

Minutes of Meeting of Monaghan County Council held via Microsoft Teams on Thursday 22nd April, 2021 at 12 noon

Chair: Cllr C. Carthy, Cathaoirleach

Present: Cllrs. Aughey, Bennett, Campbell, Conlon, Coyle, Connolly, Gilliland, Keelan, Maxwell, McCooney, McElvaney, McKenna, O’Hanlon, P. Treanor, S. Treanor, and Truell.

Mr. E. O’Sullivan, Chief Executive, Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance, Mr. P. Clifford and Ms. P. Monahan, Directors of Services, Mr. Cathal Flynn, A/Director of Services, Mr. K. Duffy, A/ Senior Executive Engineer, Mr. N. Finnegan, Executive Engineer, Ms. M. McGarvey, Senior Staff Officer and Ms. C. Thornton, Meetings Administrator.

Apology: Cllr Kerr-Conlon, Mr. A. King, Director of Service

11. Business submitted by the Chief Executive.

Presentation on Capital Programme 2021 – 2023

Mr. Noel Finnegan, Executive Engineer attended the meeting and gave a comprehensive presentation to the members on the Capital Programme. He stated that the Programme includes a total of over 100 projects, which will require funding of some €265 million over the three year period. He further stated that it was important to note that consideration of the Capital Programme by the Members does not confer Council approval on any individual project. This can only be achieved through the normal statutory processes and compliance with the Public Spending Code. Funding arrangements also need to be clearly identified and secured in advance of committing to any particular project.

A discussion followed to which a number of members contributed and complimented Noel, Cathal and all staff associated with the various projects. Members also acknowledged the significant funding provided by Minister Humphreys and her Department.

Cllr Gilliland proposed, Cllr Maxwell seconded - That Monaghan County Council research the area of Tenders and Procurement and see where it it’s possible to add requirements /clauses in the tender process for company’s from an out of state or non EU country who could potentially win a tender. That all materials that are needed for the works are purchased from the EU and where possible close to where the project is in order to support local suppliers and business.

And also under social clauses that a percentage of the workforce or sub contractors are employed from the local workforce EU based to the project in order to create jobs local and support the local workforce

The Chief Executive cautioned members against adopting the motion. He explained that Procurement is a very complex area. Procurement Law must be followed to the letter otherwise there will be legal challenges which will be at significant cost to the Council. The Council must abide by the law – Brexit hasn’t changed EU Procurement rules. The Trade Agreement is still there. He commended all of the Council staff involved in developing and delivering projects.

Cllr Carthy put Cllr Gilliland’s proposal to the meeting and it was agreed.

Presentation on Decarbonising Zone for County Monaghan.

Mr. Kieran Duffy, A/Senior Executive Engineer gave a presentation to the members on the selection of a Decarbonising Zone for County Monaghan. He explained that a Decarbonising Zones (DZ) is a spatial area identified by the local authority, in which a range of climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity measures and action owners are identified to address local low carbon energy, greenhouse gas emissions and climate needs to contribute to national climate action targets. Each LA must identify a potential area suitable for a decarbonising zone by 30 April 2021. Having examined the criteria attaching to the selection of such a zone, Mr. Duffy informed the members that Monaghan Town was being recommended for the following reasons:

- It is the only town in the County that has a population significantly greater than 5,000 persons.
- It is a geographical area that has potentially the highest carbon footprint in the county.
- Will provide capacity to identify carbon saving initiatives across a wide spectrum of activity including industry, retail, leisure, residential, education and health.
- A significant number of key stakeholders, including government agencies are in the "zone" all of whom are also responsible for achieving the National climate change targets.
- The Monaghan Town Project 2040 under Pillar 2 has the ambition of the town as "Ireland's First Carbon Negative Town".
- The indications are that most other rural counties are selecting their County Town as the Decarbonising Zone.
- The recent funding of over €13 million for the regeneration of Dublin Street offers significant opportunities for decarbonizing initiatives.
- The zone contains many buildings, properties and infrastructure which are under the ownership/control of the LA and other government Departments and agencies and which provide substantial opportunities for decarbonizing projects.
- The area provides a range of opportunities for Active Travel initiatives-, greenways, urban cycleways and footpaths.
- Decarbonising Zones are likely to benefit from preferential funding in order to deliver on their plan and which would be of major benefit to the Counties primary town.

Following his presentation Mr. Duffy responded to queries from the elected members.

On the proposal of Cllr Carthy, seconded by Cllr Aughey, it was agreed that Monaghan Town be put forward as the Decarbonizing Zone for County Monaghan.

On the proposal of Cllr Connolly, seconded by Cllr Treanor, it was agreed that the Council writes to the SEAI requesting that body to continue to allocate funding for solar grants.

12. Matters arising out of the minutes of Council meeting held on 8th March & 22nd March, 2021

Matters arising out of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 8th March and 22nd March 2021 were responded to by the relevant officials.

Cllr Conlon requested that the following question would be forwarded to Irish Water for an update – this was agreed.

That we ask of Irish Water that in consideration of Waste Water Treatment Plants at Clontibret, Knockatallon, Newbliss and Oram operating with effluent discharge levels in violation of required health and environmental standards, when will urgently required works commence to upgrade this community infrastructure. Also, to ask what is the operational

status of the irrigation systems piped from the Clontibret and Knockatallon WWTP to the adjoining Willow Crop plantations.

13. Update on N2 National Primary Road Schemes

An update on this matter had already been provided in the Management Report.

14. To receive update on North South Interconnector project

The members noted the following correspondence:

- Letter from the Office of the Taoiseach Mr. Micheál Martin, T.D. regarding Eirgrid.
- Email from Senator Robbie Gallagher regarding the North/South Interconnector.
- Email from Deputy Niamh Smyth, T.D regarding the North/South Interconnector.
- Email from Deputy Brendan Smyth, T.D regarding the North/South Interconnector.

On the proposal of Cllr Keelan, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor, it was agreed that this Council notes with great concern Eirgrid's plans to push ahead with a pylon supported 400kv overground line, given technology is evolving at a rapid pace in how electric transmission lines/ interconnections are being built, including the recently announced Kildare to Meath line (400KV circa 50 Km underground line). That we write to all Oireachtas members for this constituency requesting that they will take whatever action necessary to ensure the people of County Monaghan and other impacted counties are treated equally by ensuring the North South Interconnector is placed underground, as this is the only method that is acceptable to the people if this project is ever to be delivered.

On the proposal of Cllr Keelan, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor, it was agreed that this Council writes to An Taoiseach Michéal Martin TD seeking clarification as to when a review of the North South Interconnector will commence and what will be the terms of reference of this review. That the campaigning groups MAPC, NEPP be involved in and consulted on this review process.

That we write to all Oireachtas members for this constituency requesting they take whatever action necessary to ensure this will happen.

15. To receive update on the Ulster Canal project.

The members noted the following correspondence:

- Letter from the Chief Executive of Waterways Ireland regarding the development of the Ulster Canal from Clones to Middletown, Co. Armagh.

On the proposal of Cllr Connolly, seconded by Cllr S. Treanor, it was agreed that the Council writes to An Taoiseach Michéal Martin, TD, Minister Catherine Martin, TD, Minister Darragh O'Brien TD and Nichola Mallon MLA seeking an update on the progression of the Ulster Canal Project from Clones, Co. Monaghan to Middletown, Co. Armagh.

On the proposal of Cllr Coyle, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor it was agreed that the Council writes again to the Ulster Canal Advisory Forum enquiring when the next meeting of the Forum will take place.

16. Questions:

Cllr C. Carthy asked:

1. In relation to the Conabury Hill Housing Estate, Castleblayney, will the Council:
 - (a) commit to engaging with private landowners adjacent to this estate to establish a downhill sewerage connection to the public waste system (rather than the current system of pumping waste uphill to public system)?

Reply: Irish Water, in conjunction with Monaghan County Council will review the infrastructure that is in place at present. Irish Water again in conjunction with Monaghan County Council will request a HSQE inspection to be carried out on this Asset.

- (b) consider replacing the damaged timber fence surrounding the estates waste treatment plant with a proper, heavy-duty, steel fence to ensure access is completely restricted to unauthorised individuals?

Reply: Conabury Housing Estate had not been Taken In Charge by Monaghan County Council.

2. Has Monaghan County Council been given any update on the Carrickmacross Group Home by the HSE or Respond and have they confirmed when:
 - (a) The final snag works will be concluded?
 - (b) It is envisaged the operators will be starting on site?
 - (c) It is expected that residents will be moving in?

Reply: The HSE has provided the following response: -

“HSE CHO Area 1 is progressing with the necessary requirements to have the Carrickmacross Group Home for people with physical and sensory disabilities operational by Quarter 4, 2021, further to funding received in the CHO1 Disability Services 2021 budget allocation in support of its Operational Plan. HSE Estates is progressing engagements with the housing association to progress the minor works identified as a requirement in February, 2020, which included:

- Preliminaries
- Remedial Works to Access Areas
- Planters
- Proximity Reader and Fob to automatic door
- Remedial works to thresholds
- Window Restrictors
- Remedial works to WC
- Nurse Call point to each room linked to nurse station
- Non recording cameras
- Privacy Screen

A time frame for completion of said minor works is not yet finalised. The HSE has commenced a process to update the service requirements based on residents’ needs and will be engaging with potential service providers on this basis”.

3. What works are planned to further deal with urban dereliction in Co. Monaghan in 2021 and are there any plans in place to bring unused housing units in town centres back into use?

Reply: Monaghan County Council is dealing with urban dereliction throughout County Monaghan. The Clones Renewal Scheme is at an advanced stage, providing 24 social houses and apartments on previously derelict sites. The Lui na Greine housing development in Scotstown village is under construction, restoring 4 derelict houses and providing 28 additional social houses on a derelict site. Contracts will shortly be awarded for two houses to be constructed in place of a derelict building at 12 Church Street, Ballybay and to bring a derelict house at McCurtain Street, Clones back into use. Works will soon commence on six single-storey properties at Folly Court, Ballybay to bring them into use as social houses. Tenders have been received for the proposed conversion of a property at Church Hill in Clones to renew and convert a single dwelling into two 2-bedroom town houses, to be submitted to the Department for Housing, Local Government and Heritage for final approval shortly.

Consultants have also been appointed and are working on a funding application submission to deal with derelict buildings and unfinished housing site to the rear of Ballybay Main Street, it is proposed that the derelict buildings will be demolished and a small social housing development will be constructed to accommodate small families and older persons.

Monaghan County Council has a significant programme underway for addressing dereliction and continues to identify opportunities to help resolve derelict properties in town and village centres and to seek further funding under the national social housing programmes.

Cllr N. Keelan asked:

4. (a) How many families/individuals are availing of the housing assistance payment (HAP) at present across the county?

Reply: There are currently 610 families/individuals availing of HAP support from Monaghan County Council.

(b) what is the breakdown per municipal district, given that this payment is made directly to private landlords

Reply: Ballybay Clones MD 114;

Monaghan MD 282;

Carrickmacross Castleblayney MD 177

The remaining (37) are HAP supported tenancies for families/individuals residing outside of County Monaghan and availing of support under the terms of Inter-Authority movement within HAP. These families/individuals have sourced accommodation outside of County Monaghan for family/ personal/ employment reasons.

(c) how much is this scheme costing to run per month/annum?

Reply: The monthly cost, assuming all tenants pay their weekly rent contribution, is €184,590.88/ with an annual cost of €2,215,090.60

5. In relation to septic tank inspections and the protection of our water quality and environment,
- how many septic tanks were inspected since the introduction of the grant aid scheme back in 2013?
 - what was the outcome of these inspections?
 - how many grants were paid out to date for the upgrading of septic tanks that have failed inspection since 2013?

Reply:

Actions	Outcomes
Number of Inspections by Monaghan County Council Since 2013	205
Outcome	128 Compliance Notices Issued 70 Advisory Notices
Grants Issued	16

6. In relation to the Sliabh Dubh estate at Corduff and acknowledging the remedial works carried out by this council regarding the wastewater treatment plant and other associated works, when is it hoped to progress and complete the taken in charge process?

Reply: The development at Sliabh Dubh, Corduff has significant defects, some of which are currently being remedied. On foot of the completion of these works it is intended that the taking in charge process can be progressed.

7. What is the up to date position in relation to the upgrading of the Dundalk to Cavan regional road (R178) in particular the section from Carrickmacross to Sherlock town?

Reply: A steering committee has been established between the three relevant authorities (Monaghan, Louth and Cavan), led by Cavan Co. Council. The steering committee met with the DTTaS regional inspector on 23rd March to discuss progress. DTTaS has provided funding via Cavan Co. Council to complete a risk-based analysis of the route. This analysis is being carried out by consultants to identify the most dangerous sections of the route for future improvement. When the analysis has been completed MCC Roads section will be in a better position to advise what sections of the route are to be prioritised. As of now, DTTaS has not committed to funding the future improvement works but have advised that funding may be possible under the Specific Improvement Grant scheme.

8. What is the up to date position in relation to the Local Lane Improvement Scheme (LIS) number of lanes on the list, funding available, when the scheme will be open to new applicants etc?

Reply: There are 42 applicants on the current list and 118 applicants awaiting to be assessed for the new scheme. We are currently awaiting on the allocation of funding for 2021. The Roads Department are continually monitoring waiting lists and assessing what can be done with available funding, and we propose to reopen the scheme when a significant portion of the current applicants have been cleared. Given the current rate of funding this may take several years.

Cllr S. Treanor asked

9. What was the final cost of the last phase of the N2 road from Corracrin to Emyvale?

Reply: The Total Expenditure to date on the N2 Phase 3 Scheme is €12.8Million. This includes Planning & Design costs, Land & Property fees, Archaeology, Main Construction costs, Repairs to Residual network and Supervision costs.

There are outstanding payments for utility service diversions and Landowner Agreements which will bring the final cost to circa €13.3m.

Cllr S. Conlon asked:

10. Further to my proposal at the February 8th meeting to write to Minister Darragh O'Brien TD and Minister Heather Humphries TD highlighting the inadequate level of Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) to recipients dealing with increased rents, what number of households have applied and received a discretionary top up to their HAP payment and of these, how many received the full entitlement of the 20% top-up?

Reply: There is a total of 610 active HAP supported tenancies as at 1st April 2021, 384 have received 20% discretionary top up.

A further 72 HAP supported tenants have qualified for an increase of less than 20% which has meant in some cases they had no top up to their landlord, e.g. – capping limit for single person is €500 – monthly landlord rent is €550.00 – top up required is 10%.

11. In ensuring a multi-agency stakeholder approach in developing and promoting safe cycling and walking routes especially for children, will the relevant Council Sections engage with local schools in assisting with advice and support in applications made under the recently announced Safe Routes to School Programme?

Reply: The new Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programme was launched by the Department of Transport and supported by the Department of Education on March 20th 2021. It will be operated by An Taisce's Green-Schools Programme in partnership with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and the local authorities.

There are three elements which schools may apply for:

- 1. To accelerate the delivery of walking/scooting and cycling infrastructure on key access routes to schools.**
- 2. To provide "front of school" treatments which will enhance access to school grounds.**
- 3. To expand the amount of bike parking available at schools.**

The Departments of Transport and Education will invite every school principal to submit an online 'Expression of Interest' (EOI) form. The EOIs will be reviewed by SRTS team which will then select schools for participation in the programme for 2021. Once applications have been assessed based on a number of agreed criteria, SRTS will then liaise with selected schools and the relevant local authorities on infrastructural interventions for their schools.

SRTS will produce an outline delivery plan for each school showing interventions at concept design stage, and submit the delivery plan to local authorities to take forward for further design and implementation. Local authorities can then access dedicated funding from the NTA for the projects. The school involved will act as a local champion of the proposed measures to ensure community buy-in for the proposals. Support will be provided by SRTS and the NTA. Local authorities will undertake proposed interventions in relation to the front of school environs and walking and cycling infrastructure around schools to be funded by the NTA. SRTS will deliver cycle parking.

Monaghan County Council is committed to participating fully in the programme. The Road Safety Officer is currently liaising with the Municipal Districts in order to progress suitable projects within the county.

12. For the purpose of maximising opportunities for local business and service providers to tender for Council contracts, particularly for contracts that fall below the EU tender threshold of €50,000 for the provision of works and works related services, and €25,000 for provision of supplies and services contracts, I ask the Council's Procurement Section to increase their level of advertising in this regard across all media formats.

Reply: MCC frequently seeks quotes for lower value contracts through the national public procurement websites www.etenders.gov.ie and www.supplygov.ie. These sites are designed to streamline the procurement process of contracting authorities. The Supplygov site is focused in particular on the categories of Plant Hire and Minor Building & Civil Works. Both sites allow local authorities to procure goods, works and services through Requests for Tenders (RFTs) and Requests for Quotations (RFQs). Suppliers can also become registered for Frameworks or Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS), which are similar to frameworks.

We encourage suppliers to register with these sites and specify all types of goods, services and works that they supply. This allows MCC to be aware of them and to request quotes from them when competitions arise. Registration on both sites is free of charge, and there is also helpful information on these sites in relation to public procurement guidelines and procedures.

17. Notices of Motion:

Cllr McCooey requested that the following motion be withdrawn from the agenda. This was agreed.

- 1. That Monaghan County Council commits to self-funding The Flood Mitigation Scheme for the L3720 at Annadrummond, Castleblayney, County Monaghan on the condition that the next application for funding to the OPW (Office of Public Works) is unsuccessful.*

Cllrs McKenna, Cllr Bennett seconded

- 2. In view of the importance of the poultry sector to this country and particularly to this region, that this Council calls on the Minister and the Department of Agriculture, to set up a permanent compensation fund in order to protect the poultry sector from the ongoing disease outbreaks that have intensified in the last few years.*

Following a short debate on the motion, the Cathaoirleach put it to the members and it was agreed. Cllr McKenna requested that the resolution be circulated to the Oireachtas members. This was agreed.

Cllr Coyle proposed, Cllr O'Hanlon seconded:

- 3. That Monaghan County Council demands from the Minister for Health and the Government, the immediate implementation of the changes to the Nursing Homes Support Scheme commonly referred to as the Fair Deal Scheme, as committed to by the previous Government, to place caps of three years on family owned farms and businesses, when accessing/calculating the means to pay/charges for Nursing Home Care, as the current system is potentially disastrous for family successors viability.*

Following a short debate on the motion, the Cathaoirleach put it to the members and it was agreed. It was agreed that the motion would be circulated to all local authorities.

Cllr Maxwell stated he was opposed to the motion being circulated to the Minister or local authorities as the matter had been finalised the previous day.

Cllrs Bennett proposed, Cllr Carthy seconded:

4. *In solidarity with community groups and clubs that will be relied upon to provide community socialising and public events following the lifting of Covid restrictions, and that over the past year have experienced a decimation of finances, that Monaghan County Council write to the relevant Government Departments seeking the introduction of a funding stream aimed at Communities Resourced to Rejuvenate And Inspire Connections (CRRIC) that will encourage voluntary led groups to organise neighbourhood / community celebration events similar to previous Council supported initiatives 'Street Feast' and the 'Big Hello' where neighbours and friends meet to celebrate a family fun day aimed boosting community spirit.*

Following a short debate on the motion, the Cathaoirleach put it to the members and it was agreed.

Cllr Conlon proposed, Cllr Carthy seconded:

5. *That this Council seeks clarification from the Office of Data Commissioner, Minister for Justice Helen McEntee T.D. and Minister for Environment, Eamon Ryan T.D. regarding lack of provisions contained in both the Waste Management Act and the Litter Pollution Act for the use of CCTV acquired evidence by local authorities in legal proceedings.*

Following a short debate on the motion, the Cathaoirleach put it to the members and it was agreed.

18. Votes of Sympathy/Congratulations.

Vote of sympathy:

It was agreed that the sympathy of the Council be extended to former Chief Superintendent John O'Reilly on the sad passing of his wife Lorraine, RIP

Vote of congratulations:

It was agreed that a vote of congratulations would be extended to James Maloney MP who represents Etobicoke-Lakeshore in the Canadian House of Commons, in successfully passing a resolution that declares that, on an annual basis, the month of March is Irish Heritage Month throughout Canada.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____

Cathairleach

Meetings Administrator

Date: _____
