

**Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group Meeting held  
on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2017 in the Board Room, Áras an Chontae, Mullingar at 8.30am**

**Present**

Cllr John Shaw (Cathaoirleach)

Cllr Tom Farrell

**In Attendance**

Mr. Pat Gallagher, Chief Executive

Mr. Billy Coughlan, Meetings Administrator

Ms. Martina Slevin, Assistant Staff Officer

**Apologies**

Cllr Ken Glynn

Cllr Aengus O'Rourke

Cllr Paul Hogan

**Minutes of Previous Meetings**

The minutes of previous meeting held on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017 at 8.30am were approved as proposed by Cllr Tom Farrell, and seconded by Cllr John Shaw.

**Update on Road Traffic (Special Speed Limit)(County of Westmeath) Bye Laws 2017**

The Chief Executive advised that the proposed Speed Limit Bye Laws 2017 are deferred, as Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) are taking a national view on proposed Speed Limit Bye Laws, and Westmeath County Council will have to engage further with TII and consult with the Elected Members in both Municipal Districts in this regard.

**Update on Calendar of Official Openings / Sod Turnings**

The following event was noted:

- Civic Reception for Westmeath A Company UN Peace Keeping Force at Jadotville – Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2017, Athlone Civic Centre, at 5pm.

Billy Coughlan advised of motion passed by the Members of Athlone Municipal District that a Vote of Congratulations and Civic Reception be awarded to Joe Ward on winning his third European Boxing Championship. Cllr John Shaw was of the view that this should be dealt with as part of the Sporting Awards, along with other similar boxing successes that will probably arise in the future. The CE advised that it had been agreed previously that European or World successes could be considered for Civic Recognition.

Following a brief discussion, the CPG agreed that a Civic Recognition would be appropriate in this case, to be hosted by the Mayor of Athlone Municipal District. Billy Coughlan to notify Athlone Municipal District of the CPG decision.

**Agenda for July Council Meeting**

The Chief Executive, Pat Gallagher, outlined the contents of the July Council Meeting Agenda, and the following items were highlighted.

**Item 6 To receive presentation from the Tourism Officer**

**Item 7 To receive presentation from the Heritage Officer**

The Chief Executive advised that short presentations will be given by both the Tourism Officer, Ms. Una Doris, and the Heritage Officer, Ms. Melanie McQuade, both of whom have recently taken up their positions in Westmeath County Council. Their presentations will give them an opportunity to introduce themselves to the Members, and to give a brief outline of their work plans going forward. The Chief Executive further advised that both officers can return to the Members for a more in-depth discussion at a later date. In response to Cllr Tom Farrell who requested that presentations from both Officers be given to the District Members at a later date, the Chief Executive advised that this can be considered going forward.

### **Item 8 – Approval of Community Facilities Scheme**

The Chief Executive reminded the Members that it was agreed at the June CPG Meeting to allow each Municipal District consider the applications in respect of their own District at the July Meeting, in view of the tight timelines involved. This was noted by the CPG Members.

### **Item 11 – To consider Public Lighting Policy**

It was noted that this presentation will be given by Corrina Elder, Executive Engineer, Transportation Section, and will be presented as a recommendation of the SPC.

## **Motions**

### **Joint Motion - Cllr. John Shaw and Cllr. Paddy Hill**

*“That Westmeath County Council make the following variations to the County Development Plan 2014-2020*

#### *11.8 Local Housing Need Policy P-LHNI*

*It is a policy of Westmeath Co Council to permit residential development in areas outside of the development boundaries of the settlement hierarchy subject to the following circumstances*

- 1. Persons who are actively engaged in Agriculture, horticulture, forestry, bloodstock and peat industry. No change*
- 2. Members of farm families seeking to build on the family farm. No change*
- 3. Landowners for this purpose being defined as persons who own the land 5 years prior to the date of planning application.*
- 4. Persons employed locally whose employment would provide a service to the local community. No change*
- 5. Persons who have personal, family or economic ties within the area including returning emigrants. No Change*
- 6. Persons who wish to return to farming and who buy or inherit a substantial farm holding which is kept intact as an established farm unit, will be considered by the council to be farmers and will be open to consideration for a rural house as farmers. Where there is already a house on the holding refurbishment or replacement of this house is the preferred option. No Change*

*The local area for the purpose of this policy is defined as the area generally within a 10km radius of the applicant's family home.*

#### *11.20 Areas of High Amenity*

##### *P-AHA2*

*To restrict development not related to farm practices and tourism in all high amenity areas with the exception of housing for the immediate family (son/daughter) of established residents living on landholdings, who demonstrate a housing need and have long term intrinsic links with the area. The entire landholding will be demonstrated to have been in the resident's ownership 5 years prior to the date of application.”*

### **Cllr. Tom Farrell:**

*“That Westmeath County Council would set out in detail its policy on local needs for adjudicating on "one off" planning applications together with a view from the Executive on inconsistencies with adjoining counties”*

Above two similar motions were noted, and in particular the request for a Variation to the County Development Plan in respect of Rural Housing. The Chief Executive referred to Dept Circular PL02/2017 discussed at the June CPG Meeting. This circular advised that national policy is currently being reviewed to ensure that rural housing policies and objectives contained in local authority development plans comply with the EU Treaty on the freedom of movement of citizens. He further advised that the Dept has advised the Council not to amend its policy on rural housing until further guidance is received from the Dept.

Further to this, the Chief Executive advised that he recently sought legal advice with regard to Variations to the County Development Plan generally, and to seek clarification as to whether the initiation of a variation to a development plan is an executive or reserved function, and if the former, what the implications are, if any, in terms of variations already carried out to the current Westmeath County Development Plan. It was noted that

Variations No's 1 and 2 to the current County Development Plan were commenced by virtue of the adoption of motions proposed by elected members at monthly Council Meetings. The Chief Executive recommended to the CPG Members that the above two motions be deferred to the September CPG until the legal advice has been received, and clarification with regard to whether variations to county development plans are an executive or reserved function. This was agreed to, and Cllr John Shaw requested that the Chief Executive pursue the legal advice and ensure that the two motions are considered no later than the September CPG Meeting.

### **Assessment of upcoming Conferences**

The following two conferences were noted and approved by the CPG :

- LAMA Autumn Training Seminar, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017, Clonmel Co. Tipperary.
- Pdraig Pearse Summer School – 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> July 2017, Rosmuck, Co. Galway.

Billy Coughlan to advise the Members accordingly requesting that they confirm if they wish to attend in order that their attendance may be approved by the full Council at the July 2017 Meeting. Details of above approved conferences to be forwarded to the Members.

### **Correspondence**

Billy Coughlan advised of the following items of correspondence:

- Letter of 26<sup>th</sup> June 2017 from Minister Paul Kehoe re pay for members of the Permanent Defence Force – **Agreed to circulate to the Members**
- Circular Letter LG06-2017 dated 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017 re Expenses and Allowances of elected Members – **Agreed to circulate to the Members**
- Sligo County Council Motion of 3/7/2017 re ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – **noted.**
- South Dublin County Council Motion of 8/5/2017 re investment in Early Childhood Care and Education – **noted.**
- South Dublin County Council Motion of 8/5/2017 re Cyber bullying and children – **noted.**

### **AOB**

#### **Request to replace “Chairman” with more gender neutral term**

Mullingar Municipal District Motion raised by Cllr S Clarke at July MMD meeting requesting that the word “Chairman” be replaced with a more gender inclusive term was forwarded for the consideration of the CPG. It was agreed by the CPG to replace the term “Chairman” to “Cathaoirleach”, which is gender neutral.

Billy Coughlan advised the CPG that the display board located outside the Council Chambers containing the list of Chairmen of the Council is full, and a new board is being sourced. He also advised that the Artist who adds the names to the Board has agreed to replace “Chairman” with “Cathaoirleach” on both the existing and new boards.

#### **Request for presentation from the AIT Students Union**

Cllr Tom Farrell advised of request he received from the Students Union, Athlone Institute of Technology, to give a presentation to the Council on the future funding of Student Grants. This was discussed briefly by the CPG and agreed that as the local authority is no longer involved in processing new Student Grant applications, and also that Student Grants is a national issue it would not be appropriate to receive a presentation in this case. Cllr Tom Farrell agreed to give consideration to forwarding a motion on this issue to the Athlone Municipal District, and also to revert to the Students Union to advise them of the CPG decision.

### **CPG Recommendations**

- Civic Recognition for Joe Ward on winning the European Boxing Championship, to be hosted by the Mayor of Athlone Municipal District in the Athlone Civic Offices.
- To replace the term “Chairman” with “Cathaoirleach” and amend the display board adjacent to the Council Chambers to reflect this change.

**This concluded the business of the Meeting**

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**Cllr John Shaw**  
**Cathaoirleach**

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**Date**