

**Minutes of May Monthly Meeting of
Westmeath County Council held at 3.00 p.m. Monday 29th May 2017
In Council Chambers, Áras an Chontae, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath**

Presiding: Cllr. F. McDermott.

Members present: Cllr. Ailish McManus, Cllr. F. Keena, Cllr. P. Hogan, Cllr. J. Dolan, Cllr. A. O'Rourke, Cllr. M. O'Brien, Cllr. P. Hill, Cllr. B. Collentine, Cllr. J. Shaw, Cllr. U. D'Arcy, Cllr. E. Wallace, Cllr. M. Dollard, Cllr. L. McDaniel, Cllr. J. Penrose, Cllr. K. Glynn, Cllr. A. Duncan, Cllr. S. Clarke.

Apologies: Cllr. T. Farrell
Cllr. A. Whitney

Officers present: Pat Gallagher, Chief Executive.

Martin Murray, Director of Service.
Barry Kehoe, Director of Service.
David Hogan, Director of Service.
James Dalton, Head of Finance.
Billy Coughlan, Meetings Administrator.
Geraldine Barden, Clerical Officer.

Also present: Anne O'Keeffe, Audit Committee Chairperson.
Noel Delaney, Leinster GAA.
James Heffernan, Leinster GAA.
Eddie Bouabbse, Leinster GAA.

3:00 pm: An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Frank Mc Dermott opened the meeting.

1. Miontuairiscí.

(i) On the proposal of Cllr. Glynn and seconded by Cllr. Dolan, the Members agreed to approve the minutes of April Monthly meeting of Westmeath County Council held in Council Chambers, Áras an Chonate, Mullingar on 24th April 2017 at 3.00 pm.

(ii) On the proposal of Cllr. Glynn and seconded by Cllr. Shaw, the Members agreed to approve the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting of Westmeath County Council held in Áras an Chontae, Mullingar at 2.00p.m. Monday 24th April 2017.

(iii) The Members noted the minutes of CPG meeting of Westmeath County Council held in the Board Room, Áras an Chontae, Mullingar at 8.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 19th April 2017.

(iv) The Members noted the minutes of Mullingar Municipal District meeting of Westmeath County Council held in Áras an Chontae, Mullingar on Monday 10th April 2017.

(v) The Members noted the minutes of the Athlone Municipal District Meeting held in Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone on Monday, 2nd May 2017 at 3.00 p.m.

2. Management Report.

The Members noted the Management Report as circulated.

3. Chief Executive Orders.

The Members noted the Chief Executive Orders as circulated.

4. Disposal of Land/Property

- (i) Proposed disposal of derelict cottage on 0.207 acres plot at Garrycastle, Athlone in accordance with the terms of Section 183 Notice of the Local Government Act 2001 circulated within the specified period.

An Cathaoirleach called for a vote by a show of hands and declared the disposal passed.

- (ii) Proposed renewal of licence of circa 3.30 acres at Fore, Castlepollard, to Fore Heritage and Amenity Group for further development as a walking route, in accordance with the terms of Section 183 Notice of the Local Government Act 2001 circulated within the specified period.

An Cathaoirleach called for a vote by a show of hands and declared the disposal passed.

5. To consider Audit Committee Report pursuant to Section 121 of the Local Government Act 2001.

Ms. O'Keeffe advised the Members that there had been a change in Membership of the Audit Committee in 2016 and Alan Shaw had been appointed in October 2016.

Ms. O'Keeffe highlighted the three most relevant items in the report:

- **Income & Expenditure Account:**

Ms. O'Keeffe advised that a surplus of circa €221,000 was recorded for 2015;

- **Borrowings i.e. loans payable:**

Ms. O'Keeffe advised of mortgage borrowings with a value of €24.9m at 31 December 2015 (2014: €26.6m); and further noted that government funding of €1m received in 2015 facilitated the reduction in borrowings in respect of unsold affordable housing.

Arrears:

- 2013 - €1.6m
- 2014 - €1.1m
- 2017 - €0.6m

Ms. O'Keeffe advised the Members that whilst action is being taken by the Council to address borrowings in respect of historic housing land purchases and unsold affordable housing, the long term solution to the repayment of these borrowings is in essence dependent on initiatives by Central Government. It is further noted that government funding of €1m received in 2015 facilitated the reduction in borrowings in respect of unsold affordable housing.

- **Housing Loans Receivable i.e. mortgage book1:**

Ms. O'Keeffe advised that progress has been made in reducing the overall value of the mortgage book with a value of €25.0m at 31 December 2015 (2014: €27.1m); and accepts that progress has been made in reducing the overall value of arrears with a value of €0.6m at 31 December 2015 (2014: €1.1m).

Ms. O'Keeffe agreed that it is important for the finances of the Council that arrangements are implemented to put all account holders in arrears on long term sustainable mortgages; to be processed under the mortgage to rent scheme; or, where appropriate, be the subject of court action to repossess the property.

6. To consider Audit Committee Annual Report 2016.

Ms. O’Keeffe advised that under the provisions of the Audit Committee Charter for Westmeath County Council and in compliance with regulation 15 of S.I. 244 of 2014 Local Government (Audit Committee) Regulations 2014, the Audit Committee is required to prepare an Annual Report within three months of the end of each calendar year.

It must provide such advice and make such recommendations, if any, to the Council as the committee considers appropriate. The report details the Committees’ considerations and findings for the year 2016 in relation to all matters within its authority. It also includes the annual review of its own effectiveness as required under regulation 13 (1) of S.I. 244 of 2014 Local Government (Audit Committee) Regulations 2014.

This is the current Committee’s third annual report and covers the period 1st January 2016 to 31st December 2016, during which time the Committee met formally on four occasions. The Audit Committee considered its various functions in addition to audit planning, review of audit reports, findings and recommendations.

Ms. O’Keeffe extended her sincere appreciation to the Chief Executive, Mr. Pat Gallagher, Head of Finance, Mr. Jimmy Dalton and the staff of Westmeath County Council including Mr. Aidan Bass and Ms. Trisha Mulvaney.

The Members noted the Audit Committee Report pursuant to Section 121 of the Local Government Act 2001 and the Audit Committee Annual Report 2016.

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. McDermott advised the Members that Item No. 13 would be taken next on the Agenda.

13. To receive reports and recommendations from SPC Chairpersons:

➤ **Cemetery Policy**

Cllr. Paul Hogan referred to the Draft Cemetery Policy presented and discussed at the November 2016 monthly Council meeting.

He advised that Westmeath County Council has the responsibility in ensuring the proper provision of cemeteries in County Westmeath and in developing a policy/plan to ensure that sufficient burial spaces are available to meet the needs of the people of the County for the foreseeable future. This new policy considered the best use of available resources in maintaining and in developing adequate capacity where the need is greatest. Cllr. Hogan advised that following further consideration by the SPC of the matter raised at the November 2016 Council meeting, the following amended text of Section 5.3 of the policy was now being recommended:

5.3 Use of areas within existing cemeteries.

Many older cemeteries, which have little or no designated burial space available, contain grassed areas where burial may have taken place in the distant past but no indication or record of this is present in the form of headstones or markers. It is proposed that these areas be considered for new burials, as is common practice in other jurisdictions.

However, this can only be permitted under certain conditions including:-

- *There must be no claim of ownership over the specified area*
- *The Clergy and local community group must be in favour of using the area for burials*
- *There must be no negative archaeological implications of using the area for burials*
- *The County Council must have no objection to the area being used*

Cllr. Hogan formally proposed the adoption of the Cemetery Policy as amended. This was seconded by Cllr. Hill and resolved.

Vote of Sympathy:

- Mr. Billy Coughlan, Meetings Administrator, advised the Members in relation to a Vote of Sympathy proposed by Cllr. Penrose and supported Cllr Glynn on behalf of the Fianna Fáil group to Cllr. Hogan on the death of his grandfather, Arthur (Lolly) Earle, R.I.P.

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. McDermott and the Members supported this Vote of Sympathy to Cllr Hogan.

Mr. Pat Gallagher, Chief Executive expressed sympathy to Cllr. Hogan on behalf of himself and the staff of Westmeath County Council.

Cllr. Hogan thanked the Members for their expressions of sympathy.

3.25 p.m. Cllr. Hogan was excused from the meeting.

7. To receive presentation from Leinster GAA in respect of Westmeath GAA Development programme.

Mr. Noel Delaney, Mr. James Heffernan and Mr. Eddie Bouabbse, Leinster GAA gave the Members a presentation in respect of Westmeath GAA Development programme.

In response to the Members, Mr. James Heffernan advised that there are 30 days designated to weaker clubs and coaching visitations are targeted at weaker clubs.

Mr. Noel Delaney advised the Members that €70,000 in grants are available for coaching games initiatives and a lot of money is put into infrastructure.

In response to Cllr. McDaniel, Mr. James Heffernan advised that all school coaches are trained up as Handball coaches and there is one person from Job bridge designated to Handball.

8. To consider the making of Road Traffic (Special Speed Limit) (County of Westmeath) Bye Laws 2017.

Mr. Pat Gallagher, Chief Executive, advised the Members that this Item will be deferred to the June Monthly Meeting of Westmeath County Council.

9. To receive report on the Taking in Charge of Housing Estates in County Westmeath.

Mr. Barry Kehoe, Director of Services, presented the Members with a report on the Taking in Charge of Housing Estates in County Westmeath.

Mr. Kehoe advised the Members that intensive development in the mid 2000's came to a sudden halt and the county was left with a legacy of incomplete housing estates. He noted the upturn which has taken place in recent times and advised the Members that Westmeath County Council has been working closely with the Department of Housing, Community and Local Government, developers, receivers and bond companies to progress the completion of the roads, footpaths, services and green areas in these estates, with a view to taking them in charge in due course.

Mr. Kehoe then gave a progress report to the Members under the following categories:

- Estates that have commenced the Taking in Charge process
- Estates that have not yet commenced the Taking in Charge process
- Estates with live Planning Permission
- Estates where further Planning Permissions have been submitted
- Developments not to be Taken in Charge
- Summary

In response to the Members, Mr. Kehoe advised that there is a protocol in place with Irish Water regarding the taking in charge of water services infrastructure and he also advised the Members that Derelict sites are dealt with through the Municipal Districts.

Mr. Kehoe also pointed out that the completion of housing units within particular estates was a separate issue from that of taking the public areas and services within an estate in charge.

In relation to new developments, Mr. Kehoe advised that Westmeath County Council apply a bond of €6,000 per house and this bond can be drawn down, should the developer fail to complete the public infrastructure within an estate to the required standard.

10. To approve of the taking-in-charge of the following Housing Estates in County Westmeath:

- A) Woodville, Athlone**
- B) Beechpark, Collinstown**
- C) Cois Lene, Collinstown**

On the proposal of Cllr. O'Brien and seconded by Cllr. Keena, the Members approved the taking-in-charge of Woodville, Athlone, Beechpark, Collinstown and Cois Lene, Collinstown.

11. Motions

➤ **Cllr. Frank McDermott:**

"That this Council supports the "Stop Targeting Kids" Campaign organised by Irish Heart and calls on the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment to protect children's health through strict controls, particularly on digital marketing, by introducing a comprehensive statutory system of regulation for online unhealthy food and drinks marketing directed at children".

On the proposal of Cllr. McDermott and seconded by Cllr. D'Arcy, the Members unanimously approved Cllr. McDermott's motion.

➤ **Cllr. Ken Glynn:**

"Call on Westmeath County Council to call on Minister of State with special responsibility for defence Paul Kehoe TD to urgently bring forward proposals which will address the issue of low pay for members of the defence forces."

On the proposal of Cllr Glynn, seconded by Cllr. Dollard the Members unanimously agreed to write to Pascal Donohue, T.D. in this regard.

12. Recommendation(s) from Corporate Policy Group

There were no recommendation(s) from Corporate Policy Group

14. Correspondence:

➤ **Motion from Waterford City and County Council**

Mr. Billy Coughlan, Meetings Administrator, read out the motion received from Waterford City and County Council as circulated to the Members.

This motion was unanimously agreed by the Members.

15. Aon Gnó Eile

Vote of Congratulations:

- Cllr. Emily Wallace proposed a vote of congratulations to Westmeath County Council Social Club Men and Women's teams in respect of their recent achievement in winning the title of Westmeath Fittest Company. On the proposal of Cllr. Glynn and seconded by Cllr. Dolan, the Members unanimously approved this vote of congratulations.
- An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Frank McDermott and Cllr. Johnnie Penrose proposed a vote of congratulations to Christine Charlton, Catherine Darby and all the staff in the Local Enterprise Office in respect of the National Enterprise Awards which were held in the Mansion House and he also commended and thanked Miriam Mulrennan, Arts Officer and Paula O'Dornan, County Librarian for their work on the Westmeath Culture and Creativity Plan and the document they presented at a special event in Dublin Castle.

Conferences:

On the proposal of Cllr Hill and seconded by Cllr Dolan, the Members approved Conference attendance document as circulated:

La Touche Legacy – Greystones Golf Club, Greystones, Wicklow
29th to 30th September 2017 (Conference will launch on Monday 29th May 2017)

This concluded the business of the meeting

Cathaoirleach

Date

