

**Minutes of October Monthly Meeting of
Westmeath County Council held at 3.00 p.m. Monday 24th October 2016
in Council Chambers, Áras an Chontae, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath**

Presiding: Cllr. P. Hill (Leas-Chathaoirleach)

Members present: Cllr. F. Keena, Cllr. A. McManus, Cllr. P. Hogan, Cllr. T. Farrell, Cllr. J. Dolan, Cllr. A. O'Rourke, Cllr. M. O'Brien, Cllr. U. D'Arcy, Cllr. E. Wallace, Cllr. M. Dollard, Cllr. L. McDaniel, Cllr. J. Penrose, Cllr. K. Glynn, Cllr A Duncan and Cllr A Whitney.

Officers present: Pat Gallagher, Chief Executive.

Barry Kehoe, Director of Service.
David Hogan, Director of Service.
Martin Murray, Director of Service
Jimmy Dalton, Head of Finance.
Paul Hogan, A/Senior Executive Architect
Billy Coughlan, Meetings Administrator.
Breda Daly, Corporate Services.

Apologies: Cllr F McDermott, Cllr S Clarke, Cllr J Shaw, Cllr. B. Collentine

Leas-Chathaoirleach Cllr. Paddy Hill opened the meeting and welcomed the Members.

1. Miontuairiscí.

- (i) On the proposal of Cllr. K Glynn seconded by Cllr. J Dolan the Members approved the minutes of September Monthly meeting of Westmeath County Council held in the Council Chambers, Áras an Chontae, Mullingar, Co Westmeath at 3.00p.m. Monday 19th September 2016.
- (ii) 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, 14th September 2016.
- (iii) The Members noted the minutes of Mullingar Municipal District meeting of Westmeath County Council held in the Council Chambers, Áras an Chontae, Mullingar on Monday 12th September 2016 at 2.00pm.
- (iv) The Members noted the minutes of the Athlone Municipal District Meeting held in Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone on Monday, 12th September 2016 at 2.00 p.m.

- (v) The Members noted the minutes of the Athlone Municipal District Meeting Special Meeting held in Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone on Thursday, 15th September 2016 at 2.00 p.m.

Matters Arising :

Cllr Dollard requested that Westmeath County Council make contact with Ms Eilish Hardiman, the Chief Executive of the Children's Hospital Group requesting that a presentation be made to the Westmeath Members in early 2017.

This was proposed by Cllr M Dollard and seconded by Cllr F Keena.

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 10 year licence of 8 Connaught Street, Athlone to Athlone Community Services Council Ltd, 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 approved.

5. To receive presentation from the Housing Design Team.

Mr David Hogan, Director of Services presented an update on the Social Housing Programme to the Members and outlined the local authority's obligations under the *Social Housing Strategy "Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness"* which was launched in July 2016. Mr Hogan also advised the Members to refer to the Westmeath County Council Monthly Management Report which gives an in-depth account of all Housing activities.

Mr Paul Hogan A/Senior Executive Architect then gave a presentation on the design philosophy for social housing including examples of good design. He explained how this philosophy was incorporated into the design of the proposed social housing developments in both St Laurence Terrace and Gortnadras.

The Members welcomed the Report and raised a number of concerns which were addressed by David Hogan, Director of Services and Paul Hogan, A/Senior Executive Architect.

The Members were advised in relation to the level of housing acquisitions. The Director informed the Members that the DHPC&LG have issued a direction on the maximum and the average cost respective Local Authorities can purchase houses for and that the Council is competing with Private Purchasers in this limited market.

David Hogan advised with the Members that there is currently better value in buying rural houses rather than building them. In relation to landbanks, he stated that if there are currently suitable lands being considered for social housing construction, but the Council will consider purchasing additional lands if necessary and that Westmeath County Council is attempting to acquire as many houses as possible.

The Members welcomed the development of St Laurence's Terrace and its well designed layout.

Identifying Ennell Court as an opportunity site, it was suggested that the land bank and properties in this area could be developed.

In response to issues raised in relation to Ennell Court, Mr Hogan advised the Members that there are opportunities for the Ennell Court area and a proposed variation is being progressed, and Westmeath County Council is meeting with the Department in the coming weeks with regard to including this project on the list of approved schemes.

Mr Hogan informed the Members that it does take time to get a Housing Design Team in place and prepare the necessary documents but future schemes will progress quicker as initial documents drawn up now will be used in future schemes thus speeding up the process.

In response to the concerns and issues raised by the Members, Mr David Hogan advised the Members that the "Design for Life" has been undertaken and he informed the Members that all new estates will have a mix of four, three and two bedroom houses and OPDs' with quality open space being designed in. He also stated that Westmeath County Council are also meeting the requirements as set out in the Development Plans for car parking.

In response to a query raised in relation to the time taken for public procurement (in contrast to the private sector), Mr Paul Hogan advised that the processes for private

development vis-a-vis public housing development is very different and regrettably Local Authorities are not in a position to progress developments at the same speed as private developers.

Mr David Hogan re-stated to the Members that Westmeath County Council expects to exceed its target of purchasing 30 houses this year, and the revised target is now 50 units.

Mr Pat Gallagher, Chief Executive referred the Members to the Monthly Management Report for September 2016 under the heading "Section Report Housing" for full details of various housing provisions including RAS, Leasing, purchases etc. He noted that the figures for RAS units was 527, compared to 463 at the start of the year, an increase of 64 units.

He further advised the Members that Westmeath County Council have identified appropriate lands in both Mullingar and Athlone and have applied to the Department for funding under the Local Infrastructure Activation Fund (LIHAF).

6. To receive update on Music Generation.

The Members received a presentation and film on Music Generation Offaly/Westmeath from Ms Miriam Mulrennan, Westmeath County Council Arts Officer and Ms Margaret Broome, Development Officer, Music Generation Offaly County Council.

Ms Mulrennan highlighted to the Members that Music Generation Offaly/Westmeath has grown rapidly over the last three years and it is now entering a new "5 Year Plan" which is a 2-County Council (Offaly/Westmeath) led project with €25k annual funding allocated to it. Ms Mulrennan thanked the Members for their time, continuous support and is looking forward to mapping out the next 5 years. Ms Mulrennan then opened the floor for questions:

Leas-Chathoirleach, Cllr P Hill and the Members unanimously thanked and congratulated Ms Mulrennan and Ms Margaret Broome on their presentation, dedication and hard work to this project. The Members also wished the project well for the next phase and that they will give their full support to this project through Westmeath County Council.

Ms Broome stated that Music Generation Offaly/Westmeath aims to give children life enhancing skills through learning to sing and play instruments, to generate opportunities for children and young people to experience making music with others. Ms Broome thanked the support and excellent relationship from the two Local Authorities collaborating together on such a wonderful project.

Cllrs Hill, McManus, O'Brien, Glynn, Hogan, Keena, Farrell, D'Arcy and Whitney further complimented and congratulated the work of both Ms Mulrennan and Ms Broome.

In response to Cllr Hogan in relation to what is involved for the next phase of Music Generation and support required, Ms Mulrennan informed the Members that a review process is currently underway, to complete in the first quarter of 2017. Ms Mulrennan stated that 'programme and expansion' is a key issue to be examined. The programme currently engages with 52 schools.

In response to Cllr Keena regarding the facilities at the AIT venue, Ms Mulrennan stated that AIT is an excellent facility and that a member of the AIT staff is on the Music Generation Working Group and the event is in the planning stages to return to AIT next year.

Cllr Michael O'Brien suggested to Ms Mulrennan and Ms Broome that an initiative for "song writing" in secondary schools should be looked into.

Ms Mulrennan informed the Members that she would take all of their comments on board.

Chief Executive, Mr Pat Gallagher also thanked and acknowledged the hard work of both Arts Officers on this project and Ms Broome for her excellent co-ordination in developing the project between the two counties. Mr Gallagher acknowledged the support of Music Network nationally and stated that the Members would be on the next phase of this project in the coming months.

7. To consider and approve Draft Audit Committee Charter.

On the proposal of Cllr Una D'Arcy and seconded by Cllr Liam McDaniel the Members unanimously approved the Audit Committee Charter as circulated at the Meeting.

8. To fill the vacancy on the Joint Policing Committee to replace Senator Aidan Davitt.

On the proposal of Cllr Ken Glynn, seconded by Cllr Avril Whitney, Cllr Bill Collentine was nominated to the Joint Policing Committee to replace Senator Aidan Davitt. As there were no other nominations the Leas-Chathaoirleach declared Cllr Bill Collentine elected.

9. To fill the vacancy on the Economic, Enterprise and Tourism SPC to replace Cllr Aengus O'Rourke following his appointment as Chairman of this SPC.

On the proposal of Cllr Ken Glynn, seconded by Cllr Tom Farrell, Cllr John Shaw was nominated to the Economic, Enterprise and Tourism SPC to replace Cllr Aengus O'Rourke following his appointment as Chairman of this SPC. As there were no other nominations the Leas-Chathaoirleach declared Cllr John Shaw elected.

10. To receive update on Local Improvement Schemes

Mr Barry Kehoe, Director of Services presented the Members with an update on Local Improvement Schemes.

Mr Kehoe, informed the Members that the available budget in 2016 including local contribution is €166,000. Mr Kehoe further informed the Members that following initial liaison with seven applicant schemes, five have paid the local contribution and works are proceeding on these schemes. He further stated that consideration will be given to schemes 10 and 11 as the budget is not sufficient to cover schemes 9 and 10 in 2016. These will be prioritised if funding for the LIS scheme is available in 2017.

Cllr Farrell stated that applicants of Scheme 9 wish to proceed in 2017, Mr Kehoe confirmed that this scheme will be progressed subject to funding.

11. To approve Speed Limit Byelaws for Housing Estates

On the proposal of Cllr Ken Glynn and seconded by Cllr Tom Farrell the Members unanimously approved the Speed Limit Byelaws for Housing Estates.

Suspension of Standing Orders :

5.30 p.m. On the proposal of Cllr. Ken Glynn and seconded by Cllr. Avril Whitney it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting continue after 5.30pm.

12. To receive Presentation on the Regulation of the Lobbying Act

Mr Barry Kehoe, Director of Services, gave a presentation to the Members on the Regulation of the Lobbying Act 2015. Mr Kehoe advised the Members to read the Presentation and to regularly check the Lobbying Act website www.lobbying.ie in order to get familiar with the Act and Guidelines. Mr Kehoe further advised the Members to self declare as a Designated Public Official, to maintain good record keeping habits and where a Councillor's name is mentioned in a return on the website, to make sure the information is accurate.

13. To receive a presentation on Winter Readiness 2016 – 2017.

Mr Barry Kehoe, Director of Services, gave a presentation on Winter Readiness for 2016-2017 to the Members. Mr Kehoe advised the Members of the Winter Gritting Routes and that the Gritting Routes Map would be available on the Council website for public use. Mr Kehoe also spoke of the Council's proposed response to severe weather such as snow and ice and in the event of flooding.

Cllr Tom Farrell requested that the Glasson – Mount Temple road be included in the gritting map for this Winter.

Cllr Michael O'Brien requested that the Clara Road, Moate be included in the gritting map as there were multiple road accidents on this particular road last year.

In response to Cllr J Dolan, Mr Kehoe advised the Members that there are 15,000 sand bags in stock and that Westmeath County Council have access to more if required.

In response to Cllrs M Dollard and E Wallace, Mr Kehoe advised the Members that the public should make contact with the Municipal District Offices regarding the provision and re-filling of salt storage containers in housing estates and community areas, such as schools.

Cllr A Whitney stated that the SPC agreed to review the Gritting Plan prior to the presentation to the Members. In response, Mr Kehoe advised that the CPG requested that this Item be placed on the November Agenda and that the review will be on the Agenda for the November SPC Meeting.

Cllr Liam McDaniel suggested the provision of "temporary signage" to indicate that a particular road is gritted. In response, Mr Kehoe informed the Members that the difficulty with "temporary signage" is it could encourage inappropriate driving on a road where there is the possibility of ice, even though the road is on the winter maintenance schedule of priority routes.

Cllr Penrose asked if the R389 from Skeagh Cross into Ballinacarrigy and onto Rathowen was reclassified as a Regional Road and requested that it be gritted onto Ballinacarrigy and Rathowen.

Mr. Kehoe stated that the Members comments and submissions would be reviewed at the next Transportation SPC meeting but stressed that resources are limited and are subject to available funding.

14. Motions:

There were no Motions.

15. Recommendation(s) from Corporate Policy Group

To agree dates to consider Budget 2017:

- **To hold the preliminary Budget Meeting 2017 “In-Committee” on Monday, 21st November 2016 at 10 a.m. in Áras an Chontae, Mullingar.**
- **To hold the Statutory Budget Meeting 2017 on Monday, 28th November 2016 at 10 a.m. in Áras an Chontae, Mullingar.**

The Members unanimously agreed to hold the preliminary Budget Meeting 2017 “In-Committee” on Monday, 21st November 2016 at 10 a.m. in Áras an Chontae, Mullingar.

The Members unanimously agreed to hold the Statutory Budget Meeting 2017 on Monday, 28th November 2016 at 10 a.m. in Áras an Chontae, Mullingar.

- **To hold an “In-Committee” Meeting on Monday, 14th November 2016 at 5pm in Áras and Chontae, Mullingar to receive update on Mullingar Integrated Arts Centre.**

The Members unanimously agreed that this meeting be held as recommended.

The Chief Executive, Mr Pat Gallagher informed the Members that further correspondence was received recently in relation to Mullingar Integrated Arts Centre and is being examined, and he undertook to advise the Members further in this regard.

- **That the Mayor of Athlone Municipal District host a Civic Recognition for Athlone Credit Union on the occasion of their 50th Anniversary in 2016.**

The Members unanimously agreed that the Mayor of Athlone Municipal District host a Civic Recognition for Athlone Credit Union on the occasion of their 50th Anniversary in 2016.

16. To receive reports and recommendations from SPC Chairpersons

- **To receive reports from the Economic, Enterprise and Tourism SPC in respect of :**
 - **Business Incentive Scheme**
 - **Business Promotion Fund**

Cllr A O'Rourke, Chairperson of Economic, Enterprise and Tourism SPC updated the Members on the Business Incentive Scheme and Business Promotion Fund as follows:

Business Incentive Scheme

Cllr O' Rourke informed the Members that this Scheme was introduced in April 2015 where the level of rebate was 40%, 30%, 20%.

Cllr. O'Rourke advised the members in relation to the number of applications received, the number approved, and the amount paid in grant assistance equivalent to a percentage of rates paid.

The scheme has been more widely promoted by the Council and LEO this year, there is greater awareness out there about the scheme which is helpful.

Vacant Premises continue to be an issue across the county it is recommended therefore that the Council continue with the scheme for a period of two more years and then review it again in detail in 2018.

It is also recommended that the level of assistance be increased from the existing 40, 30, and 20 % in years 1, 2 and 3 respectively. To 50, 40, 30 % in years 1, 2 and 3.

On the proposal of Cllr A O'Rourke and seconded by Cllr John Dolan the Members unanimously approved the above recommendation.

Business Promotion Fund

In relation to the Business Promotion Fund, Cllr A O'Rourke informed the Members that in recent months, the SPC received very strong presentations and proposals for support from this Council from our Business Promotion Fund.

Destination Athlone sought the sum of €6000 in order to attend an event in Dublin called Connect 16 which is a business tourism expo and was attended by all the big tourism players in the Country and made a huge impression on behalf of the whole county and indeed the entire midlands region.

Athlone Chamber of Commerce for the sum of €10,000 who are preparing a detailed prospectus both on and off line for the greater Athlone area and sought assistance from the fund in order to carry out this important work.

Mullingar Chamber of Commerce for the sum of €5,000 to support and assist in their hosting of the very successful Life Sciences Expo here in Mullingar in the Park Hotel.

This sees the end of this fund for 2016, the €60,000 in the budget has been fully allocated. Very worthy initiatives were supported throughout the year. Very positive effects can be seen and will continue to be realised from this funding into next year and into future years.

17. Correspondence

Mr Billy Coughlan, Meetings Administrator, informed the Members of the following items of correspondence:

- **Letter from Minster Simon Conveney TD dated 23rd September 2016 re : Ministerial Direction in respect of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020**

In response to Cllr A Duncan, the Chief Executive Mr Pat Gallagher informed the Members that the Ministerial Direction in respect of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 had been incorporated into the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 from the date of the Direction.

The Members noted the above correspondence.

- **Carlow County Council Correspondence**

Mr Coughlan advised the Members that a letter had been received from Carlow County Council seeking support for the following Resolution:

“Irish Water Response to Carlow County Council (as circulated at July Meeting) on water and sewage lines which pass through backyards and gardens is unacceptable. Carlow County Council write to the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government requesting an amendment to the legislation to change the arrangements so that the position obtaining in Ireland is similar to that in the United Kingdom in that the landowner is only responsible for that portion of the service from the main to his/her dwelling as per drawings attached (“A” UK and “B” Ireland)”.

The Members resolved to support the above resolution.

Mr Gallagher informed the Members of correspondence he received from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in regard to CLÁR 2016 and REDZ 2016 programmes recently launched by Minister Michael Ring and Minister Heather Humphreys. Mr Gallagher advised that €5m has been allocated for the REDZ programme and €3m for CLÁR nationally. Mr Gallagher informed the Members that it is the Council's intention to make an application for both schemes, including Municipal Districts, prior to the closing date of Friday 4th November 2016. The Members will be advised of the details of the applications.

The above correspondence was noted by the Members.

Vote of Congratulations:

Mr Coughlan further informed the Members of the following:

- On the proposal of Cllr. D'Arcy it was unanimously agreed to extend a vote of congratulations to Rodney Connolly, Inspiration Tae Kwan Do in respect of his success at the World Cup in Budapest.
- On the proposal of Cllr. Hogan and seconded by Cllr D'Arcy it was unanimously agreed to extend a vote of congratulations to Raharney GAA and Castletown Geoghegan GAA on winning the County Final Senior and Minor Hurling Finals respectively.

Cllr Emily Wallace expressed a vote of "Best Wishes" to all competitors taking part in the Leinster Cross Country Finals in New Forest Golf Club on Saturday 29th October 2016 which is being hosted by Mullingar Harriers Athletic Club.

Cllr Tom Farrell requested a meeting with TII.

The Chief Executive undertook to revert to Cllr Andrew Duncan in respect of his enquiry as to whether any recent pre-planning meetings had taken between Westmeath County Council and Element Power.

18. Aon Gnó Eile.

Mr. Billy Coughlan, Meetings Administrator, sought the Members' approval for Council Members to attend "Safe Irelands Summit 2016", The Round Room, Mansion House, Dublin on the 14th and 15th November 2016 as circulated. On the proposal of Cllr. Tom Farrell seconded by Cllr. Ken Glynn the Members approved attendance at the training event listed.

This concluded the business of the meeting

Cathaoirleach

Date

