

**Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group Meeting held  
on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017 in the Board Room, Áras an Chontae, Mullingar at 8.30am**

**Present**

Cllr Frank McDermott (Cathaoirleach)  
Cllr Ken Glynn  
Cllr Tom Farrell  
Cllr Aengus O'Rourke  
Cllr Paul Hogan

**In Attendance**

Mr. Pat Gallagher, Chief Executive  
Mr. Billy Coughlan, Meetings Administrator  
Ms. Martina Slevin, Assistant Staff Officer

**Minutes of Previous Meetings**

The minutes of previous meeting held on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> May at 8.30am were unanimously approved.

**Matters arising**

Cllr Aengus O'Rourke referred to discussion at May CPG Meeting regarding his request for consideration of an Annual Sporting Awards in both Districts, and for the Cathaoirleach Awards to be held in Athlone every second year, and he asked if the other political groups had considered this request.

An Cathaoirleach advised that he would discuss this with his group on Monday next, but expressed the view that in regard to the Cathaoirleach Awards, the Cathaoirleach in office should have the final say on the location and venue.

Cllr Aengus O'Rourke was of the view that there is support for a Sporting Awards night in each District, separate from the Cathaoirleach Awards, and he was joined in this view by Cllr Tom Farrell, who referred to the Roscommon County Council Sporting Awards held annually. The Chief Executive reminded the CPG that Roscommon County Council do not have a Cathaoirleach Awards. Cllr Ken Glynn suggested that a sub-group of the political parties be formed to discuss and bring a recommendation to the SPC for further consideration. This was agreed.

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

The following events were noted:

- Westmeath A Company UN Peace Keeping Force at Jadotville – Date to be confirmed in July 2017.
- National Day of Commemoration Ceremony – 9<sup>th</sup> July 2017
- Disability Inclusion Event - 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017

**Motions**

***Cllr Una Darcy:***

***That this Council consider as a matter of urgency the preservation of the ancient road in Coole and take steps to protect the remnants of this significant piece of our history from further destruction.***

The Chief Executive advised that preservation of monuments is the responsibility of the Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Westmeath County Council is in support of preserving the ancient road in Coole, and has taken steps over the last number of years to have it listed as a national monument. He advised the CPG members that the Council has compiled and submitted a report to the Department in this regard.

**The above motion was approved by the CPG to go forward for the June County Council Meeting Agenda.**

### **Consideration of date for next Finance Committee Meeting.**

The Chief Executive advised that the Head of Finance has requested to bring forward the July Finance Committee Meeting to June, and this was agreed by the CPG.

The following schedule of meetings for Monday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2017 was noted.

**1pm Finance Committee Meeting**

**2pm AGM**

**3pm June Monthly Meeting**

### **Agenda for June Council Meeting**

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr Frank McDermott, outlined the contents of the June Council Meeting Agenda, which were noted by the CPG.

The following items of correspondence were noted by the CPG.

- Motion passed by Tipperary County Council on 12/6/2017 re Regional Health Forum Committees.
- Motion passed by Sligo County Council on 12/6/2017 re requesting the AILG to provide a briefing for elected members module on “The role, funding and activities of the LGMA” as part of its annual Training Programme.

### **CPG Recommendations**

To bring forward the July Finance Committee Meeting to June

To hold the July Monthly Council Meeting in Athlone

### **Assessment of upcoming Conferences**

	Date	Conf	Conference	Location	Conf Cost	Overnight Cost (133.73 euro)	Travel	Total Est Cost	Distance x return Mgr .4479
1	5 to 7 July 2017	3 days	The Percy French Festival	Castlecoote House, Castlecoote, Co. Roscommon	€ 40.00	€ -	€ 193.22	€ 233.22	143.8km/1 hour 6 minutes
2	7 to 9 July 2017	3 days	CELTIC CONFERENCES : ODCE/Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement	Clonakilty, Co. Cork	€ 100.00	€ 267.46	€ 261.57	€ 629.03	584km/3 hours 22 minutes
3	21 to 23 July 2017	3 days	CELTIC CONFERENCES : Doing more with Less: Managing Time and Productivity	Clonakilty, Co. Cork	€ 100.00	€ 267.46	€ 261.57	€ 629.03	584km/3 hours 22 minutes
4	1 to 3 Sept 2017	3 days	The Institute of Professional Training - Changing Trends and Approaches to Drug and Alcohol Abuse	Casey's Hotel, Baltimore, West Cork	€ 145.00	€ 267.46	€ 300.09	€ 712.55	670Km/4hours 1 minute

Following an assessment of the conference schedule above, the following conference was approved by the CPG for the Members of Westmeath County Council to attend:

1	5 to 7 July 2017	3 days	The Percy French Festival	Castlecoote House, Castlecoote, Co. Roscommon	€ 40.00	€ -	€ 193.22	€ 233.22	143.8km/1 hour 6 minutes
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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 June 2017 Meeting. Details of above approved conference to be forwarded to the Members.

## **Correspondence**

### **Resignation of Cllr Avril Whitney**

Billy Coughlan advised of correspondence received from Fianna Fail advising that they are not in a position to fill the casual vacancy arising from the resignation of former Cllr, Avril Whitney, before the July monthly meeting.

Billy Coughlan also advised that there are a number of vacancies to be filled on committees that Cllr Whitney was a member of namely,

- Transportation SPC
- Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)
- Mullingar Integrated Arts Centre (MIAC)
- Education Training Board (ETB).

Billy Coughlan to make arrangements for the filling of above vacancies in due course.

### **Correspondence from Irish Water re Clinic in Athlone on 24/7/2017**

Billy Coughlan advised of correspondence received from Irish Water requesting that the next Westmeath County Council Councillor clinic be changed from Athlone to Mullingar to coincide with the July Council Meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2017. It was agreed that as the July Council Meeting will be held in the Athlone Civic Offices there is no need for a change of venue. Billy Coughlan to advise Irish Water accordingly.

Further to above, Cllr Aengus O'Rourke wished to put on record his dissatisfaction with the lack of information from Irish Water with regard to recent widespread disruption of water supply over the weekend of 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> June 2017. Cllr Tom Farrell also expressed his disappointment with the lack of communication from Irish Water, stating that no information was available on the local radio. Cllr O'Rourke was of the view that a text messaging service, similar to that used by the council, would be of benefit. In response, the Chief Executive advised that the authority for water services rests with Irish Water, even though the Council do the work on the ground. He advised the Members to take up their issues of concern with regard to communications with Irish Water at the Clinic on 24<sup>th</sup> July.

## **AOB**

### **Wind Energy**

Cllr Paul Hogan and Cllr Ken Glynn sought an update on Westmeath County Council's policy on Wind Energy, in light of the recent announcement by the Minister with regard to proposed revised wind energy guidelines. Cllr Glynn expressed the view that what is being proposed by the Government is significantly different to what was agreed by the Members of Westmeath County Council.

In response, the Chief Executive advised that no formal correspondence has been received from the Department on this matter to date. He advised that all planning applications in respect of wind energy will continue to be considered in accordance with the policy set out in the County Development Plan, and the Variation contained therein. He also stated that the Department guidelines are at draft stage, and in line with requirements, an SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) will be undertaken on the proposed approach to the revised Guidelines.

He also advised that the information he has received indicates that the final guidelines will be ready in Q1 2018. He suggested to the Members that wind energy would not warrant a lengthy debate until such time as the Department guidelines are finalised and when it can be established if the guidelines are advisory or compulsory. The CPG Members agreed to this approach.

### Community Facilities Scheme

The Chief Executive advised the Members that each Local Authority has been awarded €64,000 to grant aid capital works of up to €1000 for community facilities. The Council currently have this scheme advertised with a closing date of 30<sup>th</sup> June, as prescribed by the Dept. Monies must be spent in the current year. He advised that all applications must be considered firstly by the LCDC and forwarded for approval by the Municipal Districts. He further stated that the next scheduled LCDC Meeting for consideration of the grants is Friday 21<sup>st</sup> July, but there is no Municipal District meeting following this until September. Given that the grants have to be expended in 2017, the tight timeframe for completion of works would cause a difficulty. The Chief Executive suggested a possible solution is that these grants could be presented to the Members at the July Monthly Meeting, and allow each Municipal District consider the applications in respect of their own District. This was agreed by the CPG Members.

### Rural Housing – Local Need Criteria

Cllr Tom Farrell referred to rural housing local need criteria, as raised by him at the last meeting of Athlone Municipal District, where he had requested that this issue be placed on the Council Agenda for discussion.

The Chief Executive advised Cllr Farrell that such a motion should be submitted by him to Westmeath County Council for consideration as it has County wide implications.

In response to Cllr Farrell, the Chief Executive 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 Council cannot amend its policy on rural housing until further guidance is received from the Dept. The Chief Executive also advised Cllr Farrell that if he has a view on this issue, he could consider referring to the Rural Housing Sub-Committee for further discussion. In response, Cllr Farrell advised that he will consider bringing a motion on this issue to the full Council.

### An Cathaoirleach Cllr Frank McDermott

An Cathaoirleach Cllr Frank McDermott thanked the CPG Members, the Chief Executive, Billy Coughlan and Martina Slevin, for their help and support during his term as Cathaoirleach. The Chief Executive, on behalf of himself, Billy Coughlan and Martina Slevin, also conveyed his thanks to Cllr McDermott and the CPG Members for their co-operation and courtesy during the past year.

**This concluded the business of the Meeting**

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**Cllr Frank McDermott**  
**Cathaoirleach**

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**Date**