting this evening. He thanked the members, Oireachtas members and the press for attendance and publicity of the issue.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Keogh

**SECONDED** by Cllr. McDermott

It was **AGREED** that a delegation from Roscommon County Council and Oireachtas Members meet with the Minister for Communications and representatives of An Post.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Byrne

**SECONDED** by Cllr. Kelly

It was **AGREED** that the Roscommon County Council delegation consist of the Cathaoirleach, Roscommon MD councillors and the Cathaoirleach of the Athlone MD and the Boyle MD

**This concluded the business of the Special Meeting.**

**The foregoing Minutes are Confirmed and Signed:**

*John D Keogh*

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Cathaoirleach

*Patrizio Bohon*  
Meetings Administrator

*Patrizio Bohon*  
Countersigned