

MINUTES OF MONTHLY Meeting OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNCIL Chamber, Áras an Chontae, Roscommon
MONDAY, 26TH JANUARY, 2026 AT 2.15 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Liam Callaghan **PRESIDED**

MEMBERS: Cllr L. Brennan, Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr R. Conboy, Cllr D. Connolly, Cllr T. Crosby, Cllr L. Cull, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr V. Duffy, Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice, Cllr M. Frain, Cllr M.Holland, Cllr E. Kelly, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr S. Moylan, Cllr M. McDermott and Cllr T. Ward.

OFFICIALS: Shane Tiernan, Chief Executive
Caitlín Conneely, Director of Services
Mark Keaveney, Director of Services
Sean Mullarkey, Director of Finance
Fiona Ni Chuinn, A/Director of Services
Karen Hanley, Meetings Administrator
Claudette Collins, Staff Officer
Michaela Finneran, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies: .

1.26 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.

2.26 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Connolly
SECONDED by Cllr. Holland
It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of the Plenary Meeting of 15.12.2025

3.26 MATTERS ARISING

Housing Part V Proposal

Cllr Fitzmaurice raised the matter regarding his proposal that 10% of Part V developments are allocated to Affordable Housing.

The Chief Executive recommended referring the proposal to the Housing SPC for discussion, with its recommendations to be brought back to the Council in due course.

Cllr. Fitzmaurice accepted this advice.

Cllr. Keogh further added that an issue is the housing income threshold set for the county not being on par with neighbouring counties.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Keogh

SECONDED by Cllr. Fallon

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister for Housing requesting that the income threshold for social housing support be increased to €35,000 for a single individual, in line with neighbouring counties including Westmeath, Galway and Mayo.

Correspondence Queries

Enquiries were made from Members regarding responses to correspondence issued from previous Notices of Motions.

Cathaoirleach Cllr. Callaghan advised that any response received would be included in the correspondence pack.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland

It was raised that the CPG would be with TII in the coming weeks at the request of the Council.

4.26 MANAGEMENT REPORT

- Management Report for Q4 2025 noted.

5.26 DISPOSAL OF LANDS

There were no items to report under this agenda item.

6.26 CORRESPONDENCE

Noted as circulated in advance of the meeting.

7.26 DRAFT TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Director of Services, Caitlín Conneely outlined the programme as circulated and endorsed by the CPG which sets out the training requirements for Elected Members for 2026.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Fitzmaurice

SECONDED by Cllr. Connolly

It was **AGREED** to approve the Training and Development Programme for Elected Members.

8.26 AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE AFS 2024

Audit Committee Report on the AFS 2024 noted.

9.26 AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2026

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Keogh

SECONDED by Cllr. Fitzmaurice

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Audit Committee Work Programme 2026.

10.26 NOTICE OF MOTION

10.26a CLLR. CROSBY - M1:26 - COST OF BUILDING MATERIALS

Notice of Motion from Cllr. Crosby

Ready-mix concrete has risen from circa €69/m³ in 2020 to €140/m³ today almost a 100% increase, five times CPI inflation circa 19.4%, which would suggest pricing closer to €80/m³, particularly given abundant local quarry materials. Concrete and cement are essential to housing delivery, foundations, slabs, blockwork, renders, roof tiles, drainage and related works, yet pricing lacks any oversight.

This Council calls on Government to urgently introduce transparent monitoring and reporting, and enforceable controls, to curb excessive cost of building homes which has almost doubled over the past five years. To build a two bed Apartment in Dublin now costs €600,000.

The Meetings Administrator read the following reply:

This motion requires a resolution of the Council.

Cllr. Crosby reiterated that the situation has escalated significantly and that no regulatory controls are currently in place.

Cathaoirleach Cllr. Callaghan expressed full support for the motion, noting the substantial and unjustified increase in costs associated with building both homes and agricultural structures.

Members voiced strong support for the motion and raised the following points:

- The price increases amount to price gouging.
- Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine are frequently cited as reasons, but these do not justify such significant price hikes.
- It is now cheaper to buy a house than to build one.
- The situation is unsustainable.
- Individuals are going into lifelong debt to build homes.
- The cost of building is directly contributing to missed housing targets.
- It can cost close to €500,000 to build a house in rural Ireland.
- Inflation is out of control.
- Young people want to build homes in their local communities, yet many will never be able to afford to in the current climate.
- The crisis could lead to depopulation and negatively affect local schools and communities.

Cllr. Crosby reiterated his concerns and added that road construction and improvement costs have also multiplied, despite plentiful raw materials. He thanked the Members for their support.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Crosby

SECONDED by Cllr. Keogh

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister for Finance, Minister for Housing, the Minister responsible for price controls and the Taoiseach to urgently introduce transparent monitoring and reporting, and enforceable controls, to curb excessive cost of building homes which has almost doubled over the past five years.

11.26 CHIEF EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

No further business.

12.26 COUNCILLORS CONFERENCES - PAYMENT/ATTENDANCE

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Connolly

SECONDED by Cllr. Brennan

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

13.26 VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS AND SYMPATHY

Congratulations to Gemma Casey from St. Dominic's GAA Club who won the All-Ireland Scór na nÓg Solo Singing Competition and the Padraig Pearses GAA Club who participated in the All-Ireland Scór na nÓg Story Telling and Novelty Act Competitions.

Sympathies to member of staff Catriona McCarthy on the sad passing of her brother recently and to the families of Teresa McCormack, John Clarke and Bernie Carty on their recent passings.

14.26 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

15.26 ATHLONE CITY VISION

Cathaoirleach Cllr. Callaghan welcomed Mr. Sean Mulryan, Chairman and Chief Executive of Ballymore Group, Mr. David Killion, Development Director Ballymore, Ms. Josephine Feehily, Chair of Governing Body of TUS and Professor Brian MacCraith, former President DCU and Senior Advisor to the President of Arizona State University attending on behalf of the Athlone 2040 Steering Group.

He acknowledged Mr. Mulryan's Roscommon roots, and his significant achievements in the property development industry including his recent receipt of the Freedom of London. He thanked Cllr. Brennan for proposing the invitation and expressed appreciation to the attendees for their willingness and promptness in attending.

Cllr. Callaghan outlined the ambitions of the Athlone 2040 project, Ireland's first proposed Green City, and emphasised its importance for Athlone's future development and the wider benefits to County Roscommon. He confirmed the Council's commitment to working closely with Westmeath County Council to progress the initiative.

Mr. Mulryan thanked the Council and Executive for the opportunity to present the Athlone 2040 vision. He explained that the project originated eight years ago in response to congestion and capacity issues in Dublin and a desire to identify a sustainable national solution. Drawing on European examples, the Steering Group identified Athlone as the optimal location due to its central location and the presence of a strong university, which will anchor the project. He noted the significant economic, employment and population benefits anticipated for Roscommon and the Northwest Region, including an ambition to increase TUS Midlands student numbers from 6,000 to 25,000.

Mr. Killion presented the key drivers of the project: meeting projected population growth, achieving regionally balanced development, supporting the green transition, aligning with the National Planning Framework, addressing sustainability challenges, supporting the Programme for Government, and delivering sustainable, affordable housing and high-quality employment.

He outlined the six core pillars:

- Education & Skills
- Green Buildings & Infrastructure
- Nature Restoration & Biodiversity
- Innovation & Employment
- Sustainable Energy & Transport
- Design & Planning

Key objectives within these pillars include a 5,000-student eco-village, developing Athlone as a “15-minute sponge city”, achieving 90% renewable energy usage, enhanced intercity rail services, an innovation hub, eco-tourism initiatives, and a Smart City Digital Twin.

Professor MacCraith highlighted the project’s two central drivers: the Green Agenda and digital transformation, emphasising the importance of achieving net-zero emissions and establishing the innovation hub.

Ms. Feehily noted that TUS Midlands is a thriving campus but has reached capacity for student accommodation. She stressed the importance of attracting international students for both cultural diversity and economic benefit and advised that TUS Midlands has recently been awarded Professorships—an important milestone in advancing the university’s academic ambitions.

Mr. Killion added that the Athlone 2040 model is replicable in other towns as it leverages existing assets including the university, established town centre, the River Shannon, and current transport infrastructure. He noted that delivery mechanisms would draw on models such as Dublin IFAC, the Source Protection Zones (SPZs) and the London GLA approach, supported through collaboration between national Government, Local Authorities, District Councils and industry. Funding will be required from both National and EU sources.

Mr. Mulryan emphasised that going forward, Athlone 2040 needs to be a government-led project, not a Ballymore Properties development.

Cathaoirleach Cllr. Callaghan thanked the group for their detailed presentation, noting the significant opportunity it represents. He encouraged Members to get involved and use their influence to secure Government support. He also raised concerns regarding future water and electricity capacity and the high level of objection to wind farm proposals locally.

Members thanked the group for their presentation and expressed broad support for the Athlone 2040 project. The following points were raised:

- Strong and widespread support for the vision presented, with Members expressing excitement about its potential.
- Recognition of the project’s capacity to transform Roscommon and the wider Midlands and

Northwest region.

- Calls for Government commitment and financial support.
- Requests for further detail on costings, next steps, and what alternative planning mechanisms may be required given the limitations of the standard local planning process.
- Acknowledgement of the ambition to rebalance national development away from congested cities such as Dublin and Galway.
- Queries regarding international examples of similar city-building initiatives.
- Questions on the overall timeframe and whether proposed targets are realistic.
- Queries regarding supporting infrastructure and services, including healthcare, airports, utilities, and hospital provision.
- Questions on how elected members can best support the progression of the project.
- Clarification sought on future building height and density requirements.
- Praise for Mr. Mulryan's vision and international track record with large-scale developments.
- Reference to similar projects such as those underway in Utrecht, Netherlands.
- Calls for improvements to surrounding road infrastructure.
- Support for the project's strong focus on the Green Agenda and technology, noting its potential to attract and retain young people.
- Recognition of the high-level national praise the plan has already received, with Members emphasising the need for tangible support and funding.
- Calls for Government to fast-track the project.
- Recognition of the important role Knock Airport could play.
- Suggestions that the Eastern Regional Assembly and North West Regional Assembly could assist in securing EU funding, including through the 2028 Green Programme.
- Proposal to explore twinning with Ljubljana, capital of Slovenia, given Ireland's upcoming EU Presidency.
- Members that are part of Government parties committed to engage with Government colleagues to support the project.
- Acknowledgement of Adrian Jones, Chairman and Co-Head of Global Equity at Goldman Sachs and a native of Tusk, as a member of the Steering Committee.
- Recognition of Ireland's increasing attractiveness as a place to live due to climate change and the need to proactively plan for this growth.
- Appreciation of the project's potential to enhance quality of life in Roscommon and encourage population retention.
- Support for the development of a high-speed rail connection.
- Observations that population growth is occurring regardless, and that this project offers a planned, coherent alternative to ad hoc development.

Mr. Killeen thanked Cllr. Brennan for initiating the invitation and emphasised that political and community support would be essential to advancing the project. He said further detailed work on costings and governance structures is required, noting that Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) will be central to securing appropriate land banks.

He advised that the team is examining successful planning frameworks including Grangegorman, SDZs, IFAC and the GLA model. He stated that services not currently in place—such as a hospital—would naturally follow as the city develops. He assured Members that the group is committed to ongoing engagement with all relevant stakeholders.

Mr. Mulryan advised that a preliminary estimate of costs would be approximately €1 billion per year for the first five years. He emphasised the need for a top-down approach led by Government, including the appointment of a senior civil servant and the establishment of a body with authority to manage CPOs and streamline planning.

He noted that legislative precedents exist from the Dublin Docklands project and that recent national Budget surpluses could support investment. He stated that the project will soon move beyond the remit of the committee and that Government must determine the next steps.

He explained that the project does not anticipate high-rise development, with the focus instead on medium-density housing, three-storey homes and seven to eight-storey apartment buildings. He added that developing a new airport would not be necessary; existing airports at Knock, Shannon and Dublin can meet regional needs, with greater priority placed on public transport expansion and road improvements.

Ms. Feehily highlighted that universities have extensive experience in master-planning and that TUS will progress its own plans regardless of the broader development. She said the university aims to expand its facilities and build a world-class brand. She noted the strong connection of Roscommon students to TUS Midlands but identified limited local employment opportunities as a challenge. She emphasised the university's growing relationship with businesses in Monksland and willingness to expand partnerships across the region.

Professor MacCraith underlined the transformative impact that adequate investment in a university can deliver. He referenced Aarhus, Denmark, as an example of a smart, sustainable green city, which is on track to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, which is twenty years ahead of Denmark's national target. He noted that renewable energy accounts for just 25% of European usage in 2024, and that Ireland ranks 25th out of the EU27, highlighting the scale of work required. He stressed the role of the university in supporting the talent pipeline necessary to deliver the Green Agenda.

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

It was **AGREED** to write to the Taoiseach endorsing the Athlone 2040 project in its entirety and call on the Taoiseach to immediately take on the necessary steps from a whole Government approach to enable this vision to be brought to fruition and to include the development of an SDZ or such other appropriate special legislation to allow the fast tracking of the planning process.

Chief Executive, Shane Tiernan, welcomed the guests and thanked them on behalf of the Executive and Management Team for their comprehensive presentation. He outlined that many meetings have taken place with the group, the Chief Executive in Westmeath County Council and the economic forum. He noted the work being done to enhance the economic strategy, the transport strategy, strategic plans and the positive way that this can grow sustainable towns, green travel, green transport, sustainable travel, connectivity, tourism, education, linking the West of Ireland to the East. He emphasised that the plan needs recognition and decision making, the funding of €1 billion a year is a significant investment but has phenomenal potential for long-term return. He wished the group success.

Mr. Mulryan thanked everyone for their comments and support and noted that pressure now needs to be put on the government to bring this to fruition.

Cathaoirleach Cllr. Callaghan committed to discussing the matter with Government colleagues.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Monday, 23rd February, 2026.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

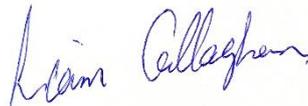
The foregoing Minutes are
Confirmed and Signed:



Meetings Administrator



Countersigned



Cathaoirleach