

Minutes of Meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Garage Theatre, on Monday 14th June, 2021 at 1.00 p.m.

Chair: Cllr C. Carthy, Cathaoirleach

Present: Cllrs. Aughey, Bennett, Campbell, Conlon, Coyle, Connolly, Gilliland, Keelan, Maxwell, McCooey, 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, Director of Services, Mr. Cathal Flynn and Mr. P. McGuinness A/Director of Services, Mr. A. Hughes, Senior Planner, Ms. M. McGarvey, Senior Staff Officer and Ms. C. Thornton, Meetings Administrator.

Apology: Cllr Kerr-Conlon.

At the outset the Cathaoirleach proposed a vote of sympathy with the following staff members on their recent bereavements –

- Frank Shevlin, Council employee on the death of his mother Ann Shevlin RIP.
- Karen McDonnell, Council employee on the death of her mother Kathleen McDonald RIP.
- Stephen McGeough, Council employee on the death of his mother Colette McGeough RIP

All members and the Chief Executive associated themselves with the expressions of sympathy. A minute's silence was observed as a mark of respect.

Cllr Carthy, referring to a sudden cardiac incident at an international soccer match the previous weekend, called for the publication of the location of all publicly accessible AED's (defibrillators) in Co. Monaghan, so that people dealing with a sudden cardiac arrest are aware of the location of the nearest available AED to them. He also called for more people to participate in First aid and CPR courses to enable them to deal with such an incident.

On the proposal of Cllr Conlon seconded by Cllr O'Hanlon it was agreed that the relevant Council sections initiate outreach with our representative business organisations and throughout the county to seek expressions of interest from businesses located in urban populated areas to install an AED device at their premises.

1. Confirmation of Minutes

(i) Minutes of Council meeting held on 10th May, 2021

On the proposal of Cllr Maxwell, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor, it was agreed that the minutes of the Council meeting held on the 10th May 2021, be confirmed.

(i) Minutes of Adjourned Council meeting held on 17th May, 2021

On the proposal of Cllr Maxwell, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor, it was agreed that the minutes of the adjourned Council meeting held on the 17th May 2021, be confirmed

2. Correspondence.

The following correspondence was circulated with the agenda for the meeting:

- Letter from the Office of the Minister for Social Protection and Rural & Community Development, Ms. Heather Humphreys, T.D. regarding the Carer's Allowance.
- Letter from the Office of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine Mr. Charlie McConalogue, T.D. regarding the Poultry Issue.
- Email from the Office of the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications Mr. Eamon Ryan, T.D. regarding to CCTV and litter/waste enforcement.
- Acknowledgement letter from the Office of the Taoiseach Mr. Micheál Martin, T.D. regarding Business Grant/Loans.
- Letter from the Minister for Community Development and Charities Mr. Joe O'Brien, T.D. regarding "The Big Hello" community event.
- Letter from Deputy Matt Carthy, T.D. regarding the unilateral proposals by British Government to grant amnesty to their state forces.
- Email from the Minister for Social Protection and Rural & Community Development, Ms. Heather Humphreys, T.D. regarding the unilateral proposals by British Government to grant amnesty to their state forces.
- Email from Senator Robbie Gallagher regarding a response from the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine Mr. Charlie McConalogue, T.D. regarding the Poultry Issue.
- Email on behalf of Deputy Pauline Tully regarding responses received from the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine Mr. Charlie McConalogue, T.D. regarding the Poultry Issue.
- Resolution from Limerick City & County Council regarding policy on one-off rural housing in the Co and City Development Plan and the phrase "social and economic need" not be included.
- Resolution from Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council regarding the immediate termination of the current Planning and Development (Strategic Housing Developments) Regulations 2017.
- Resolution from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council regarding the protection of Honeybees.
- Resolution from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council regarding Equitable Global Distributions of vaccines, Treatments and Therapies developed to combat Coronavirus.

The following additional correspondence which had been received after the agenda had issued, was also circulated:

- Acknowledgement letter from the Office of the Taoiseach Mr. Micheál Martin, T.D. regarding Amnesty for crimes during NI conflicts.
- Acknowledgement letter from the Office of the Taoiseach Mr. Micheál Martin, T.D. regarding Broadband.

Proposals arising out of correspondence:

On the proposal of Cllr Bennet, seconded by Cllr Carthy, it was agreed that the Council write again to the Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys TD, asking her not to means test Carers. The cost saving that Carers provide is not being appreciated and needs to be urgently supported.

On the proposal of Cllr Bennett, seconded by Cllr Carthy, it was agreed that the Council support the resolution from Sligo County Council calling on the Minister for Social Protection to ensure that all working mothers and their partners be allowed to take paid leave after suffering a

miscarriage or stillbirth. This bereavement allowance would give employees three days leave when a pregnancy ends in miscarriage or stillbirth, rather than forcing them to use their sick leave.

On the proposal of Cllr Bennett, seconded by Cllr Connolly it was agreed that the Council support the resolution from Sligo County Council calling on the Minister for Justice to re-consider her departments decision not to have a specific offence of stalking introduced onto the statute books and to not only introduce an offence of stalking but to also introduce longer sentences for the crime than that currently available to prosecutors.

On the proposal of Cllr Bennett, seconded by Cllr McKenna it was agreed that the Council support the motion from Fermanagh Omagh District Council calling on the British Government and the relevant Stormont & Dail Ministers to oppose the importation of Italian honeybees onto the island of Ireland, North and South and to move to completely ban such actions in the future.

On the proposal of Cllr Keelan, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor, it was agreed that in light of recent media reports regarding the delivery and target dates in relation to the rollout for high speed broadband throughout the county and country, that we seek a presentation from the NBI before year end.

On the proposal of Cllr O'Hanlon, seconded by Cllr Keelan it was agreed that the Council write to ComReg in relation to the poor broadband service in Carrickmacross and the rest of County Monaghan from private companies supplying broadband to this region.

3. To receive Presentation on Monaghan Digital Strategy 2021-2025

The Cathaoirleach welcomed, Aidan McKenna, Chair of the Monaghan Digital Steering Committee, Claire Cunningham, Vice Chair, Carmel O'Hare, Head of IS and John McArdle, IS Project Leader to the meeting and invited Mr. McKenna to make a presentation to the members.

During his presentation Mr. McKenna explained that the Digital Strategy is designed as an agile document that will change and adapt to emerging needs and trends with the county as recognised by its citizens, businesses and broader stakeholders. He stated that it was clear that people across Monaghan have embraced the digital revolution with enthusiasm. The strategy aims to build on this momentum and position the county to seize digital opportunities, ensure people can easily effectively access information and services. He also outlined the following

- The background to the Digital Strategy
- Engagement and Research
- Our Digital Principles
- 5 Strategic Digital Priorities – Digital Citizen; Digital Community; Digital Commerce; Digital Connectivity and Digital Council
- Our Digital Ambition – Citizen App and Made in Monaghan
- Transition to Digital – how we will move forward with ambition.
- Request for support from the Council
 - Hosting on www.monaghan.ie
 - Keep the focus on BCP rollout and mobile national coverage as a key priority for the county

- Active support, endorsement and promotion of key priority initiatives and projects
- Encourage all political parties, community groups, stakeholders and businesses to engage with the initiatives
- Ensure digital and innovation are key enabling criteria to all new projects and policies in Monaghan.

Following his presentation Mr. McKenna responded to queries from the members.

On the proposal of Cllr P. Treanor, seconded by Cllr Maxwell, it was agreed that the Council supports the 'asks' from the Monaghan Digital Strategy Steering Committee and proposes the addition of two SPC Chairs, Cllr Sean Gilliland and Cllr Raymond Aughey to that Committee.

4. To consider recommendations and minutes from Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 1st June, 2021.

The members noted the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 1st June, 2021 which had been circulated.

On the proposal of Cllr Keelan seconded by Cllr Bennett, it was agreed that the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 1st June, 2021 and the recommendations contained therein be approved.

5. To approve the appointment of two members to the Local Community Development Committee

On the proposal of Cllr Maxwell, seconded by Cllr Aughey it was agreed that the Council approve the appointment of the following persons to the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

- (i) Ms. Deirdre Byrne representing Cavan Monaghan ETB (replacing John Kearney CMETB)
- (ii) Ms. Sharon Curran representing the Department of Social Protection (replacing Brendan McGuinness DSP)

6. To fix date for presentations to the Council (Sliabh Beagh Adventures/Treinfhir Clann)

It was agreed that the Council would receive online presentations (via Microsoft Teams) from the Sliabh Beagh Adventures and the Treinfhir Clann on Wednesday 14th July 2021 as follows:

- Sliabh Beagh Adventures – 6pm
- Treinfhir Clann – 7pm

7. To receive Management Report - May 2021

The members noted the Management Report for the month of May which had been circulated with the agenda.

The Chief Executive and Directors of Services responded to queries from the elected members.

On the proposal of Cllr Coyle, seconded by Cllr Bennett, it was agreed that the Council requests the Minister for Climate Action, Communications and Transport, Eamon Ryan TD and the government to make special funding available to County Monaghan for the provision and installation of electric vehicle charging points across the county in each of our towns and villages.

Cllr Bennett proposed, Cllr McKenna seconded, that Monaghan County Council carry out DNA testing on animals being dumped in Monaghan. That we request that the Department of Agriculture provide the DNA of all animals for traceability purposes. This measure would prevent the dumping of animals in the county.

It was agreed that the motion would be forwarded to the Environment and Climate Action SPC for consideration.

8. Business submitted by Chief Executive

The Chief Executive informed the members that because 2022 is a revaluation year and in accordance with the General Scheme of Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2021, any decision by a local authority to vary the basic rate of Local Property Tax must be taken before the 31st August 2021. He suggested that the matter would be considered at the June CPG meeting and by the full Council at the July meeting. This was agreed.

9. Matters arising out of the minutes of meetings held on 10th & 17th May, 2021

Matters arising out of the minutes of the Council meetings held on 10th & 17th May 2021 were responded to by the relevant officials.

10. Update on N2 National Primary Road Schemes

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

11. To receive update on North South Interconnector project

The members noted the following correspondence:

- Acknowledgement letter from the Office of the Taoiseach, Mr. Micheál Martin, T.D., regarding the North/South Interconnector.
- Email from Minister for Social Protection and Rural & Community Development, Ms. Heather Humphreys, T.D. regarding the North/South Interconnector.
- Email from the Office of the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications, Mr. Eamon Ryan, T.D regarding the North/South Interconnector.
- Email from Minister for Social Protection and Rural & Community Development, Ms. Heather Humphreys, T.D. regarding the North/South Interconnector.
- Email from Deputy Brendan Smith, T.D regarding the North/South Interconnector.
- Email from Deputy Joe O'Reilly, T.D regarding the North/South Interconnector.
- Email on behalf of Deputy Pauline Tully regarding responses received from Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications, Mr. Eamon Ryan, T.D regarding the North/South Interconnector.

On the proposal of Cllr Keelan, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor, it was agreed that this Council writes to An Taoiseach Michael Martin TD as head of Government calling for a more hands on approach to be taken in relation to the NSI, given the huge advances and understanding of technology available and evolving in relation to the undergrounding of high voltage electrical cabling, including potential cost savings.

On the proposal of Cllr Keelan, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor it was agreed that this Council writes to An Taoiseach Michael Martin TD, Minister Eamon Ryan TD and to Eirgrid requesting that the campaigning groups NEPP & MAPC be given an opportunity to take part in a meaningful way in the upcoming review of the NSI.

12. To receive update on the Ulster Canal project

The members noted the following correspondence:

- Letter from the office of the Minister for Infrastructure Northern Ireland, Ms. Nichola Mallon, MLA, regarding Ulster Canal.
- Letter from the office of the Minister for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Mr. Malcolm Noonan regarding the restoration of the Ulster Canal.
- Letter from the office of the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Ms. Catherine Martin, T.D. regarding the Ulster Canal Project.

On the proposal of Cllr P. Treanor, seconded by Cllr McElvaney, it was agreed that the Council writes to Minister Darragh O'Brien and Minister Nichola Mallon asking them to collaborate through the North South Ministerial Council and give approval to Waterways Ireland to develop the Ulster Canal from Lough Erne to Lough Neagh.

13. Questions

Cllr A. McCooey will ask:

1. (a) Can Monaghan County Council provide any details on the Hen Harrier Scheme uptake in the County. Sliabh Beagh was one of only 7 designated areas land which was open to applications.

Reply: The Hen Harrier project (<http://www.henharrierproject.ie/about.html>) is a Results Based Agri Environmental scheme operating in the 7 SPAs designated for Hen Harrier in the state. It delivers payments to farmers for actions that benefit the Hen Harrier and payments for the results of these actions. The project is an EIP (European Innovation Partnership) Locally Led Scheme. The Project is funded by the Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine as part of Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

- (b) How many landowners have signed up to the scheme?
The information on the number of farmers participating within the Hen Harrier project in county Monaghan is held by the Hen Harrier project itself. These data are available to the department of agriculture and the Hen Harrier project but are not released publicly.
- (c) Can Monaghan County Council do anything to take part in the scheme and promote conservation of wildlife?

Reply: Monaghan County Council is unable to directly take part in this scheme as it is an agri-environmental scheme run by the Hen harrier project and funded by the department of agriculture, however Monaghan County Council, through the Collaborative Action for the Nature Network (CANN) project, managed through the heritage section, actively engages and collaborates with the Hen Harrier project.

We are currently collaborating on innovative upland grazing methods. We have actively recruited the Hen Harrier project into a cross border wildfire management planning exercise for the Sliabh Beagh SPAs north and south.

The CANN project and heritage section are actively and deeply engaged in promoting the conservation of wildlife within the Sliabh Beagh SPAs. Since 2017 this project has been delivering direct conservation actions for the protected habitats and bird species found in the area. We have carried out a wide range of public engagement events around nature conservation and will be launching an additional community engagement project in the Autumn.

2. Can the Council provide information on the status for Killycard Manor being taken in charge by Monaghan County Council?

Reply: The Planning Authority has not received a request to have Killycard Manor taken in charge.

Clr A. Campbell will ask:

3. Regarding the Change Adaption funding which was applied for from the DTTAS.

(a) What is the update on this funding?

Reply: Funding allocation of €440k has been received from DTTAS for 2021 schemes.

(b) What plans are in place for this funding?

Reply: The following schemes have been approved:

Road Number	Scheme Title	Scheme Description	Allocation
LT30103	Drumfaltra, Ballybay	Cleaning Channel, upgrading 2 no culverts	€60,000
L49012	Tullylougherry – Knocknacran	In Year 1 - Verge Treatment including works to parapet walls. In Year 2 100mm overlay for 60m	€15,000
L49012	Tullylougherry – Knocknacran	In Year 1 - Verge Treatment including works to parapet walls. In Year 2 100mm overlay for 60m	€15,000
R186 & L-5051	Derrykinnigh Beg Culvert Replacement	Replace undersized and partially collapsed Clapper Culvert that traverses the R186 and L-5051.	€80,000
LS7110	Garrybawn, Latton	Build up of bank with rock armour and clay to cover recently exposed high pressure water main following flash flooding.	€10,000
LP2171	Carnbane Smithboro	Build up of bank that has slipped with rock armour and clay following recent flooding.	€20,000
LT76001	Drumaliss LT76001	Verge Treatment including works to parapet walls and an overlay for 120m	€20,000
LT76001	Drumaliss LT76001	Verge Treatment including works to parapet walls and an overlay for 120m	€30,000

LS8831	Descart	Raising the road by 150mm for 250m including verge treatment	€50,000
LT36002-0	Milltown	Raising the road by 150mm for 125m including verge treatment	€35,000
R180	Nafferty	Year 1 - Design for Flood Alleviation Measures & Land Agreement. Year 2 Construction	€15,000
R180	Cloughvalley	Installation of new drainage pipeline and gully's including structural inlay	€30,000
LP3720	Annadrummond	Design and Construction for Flood Alleviation Works (Design Fees 50,000 & Construction estimated 550,000)	€50,000

(c) When will these plans be rolled out?

Reply: Schemes are to be completed by end of 2021.

4. With Fáilte Ireland's new Outdoor Dining Enhancement Investment Scheme, in partnership with Local Authorities to facilitate greater capacity in outdoor dining by supporting Local Authorities and hospitality businesses with upgrading and enhancing streets and public spaces and implementing weather-proofing solutions which will facilitate year-round outdoor dining. With this investment scheme to be delivered under the Fáilte Ireland 'Opening the Outdoors' strategic pillar which aims to capitalise our outdoor assets and re-imagine our urban spaces. With up to €4,000 available in grant aid for individual businesses.

(a) How many applications have the Council received?

Reply: 10 applications have been received. Several more are expected shortly, with businesses awaiting receipts before submitting their applications.

(b) How many has been approved?

Reply: 4 have been approved, 2 are ineligible at this time (traditional pubs – although they have been notified that an announcement is expected shortly about their inclusion into the scheme) and 4 have been asked to provide further information

(c) In terms of the planning laws for using outdoor spaces how many businesses have looked for this facility?

Reply: There have been 2 Section 254 applications to Monaghan MD, 0 for Ballybay Clones MD (although 1 is expected) and 1 for Carrickmacross – Castleblayney MD (3 more expected)

(d) What plans has the Council in place for the local authority part of this funding?

Reply: Under the Weatherproofing and Outdoor Dining Scheme which was open to Local Authorities, 1 application amounting to €156K was submitted by MCC by the deadline of 27 May. This application was for Clones. There were no eligible project proposals from Monaghan or Carrickmacross - Castleblayney MDs under this scheme.

5. With regards to the ongoing works by Jacobs Consulting on the N2 Ardee to Castleblayney road scheme.

(a) What is the update on the topographical and environmental surveys?

Reply: Monaghan County Council is in the process of appointing a supplier to undertake the topographical survey works. It is hoped to have the surveyor appointed and that works will commence in June.

The environmental surveys are underway with ecological surveys ongoing. Additional environmental surveys will be undertaken in-line with national guidance, which means they will have to be completed at certain times of the year. The project team will keep landowners updated when these surveys are required.

The project team would like to thank landowners for their continued co-operation as these surveys are undertaken.

- (b) What is the outline and time scale for the agriculture, ecology and noise surveys which are due to commence?

Reply: The ecological surveys are complex as the national guidelines require many different types of surveys, some of which can only be undertaken at certain times of year. For instance, wintering bird surveys were undertaken between January and March 2021 and the surveys will be repeated in October – December 2021 when wintering birds like whooper swans return to Ireland. Ecological survey works will continue as appropriate through 2021 and into 2022. The project team will work with landowners to take into account any biosecurity and any works ongoing on the farms (e.g silage cutting).

All properties in the study area will be modelled for noise impacts from the proposed scheme, however noise surveys will only be undertaken at specific locations. The noise surveys are expected to commence in August 2021 and the project team will contact relevant landowners in due course.

Jacobs has appointed an agronomist who is expected to start contacting agricultural landowners affected by the scheme from mid-June. This will be done in-line with Covid protocols and will take into account that it is a very busy time of the year for farmers. The agronomist will speak with landowners to determine the nature of their agricultural activities. That information will be used by the project team in developing the initial design.

- (c) What is the update on the ground investigations work and what will this entail?

Reply: Monaghan County Council is in the process of awarding 2 separate contracts for Ground Investigation Works on the N2 Ardee to Castleblayney and on the N2 Clontibret to Border Road Schemes. Ground investigations will include boreholes, probes, trial pits and the installation of standpipes to monitor groundwater levels. It is planned to write to relevant landowners in the coming weeks with details of any ground investigation proposed on their lands and any compensation that would be due. Both Contractors will have an appointed Liaison Person to liaise with landowners and arrange access prior to works taking place.

6. With regard to Housing.

- (a) How much is Monaghan County Council currently paying out in HAP payments and what is the breakdown for each MD?

Reply: The Housing Assistance Payment Shared Services Centre operated by Limerick City and County Council have responsibility for the monthly payment of landlords and the collection of weekly tenant rents on behalf of each Local Authority.

The breakdown for HAP supported tenancies for Monaghan County Council is as follows:

	Monthly Payment to Landlord	Monthly Rent Accrual (Tenant Contribution)	Cost
TOTAL	€ 304,462.72	€128,778.00	€175,684.72
Ballybay Clones MD	€ 52,186.92	€ 23,471.50	€ 28,715.42
Carrickmacross Castleblayney MD	€ 77,295.49	€ 32,396.00	€ 44,899.49
Monaghan MD	€ 146,375.98	€ 65,513.50	€ 80,862.48
Inter Authority movement (HAP supported tenancies outside County Monaghan)	€ 28,604.33	€ 7,397.00	€ 21,207.33

- (b) How much is Monaghan County Council currently paying in the RAS payments and what is the breakdown for each MD?

Reply: Currently Monaghan County Council issues monthly landlord payments totalling €67,199.03 – breakdown below:-

	RAS Monthly Payment to Private Landlords	RAS Monthly Payment to AHB Landlords
TOTAL	€ 53,337.00	€13,862.03
Ballybay Clones MD	€ 6,772.00	€866.67
Carrickmacross Castleblayney MD	€ 13,390.00	€5,526.56
Monaghan MD	€ 33,175.00	€7,468.80

- (c) What are the main changes to the new application forms for housing which were introduced recently by the Department?

Reply: The main changes to the new social housing assessment regulations and the application form introduced by the Department on the 19th April 2021 involved the following: -

i. Changes to the content of the housing application form

This is to reflect changes that have arisen since the time of the original application form was developed (2011). This includes revised/rebranded government payments; inclusion of details that weren't available at the previous drafting of the form (Eircode/changed relationship with Britain); additional details for recording purposes (basis of need – unsustainable mortgage/ being on another local authority waiting list/inclusion of persons living in Direct Provision).

- ii. In conjunction these changes Part 8 is being changed to incorporate details relating to an individual's housing requirement and a section outlining whether there is a need for wheelchair accessible housing. Where an individual household is applying on these or other medical/disability grounds there is the requirement by the applicant to complete an additional Medical/Disability Form.**

iii. Changes to the Household Means Policy

The determination of whether an applicant household meets the income criteria will now be based on a calculation of their preceding 12 months

net average income prior to the date of the receipt of the application. Formerly the income criteria were based on the income details at the time of the application. This will require additional information being submitted by the applicant as well as additional assessment by the staff members.

iv. **Removal of Cap on the % increase in respect of each household member aged less than 18 years old**

Current regulations provide that the maximum income threshold may be increased by % in respect of each household over 18 – subject to a maximum of 10%. Also, there is a provision of 2.5% increase to the maximum increase to maximum threshold for every member of household under 18. Previously this was subject to an increase of 10%. This capping has now been deleted.

The changes were presented to all members of the SPC and the new application form and supporting guidance information were forwarded to all councillors for their information.

7. With the funding of €200,000 for the N53 Ballynacarry Bridge Replacement works ongoing.
- (a) What is the update of the procurement of design services for the scheme?
Reply: The Request for Tender (RFT) document for procurement of Consultants for design services is currently with TII Senior Bridge Management for review.
- (b) What is the update of the drafting of the Memorandum of Understanding for the steering group and who will be on this steering group?
Reply: A draft MOU has been prepared and circulated to Department for Infrastructure (Roads) and TII for review and comment. Engineering personnel from MCC, DFI and TII as well as the Engineering Consultant (when appointed) will form part of this steering Group.
- (c) When is it hoped that this group will meet?
Reply: The Engineering teams from MCC, DFI and TII are currently meeting monthly. The last meeting was on 2nd June 2021. The group will form the Steering Group which will continue to meet monthly.
- (d) What communications and commitment have MCC and TII got from Department of Infrastructure NI?
Reply: DFI has written to MCC agreeing in principle to the proposals for the replacement of the bridge and the associated infrastructure improvements. DFI welcomes TII's commitment to enable MCC to develop the proposals to the detailed design stage. Unfortunately, given the reduced funding available to the DFI, they are not able to commit to a financial contribution at this time, however, they have stated that they look forward to working with MCC and TII as the design is developed and the necessary approvals processes are progressed.
- (e) What is the next stage for this scheme?
Reply: Following receipt of feedback on the draft RFT, Roads will update the document and pending approval from TII, intend to tender for the Engineering Consultant for the design and planning of the scheme.

Cllr S. Conlon will ask:

8. Following my question from February last seeking to determine what new staffing resources were being allocated to facilitate implementation of Active Travel Measures, I ask for an update on how many new posts are being created for Monaghan County Council out of 248 announced by the Department, and have any appointments been made to date? Also out of the 30 Cycling Design Offices being created throughout the State, has Monaghan been selected as a location?

Reply: Monaghan County Council have sought sanction for 4 No. Posts to assist in the delivery of the Active Travel Grant Programme. Appointments to the posts will be completed in July from existing recruitment panels for the Grades in question. Cycling Design will be completed by the Active Travel Staff in question with assistance from professional services available on the NTS Framework.

Cllr B. McKenna will ask:

9. Will this Council contact the TII and request the installation without fail signage identifying Tiernaneil Cross on the N2. There are many cases where delivery vehicles make enquiries locally as to where is Tiernaneil Cross.

Reply: A sign indicating a crossroads would not be standard for a National Road. However, Roads will make enquiries with TII Signage section.

Cllr C. Carthy will ask:

10. Has any further progress been made in the 'Taking in charge' of the Alderwood housing estate, Carrickmacross and can the Council endeavour to push for this process to be expedited?

Reply: The Planning Authority are actively progressing the taking in charge process of Alderwood and are corresponding with the agent acting on behalf of the developer with regards to resolving outstanding issues.

11. What measures are being considered by Monaghan County Council to encourage and facilitate outdoor dining throughout the county this summer?

Reply: In terms of private provision, the Outdoor Dining Scheme for individual businesses has been advertised in the local press and radio stations and the Tourism Unit has notified eligible businesses about the scheme. This has been followed up with emails and phone calls to encourage applications. Details have been provided regarding application numbers to date, together with details on the Outdoor Dining application for Clones submitted under the LA Weatherproofing and Outdoor Dining Scheme by the 27 May deadline.

In relation to public dining spaces, there is provision for outdoor dining at key family recreation spaces such as Rossmore, Lough Muckno, Dartrey Forest, Billy Fox Memorial Park, Emy Lough, on Slaibh Beagh and at many smaller amenity spaces throughout the county.

12. In relation to dereliction, does the council have a full breakdown of housing units that remain vacant in Co. Monaghan and what measures are being considered to bring these units back into use?

Reply: Under the government Vacant Homes Scheme Monaghan County Council has coordinated 7 properties taken back into use under the Buy and Renew Scheme since

2019 (17 houses in 2018 delivered also). 2 properties have been taken back into use under the Repair and Lease Scheme since 2019 (4 units in 2018 delivered also), 80 houses have been taken back into use by Approved Housing Bodies in conjunction with Monaghan County Council since 2018 and 59 new homes will be delivered or in the process of being delivered on previously Derelict Sites in Co. Monaghan (including 32 on the unfinished housing development in Scotstown).

Further to this, since the inception of the Vacant Homes Programme the Vacant Homes Office carried out onsite inspections of circa 300 vacant homes in County Monaghan. Once vacancy is confirmed Monaghan County Council issues information regarding possible options to owners to bring vacant properties into use (such as the Repair and Lease Scheme) and engages with owners if they are interested, to advise them of the particulars of each scheme available. Monaghan County Council's Vacant Homes Office is registered with www.vacanthomes.ie where the public can provide the details of any vacant homes in their locality and the website will automatically notify the Vacant Homes Office by email for further investigation.

Monaghan County Council will continue gathering information and surveying vacant homes to provide a holistic profile on vacancy throughout County Monaghan, with the intention of encouraging the use of vacant homes wherever possible towards revitalising and repopulating the areas that are most affected by vacancy.

13. Can the Council follow up with the HSE to ensure that the proposed opening of the Carrickmacross Group home, scheduled for Q4 2021, is still on target?

Reply: Monaghan County Council contacted the HSE regarding the proposed opening of the Carrickmacross Group Home but no update was available. A letter has been issued to the HSE requesting an update.

Cllr N. Keelan will ask:

14. Will the Council give an outline as to what new changes have been made to the housing support application form and process, including the requirement to provide a sworn affidavit and a twelve month financial statement, were these changes discussed at SPC level, were they brought to the attention of the elected members at any point, or was this a directive from the department / Government at national level?

Reply: The main changes to the new social housing assessment regulations and the application form introduced by the Department on the 19th April 2021 involved the following: -

- (i) **Changes to the content of the housing application form**

This is to reflect changes that have arisen since the time of the original application form was developed (2011). This includes revised/rebranded government payments; inclusion of details that weren't available at the previous drafting of the form (Eircode/changed relationship with Britain); additional details for recording purposes (basis of need – unsustainable mortgage/ being on another local authority waiting list/inclusion of persons living in Direct Provision).

- (ii) In conjunction these changes Part 8 is being changed to incorporate details relating to an individual's housing requirement and a section outlining whether there is a need for wheelchair accessible housing. Where an individual household is applying on these or other medical/disability grounds there is the requirement by the applicant to complete an additional Medical/Disability Form.

(iii) Changes to the Household Means Policy

The determination of whether an applicant household meets the income criteria will now be based on a calculation of their preceding 12 months net average income prior to the date of the receipt of the application. Formerly the income criteria were based on the income details at the time of the application. This will require additional information being submitted by the applicant as well as additional assessment by the staff members.

(iv) Removal of Cap on the % increase in respect of each household member aged less than 18 years old. Current regulations provide that the maximum income threshold may be increased by % in respect of each household over 18 – subject to a maximum of 10%. Also, there is a provision of 2.5% increase to the maximum increase to maximum threshold for every member of household under 18. Previously this was subject to an increase of 10%. This capping has now been deleted. For clarity the revised application form, and changes as set out above were issued by the Department

14. In order to support the reopening of the hospitality sector including (hotels ,Restaurants cafes, public houses etc) and facilitate outdoor dining and also encourage people back into our towns and villages to shop and spend locally, is the Council getting many applications / enquiries for the provision of outdoor seating and other associated items and equipment?

Reply: 10 applications have been received. Several more are expected shortly, with businesses awaiting receipts before submitting their applications.

15. What is the overall picture county wide in relation to the provision and availability of hot desking facilities, is there availability of hot desking at the CTEK building in Carrickmacross or is this facility over subscribed at present?

Reply: Hot desking facilities are available in M-Tek, C-Tek, Castleblayney Enterprise Centre and a new facility, the Station House in Monaghan. Community facilities can be booked online at www.connectedhubs.ie. The CTEK facility managed by Enterprising Monaghan currently provides 8 desks and the facility is adequate to meet demand at the moment.

16. In advance of the rollout of high speed broadband across County Monaghan, which will take up to seven years , what is the up to date position in relation to broadband connection points (BCP) across the county , what is the up to date position in relation to the provision of WiFi facilities across the county , what is the up to date position in relation to the provision of a BCP in Inniskeen village , will the council ensure that these facilities are well advertised?

Reply: A total of 16 Broadband Connection Points have been allocated for County Monaghan. This total is higher than any other local authority area nationally with the exception of counties which have both a city and county area. In addition, we have installed public Wifi under the Wifi4EU scheme in 35 locations throughout the county including community centres, public buildings, tourist areas and playparks. Within the county, we also have public wifi in public spaces within all 5 towns. BCPs are intended to be identified in rural areas where broadband is very poor. Inniskeen already has gigabit fibre broadband in the village. Wifi4EU connections and wifi points have been installed in Inniskeen Community Centre and in the Patrick Kavanagh Centre. All of the BCPs and Wifi4EU sites have been mapped by the GIS section. This map will also be included in the County Digital Strategy being launched later this month.

17. What is the up to date position in relation to the various housing adaptation grants, including applications approved, applications being accessed, available funding etc?

Reply: An initial allocation of €1,286,225 for 2021 was received from the Department in March 2021. Based on the volume of applications received, Monaghan County Council requested an additional allocation of €513,775 which was approved, giving an overall total allocation for 2021 in the amount of €1.8m for the delivery of Housing Grants. To date in 2021, Monaghan County Council Housing Section has received 268 applications. In the same period, we have approved 172 applications; paid out on 78 applications and recouped 59 applications in the amount of €445,336.

Cllr R. Truell will ask:

18. Could I ask that the Executive of Monaghan County Council examine a proposal for more public outdoor dining spaces in County Monaghan, at suitable locations which would be of interest for families who wish to use such spaces? Now, more than ever, we are being forced to identify alternative ways for recreational activities “outside” hence provision of public dining spaces such as picnic tables, or areas to hold BBQs would be of great use to families in Co. Monaghan.

Reply: In terms of private provision, the Outdoor Dining Scheme for individual businesses has been advertised in the local press and radio stations and the Tourism Unit has notified eligible businesses about the scheme. This has been followed up with emails and phone calls to encourage applications. Details have been provided regarding application numbers to date, together with details on the Outdoor Dining application for Clones submitted under the LA Weatherproofing and Outdoor Dining Scheme by the 27 May deadline. In relation to public dining spaces, there is provision for outdoor dining at key family recreation spaces such as Rossmore, Lough Muckno, Dartrey Forest, Billy Fox Memorial Park, Emy Lough, on Slaibh Beagh and at many smaller amenity spaces throughout the county.

14. Notices of Motion

Cllr A. McCooey proposed, Cllr Bennett seconded:

1. That the members of Monaghan County Council support the victims of sexual abuse having a right to free psychological support and counselling after their court case ends and for as long as this therapy may be required.”

If the motion today passes, I request that this Council writes to the Minister responsible Deputy Roderic O’Gorman to request the funding be increased and victims be given the right to this invaluable and essential support in order to help those affected be the most heinous of crimes. I also wish to request that this motion will be sent to every Local Authority seeking their support in order to create a consensus on this issue at Local Government level.

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

Cllrs R. Aughey proposed, Cllr S. Coyle seconded:

2. That Monaghan County Council immediately examine, recommend and seek special funding from the Department of Transport for additional safety measures/necessary realignment works at the Scots Corner junction of the Tullycorbett-Clontibret

(R184)Road, the Monaghan/Braddock (LP3300)-Castleblayney (LP3421) Road, as road users and locals are very concerned for road safety at this very dangerous junction, which is shared by the Ballybay - Clones Municipal District and the Monaghan Municipal District.

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

Cllr R. Truell proposed, Cllr McElvaney seconded:

3. That Monaghan County Council agree to provide Communication Boards to be installed in playgrounds/parks throughout County Monaghan. These boards would allow children who are non-verbal or have additional communication needs to express themselves.

Ms. P. Monahan, Director stated that the Council had already engaged in this process and referred to the text contained within the Management Report relating to this item.

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

In the absence of Cllr Conlon, it was agreed to defer Notice of Motion (4) to the next meeting.

Cllrs P. Treanor proposed, Cllr Bennett seconded:

5. That Monaghan County Council writes to Minister Catherine Martin T.D. and Minister Leo Varadkar T.D., proposing that they do a feasibility study regarding the provision of bi-lingual (Irish/English) packaging on consumer goods on sale in Ireland. This would promote the Irish language in a more visible and accessible way. Existing supports to businesses from the state and stakeholders such as Conradh na Gaeilge should be extended through additional funding to ensure that Irish businesses will not suffer from the cost of translation, design or development.

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

Cllr P. Treanor requested that the Coiste Logainmneacha be re-established and soon as possible. This was agreed.

15. Votes of Sympathy/Congratulations.

It was agreed that a vote of congratulations would be extended to the following

- Corracrin National School on their success in the RSA Seatbelt Sherriff competition recently.
- Carrickmacross Emmetts Rounders team on winning the All-Ireland Men's Rounders Title.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Meetings Administrator

Date: _____