

Minutes of the Meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Council Chamber, M-Tek Building, Armagh Rd, Knockaconny, Monaghan, on Monday 16 December 2024 at 2.00pm

Chair: Cllr P. Gibbons, Cathaoirleach

Present: Cllrs Aughey, Campbell, Carthy, Clerkin, P. Conlon, S. Conlon, Coyle, Flynn, Gilliland, Johnston, Keelan, McAree, McCooey, O'Hanlon, P. Treanor, S. Treanor and Truell

Mr. R. Burns, Chief Executive, Mr. C. Flynn, Ms. C O'Hare, Directors of Services, Mr. G. McMahon, A/Director of Services, Mr. D. McElwaine deputising for Ms P Monahan; Ms. D. McQuaid, deputizing for Ms. O. McConnon, Ms. M. McGarvey, Meetings Administrator, Ms. A. McMeel, Assistant Staff Officer.

At the outset of the meeting, the Leas Cathaoirleach, Cllr P. Conlon, welcomed Niamh McCooey of Sinn Féin and Alan Johnston of Fine Gael who were selected by their respective parties to be co-opted on to the Council to fill the vacancies created by the recent election to the Dáil of their respective party colleagues, Cathy Bennett (Sinn Féin) and David Maxwell, (Fine Gael).

Cllr. P. Conlon congratulated their former colleagues Cathy Bennett and David Maxwell on their election to the 34th Dáil and wished them well in their new roles and then proceeded with the co-option of the two new members.

1. Casual Vacancy

i) To fill the casual vacancy arising from Cathy Bennett's election to Dail Eireann

On the proposal of Cllr S. Conlon, seconded by Cllr B. McAree, it was agreed that Niamh McCooey be co-opted on to Monaghan County Council to fill the seat vacated by Cllr C. Bennett.

ii) To fill the casual vacancy arising from David Maxwell's election to Dail Eireann

On the proposal of Cllr P. Clerkin, seconded by Cllr S. Gilliland, it was agreed that Alan Johnson be co-opted on to Monaghan County Council to fill the seat vacated by Cllr D. Maxwell.

2. Election of Cathaoirleach of the County of Monaghan

On the proposal of Cllr P. Treanor, seconded by Cllr N. Keelan, it was agreed that Cllr P. Gibbons be elected Cathaoirleach of the County of Monaghan.

3. i) Confirmation of Council Meeting Minutes held on 04 November 2024

On the proposal of Cllr P. Conlon, seconded by Cllr S. Conlon, it was agreed that the minutes of the Council meeting held on the 04 November 2024 be confirmed.

ii) Confirmation of Statutory Budget Minutes held on 19 November 2024

On the proposal of Cllr B. McAree, seconded by Cllr S. Flynn, it was agreed that the minutes of the Statutory Budget meeting held on the 19 November 2024 be confirmed.

4. Correspondence

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

- Acknowledgement email from the office of the Taoiseach regarding the resolution passed requesting the Government to adopt a zero-tolerance approach towards domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

- Acknowledgement email from the Private Secretary to the Minister for Health, regarding the resolution that the eligibility of the Primary Medical Certificate scheme be widened to allow for applicants 'without the use of one of their hands/arms or one of their legs and who require modifications to their vehicles in order to be able to drive'.
- Acknowledgement email from the Private Secretary to the Minister for Finance, regarding the resolution that the eligibility of the Primary Medical Certificate scheme be widened to allow for applicants 'without the use of one of their hands/arms or one of their legs and who require modifications to their vehicles in order to be able to drive'.
- Acknowledgement email from the Transport Minister's office regarding the request for funding for a Roadside Tree Survey and that MCC also be put forward as a pilot for the national scheme.
- Acknowledgement email from the Private Secretary to the Minister for Transport regarding the continued underfunding of Active Travel measures throughout Co. Monaghan.
- Acknowledgement email from the National Transport Authority regarding the continued underfunding of Active Travel measures throughout Co. Monaghan.
- Acknowledgement email from Minister Brendan Smyth, T.D., regarding the resolution that the eligibility of the Primary Medical Certificate scheme be widened to allow for applicants 'without the use of one of their hands/arms or one of their legs and who require modifications to their vehicles in order to be able to drive'
- Acknowledgement email from Senator Robbie Gallagher regarding the resolution that the eligibility of the Primary Medical Certificate scheme be widened to allow for applicants 'without the use of one of their hands/arms or one of their legs and who require modifications to their vehicles in order to be able to drive'.

4.1 Additional Correspondence

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

- Email from the Private Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Mr. Eamon Ryan, T.D., regarding Ash dieback.
- Email from the Private Secretary to the Minister for Finance, T.D., regarding the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers Scheme (DDS).
- Email from the Private Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Mr. Eamon Ryan, T.D., regarding Active Travel funding.
- Email from the Private Secretary to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Mr. Darragh O'Brien, T.D., regarding the additional costs of Retained Fire Officers, should be covered by DHLGH.
- Resolution from Wexford County Council calling on IPB to provide affordable underwriting options for insurance cover specifically tailored to the needs of community centres and similar community organisations and playgrounds.

Proposals arising out of correspondence:

On the proposal of Cllr. C. Carthy, seconded by Cllr. S. Flynn, it was agreed that this Council writes to the Office of An Taoiseach requesting that the review of the National Disability Strategy, specifically around the work carried out to progress NDIS proposals for needs-based, grant-aided, modern vehicle adaption supports to replace DDS, continue and, where possible, be expedited in order to allow those who need vehicle adaptations to be given the supports they need as quickly as possible.

On the proposal of Cllr S. Conlon, seconded by Cllr N. Keelan, it was agreed that, further to correspondence received from the Department of Transport, and given that a response is still yet to arrive from the National Transport Authority from the previous proposals dated November 4th, that this Council seeks clarification from both agencies regarding the €3 million Active Travel budget announced for 2024. Furthermore, asking has this total been allocated to Monaghan County Council to develop the multiple projects considered ready for implementation in the months ahead, and that we make a further appeal for an increase to the Active Travel budget for 2025.

5. To consider Variation No. 6 of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025 – Change of Zoning of lands at Shirley House Lane, Carrickmacross from Existing Residential to Town Centre.

Mr D Hurley, Senior Executive Planner, presented the screening reports and CE report relating to the proposed variation.

In relation to the proposed variation, he outlined the background to the report and the 10 submissions received. D. Hurley stated that a number of comments were received from various consultees but that no formal objection had been made to the proposed variation and the screening determinations.

Mr Hurley advised that the proposal accords with the proper planning and development of the area and recommended that the proposed variation be made, and proposed determination be issued (relating to the screening decisions), without modifications.

On the proposal of Cllr PJ O’Hanlon, seconded by Cllr C. Carthy, it was agreed that the Council approve Variation No. 6 of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025 – Change of Zoning of lands at Shirley House Lane, Carrickmacross from Existing Residential to Town Centre.

6. To consider Section 183 - Clones Technology Park

Mr G. McMahon, A/Director of Services, referred to proposed disposal of plot of land for Clones Business Technology Park building located at 98 Avenue, Clones, Co. Monaghan. The land to be disposed of is the footprint of the building. Monaghan County Council will retain the car park and will provide a licence to Monaghan County Enterprise Fund for access and egress for the upkeep or use of their buildings.

On the proposal of Cllr P. Treanor, seconded by Cllr S. Coyle, it was agreed that the Council approve the disposal of sale of lands at Clones Technology Park, in accordance with the terms of the notice dated 23rd January 2023 and attached site location map in accordance with S183 of the Local Government Act 2001.

7. To consider Monaghan County Libraries Development plan 2024-28

Ms. M. Treanor, Senior Executive Librarian, introduced '*Libraries Make Lives Better*', the Monaghan County Libraries Development Plan 2024-2028. She advised that Library Services are obligated to produce a 5-year plan. The plan highlights the key achievements over the past 5 years and the objectives for the next 5 years.

The high level aims that will guide the delivery of the library services over the next five years are:

Aim 1: Enable - we aim to enable reading, learning and cultural opportunities for everyone by developing user-centred library services and collections.

Aim 2: Create - we aim to create user-centred outreach and engagement programmes that deliver reading, literacy and cultural opportunities for everyone.

Aim 3: Promote – we aim to raise awareness of our work so that more people know about library resources and services.

Aim 4: Enhance – we aim to enhance our capacity so that we can continue to support the changing needs of our communities.

She referred to the significant investment by Monaghan Co Council in library infrastructure with two new library branches, one in Castleblaney and one at The Peace Campus in Monaghan town. She also referred to the redevelopment of the Market House in Ballybay as a new library space.

Ms. Treanor concluded her presentation stating that reading and literacy are at the heart of everything Monaghan County Libraries do. Monaghan County Libraries' *vision* is to enable and support everyone to be informed, connected, literate and skilled for life. The libraries *mission* is to make lives better in Monaghan by providing free access to resources, services and programmes that support literacy, lifelong learning and cultural engagement.

The Cathaoirleach thanked Ms. M. Treanor for the very informative presentation and she responded to queries from the elected members.

On the proposal of Cllr A. Campbell, seconded by Cllr S. Coyle, it was agreed that the Council approve the Monaghan County Libraries Development plan 2024-28.

8. To consider Corporate Plan 2024-2029

Ms. C. O'Hare, Director of Services, referred to Corporate Plan 2024-2029 and advised members in accordance with Section 134(2) of the Local Government Act 2001 there is a requirement on the Council to adopt a Corporate Plan within 6 months of the date of the Annual meeting, in an election year.

The purpose of the plan is to provide a strategic framework for Monaghan County Council over the next five years, aligning with national, regional, and local strategies. Stakeholders (Council Staff and management, elected representatives, the Public Participation Network (PPN), and the wider community) have been included in surveys, workshops, focus groups, interviews, and invitations for submissions. The facilitation process has been guided by Crowe Ireland.

The Plan takes into account a wide range of regional, national and international plans and policies which are relevant to the Council's activities. It also takes account of the various policies and objectives set out in the Council's other plans and strategies. Key local and national plans included the County Development Plan, Climate Action Plan, and Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). Ms O'Hare referred to the significant changes in the Council's services and operating model since the adoption of the previous plan - Covid aftermath, remote working, International Protection and integration, all of which have been incorporated in this plan.

The Plan sets out Five Core Corporate Goals:

1. **A Great Place to Live:** Addressing housing, planning, and town regeneration
2. **A Thriving Community:** Community development, transport, culture, and public safety
3. **A Strong Economy:** Economic growth and tourism development
4. **A Sustainable Future:** Climate action, biodiversity, and waste management
5. **A High-Performing Council:** Emphasis on governance, innovation, and staff development

There are a total of 16 objectives incorporated into the plan with a number of cross-cutting themes - Alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Commitment to the Public Service Human Rights Duty, Adoption of Age-Friendly Principles and Integration of climate action into all objectives.

To ensure the Plan is delivered, there will be a clear link between the Goals and Objectives of the Corporate Plan and the Annual Service Delivery Plan, the budgetary process, the Performance Management Development System, the internal and Local Government Audit Systems and the monthly Management Reports.

The Chief Executive thanked all those who have contributed to the Corporate Plan 2024-2029, in particular C. O'Hare and her team. He stated that it is a very meaningful plan and it is deliverable and he is confident this plan can be achieved.

On the proposal of Cllr S. Conlon, seconded by Cllr A. Campbell, it was agreed that the Corporate Plan 2024-2029 be adopted.

9. To consider recommendations and minutes from Corporate Policy Group 19 November 2024

The members noted the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 19 November 2024, which had been circulated.

On the proposal of Cllr C. Carthy, seconded by Cllr R. Truell, it was agreed that the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 19 November 2024 and the recommendations contained therein be approved.

10. To receive a delegation from Irish Farmers Association

The Cathaoirleach welcomed a delegation from the Irish Farmers Association to the December meeting. The speakers raised their concern in respect of farming in the county with the members.

Mr. Frank Brady, Regional Chairman of Ulster/North Leinster expressed the IFA's concerns regarding the proposed Mercosur trade deal agreed recently by the EU. The ability of poultry producers to make a sustainable income is being jeopardised by the importation of sub-standard products. The IFA state that the deal would grant market access for 99,000 tonnes of beef and 180,000 tonnes of poultry, both at a zero-tariff rate, which could 'decimate' both the Irish and EU beef and poultry sectors, especially in high value cuts like steak and chicken fillets. The poultry sector is of significant economic importance in Co. Monaghan and this deal will have a detrimental effect on the industry. Mr. Brady appealed to the elected members to raise their concerns with their respective parties.

The Cathaoirleach and members thanked the IFA delegation for the very informative presentation, highlighting the issues affecting their industry.

11. To receive Management Report – November 2024

The Chief Executive introduced the Management Report for November 2024 which had been circulated with the agenda. He referred to the development of 72 new houses in Monaghan town across two sites; work on the new development will start on site in the coming days. He is particularly pleased to see the Council embracing modern methods of construction to increase the pace and scale of housing delivery. The ambition is to deliver at least 120 new houses every year which would be well in excess of the Government targets set for them. 100 houses have been delivered this year, 20 through acquisition. 180 grants have also been approved and nearly 50% have been paid out fully. The Council is also actively dealing with vacancy and dereliction. Overall, this represented a significant body of work by the housing team.

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

The members noted the Management Report for November 2024 which had been circulated with the agenda.

12. To receive reports from Members attending Conferences/Training events

The members noted the reports from Cllr S. Conlon, Cllr R. Truell and S. Flynn in relation to their attendance at the following Conferences/Training events:

- LAMA Autumn Seminar, 17th & 18th October, Newgrange Hotel, Navan, Co. Meath
- IPB, 4th October, Mullingar Park Hotel
- AILG, 28th September, Bridge House, Tullamore
- Women's Regional Caucus plenary meeting, 15th October, Sligo Park Hotel

13. Business Submitted by the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive informed the members that there were no matters for consideration under this item.

14. Matters arising out of the minutes of the Council meetings held on 04 November 2024

There were no matters arising out of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 04 November 2024.

15. To receive update on N2 National Primary Road Schemes

The following correspondence was received in relation to the N2 National Primary Road Schemes:

- Letter from the Department for Infrastructure, Western Division, regarding the A5 Western Transport Corridor (A5WTC) Notice of Making a Vesting Order and enclosed was a copy of the Vesting Order Notice dated 15 October 2024 which will become operative on 25 November 2024.

Mr. G. McMahon, Director of Services, noted a court case lodged by a group of residents and landowners against the dual carriageway scheme has been scheduled for March 2025. Donegal County Council has assumed the Secretarial role for the A5 in the coming year and a meeting will be scheduled in early 2025 to discuss the issues.

16. To receive update on North/South Interconnector project

On the proposal of Cllr N. Keelan, seconded by Cllr N. McCooey, it was agreed that Monaghan County Council:

1/ writes to Eirgrid requesting that they cease all activities immediately in relation to the North South Interconnector project pending the outcome of the judicial review proceedings brought before the High Court in Belfast on Monday last the 9th of December.

2 / writes to all our Oireachtas members for this constituency seeking their support for our motion, and that they also would make contact with Eirgrid.

17. To receive update on the Ulster Canal project

No further update on the Ulster Canal project.

18. Questions and Replies

Cllr S. Flynn asked:

- 1. Can Monaghan County Council please advise on the meeting held with TII in October & whether the issue with regards traffic congestion in Monaghan Town was discussed?**

Reply: The Chief Executive, Director of Service and Senior Engineer met with the TII in October 2024, and the Traffic Congestion in Monaghan Town was discussed. The TII made specific reference to the need for the development of a strategy i.e., The Local Transport Plan (LTP) which is currently being prepared for Monaghan Town. This LTP may provide the robust evidence of how the introduction of planned Active Travel facilities, public transport hubs/links would benefit from rerouting vehicular traffic (particularly HGVs) away from the urban core, and therefore strengthen the case for a bypass/ring road. If the LTP can successfully outline the need for a Monaghan Town By-pass, the next step is to put the project forward for inclusion the National Development Plan, which is up for review in **2025**.

- 2. Can Monaghan County Council please provide me with a list of traffic calming measures for villages & towns in Co Monaghan, in particular Ballybay to Doohamlet, Smithboro & Cremartin.**

Reply:

Traffic Calming measure are incorporated at MD level. Examples of traffic calming implemented by the MD's in 2024 are as follows:

- Rockcorry – Road markings and high friction surfacing.
- Cremartin GAA – High friction surfacing and additional road markings.
- Scotstown Village - Road markings and signage.
- Mullan Village – Road markings and signage.

Ballybay Clones MD have applied for funding for 2025 under the Low-Cost Safety Improvement works for the following locations:

- Ballybay approach roads to the town – Driver feedback signs and additional road markings.
- Cremartin – Additional signage, Remove and set back hedges and fencing for improved visibility, high friction surfacing, lane narrowing and driver feedback signs.
- Doohamlet - Additional signage, High friction surfacing, lane narrowing and additional road markings.

- The Carrickmacross/Castleblayney MD has applied for funding to implement a traffic calming scheme on Muckno Street, Castleblayney, under the Low-Cost Safety Improvement Works programme 2025.

- The Monaghan MD have applied for funding to complete the following traffic calming scheme at R937 Old Dublin Road – Installation of a raised pedestrian crossing, roads marking and signage.

- 3. Can Monaghan County Council examine extending the speed limit on both sides of Smithboro village and also on the Ballybay - Castleblayney Road?**

Reply:

A national road speed limit review is to take place in 2025. Speed limit modifications proposed by MCC, Elected Representatives and Members of the Public will be considered and assessed in line with the Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits in Ireland (DOT). The N54 on both approaches to Smithboro will be considered.

- 4. Can Monaghan County Council please confirm whether there are additional services & routes to be offered by the local link throughout the county and whether the NTA have additional services planned for other areas? In particular, the route from Clones to Monaghan via Smithboro village & Monaghan to Clones via Smithboro village, where there is a high demand for public transport with limited services currently available.**

Reply:

Local link has issued Monaghan County with a list of proposed new locations where local link services are to be provided. Monaghan County Council have assessed the locations from a road safety prospective and returned comments to local link for their consideration before rolling out these new services.

Cllr P. Gibbons asked:

- 5. Has the provision of fully serviced camper van and/or caravan stands been considered for the Lough Muckno area? If so, what was the outcome of these considerations?**

Reply:

Lough Muckno park was assessed for suitability for motorhome parking (Aire de Service), and the Council has now received the assessors report. The location has been highlighted by the assessor as having high potential for this purpose, if properly developed, due to its proximity to both the town centre, the park and the lake, and the availability of all amenities within walking distance. The assessor identified 3 potential areas for development within the park. MCC intends to apply for funding under the Town and Village scheme to progress the development of suitable Aires de Services sites in each of the MDs.

- 6. Have any funding applications been recently submitted and awaiting a decision or else are being prepared for new playgrounds in the County?**

Reply:

Funding of €136,000 was secured under the Community Recognition Fund 2023 for the provision of a sensory garden/play area and outdoor educational space, including the upgrade of existing gravel pathways, to enhance existing recreational amenities at Cloughvalley. Existing facilities at Cloughvalley include a children's play park, MUGA, basketball/tennis court and playing fields. This project aims to complement and enhance these facilities, to provide for a more inclusive and accessible recreational and educational space for the community.

Playpark extension at Rossmore Forest Park. This project will extend the playpark to provide additional play equipment that will allow more space for children to play within. Funding of €150,000 was received under the Community Recognition Fund 2023.

The new Peace Programme will provide funding for the following playgrounds:

- A playground in Scotstown village.
- Drumillard Park Castleblayney.
- Upgrade surface on Basketball Court at Ballybay Park to a polymeric rubber surface.

- 7. What is the update on the proposed housing development on the site of the old fire station at the Commons, Castleblayney? Can the number and type of dwelling, current status of project and proposed timelines for construction and completion of this project be provided?**

Reply:

The Old fire station at the Commons, Castleblayney project consists of the provision of 22 dwellings.

Details of the proposed dwellings are as follows:

	New Build	
10no	Two-bedroom duplexes (at ground and first floor)_	82sqm*
7no	One-bedroom apartments (at second and third floor)_	51sqm
1no	Two-bedroom apartment (at ground floor only)_	75sqm
1no	Bin store (at ground floor only)_	22sqm
	Horsemarket	
2no	One-bedroom apartments (at ground floor only)_	45sqm
1no	Bicycle store_	22sqm
	Store Building	
1no	One-bedroom apartment (at first floor)_	46sqm
1no	One-bedroom apartment (at second floor)_	48sqm
1no	Store (at ground floor)_	9sqm
1no	Common Room (with kitchenette and store at ground floor)_	38sqm

This includes

1no	two-bedroom unit to UD home standards for older persons (at ground floor only)
2no	one-bedroom units to UD home standards for older persons (at ground floor only)
3no	one-bedroom units to UD home standards for older persons (at second floor_ access by lift)
4no	one-bedroom units to UD home standards for disabled person households (at second floor and third floor_ access by lift)



Draft planning drawings have been circulated to the relevant departments with comments returned and actioned by the designers.

The Cost analysis is being undertaken by the consultants in preparation for stage 2 submission (within the next 4/6 weeks) and on approval of this, planning will be submitted.

It is anticipated that construction on this site will commence by Q4 2025.

12. What plans are in place to create and deliver amenities/public spaces for teenagers and young adults throughout Co. Monaghan?

Reply:

Ballybay/Clones MD together with the Town Team applied under CLÁR 2024 for the provision of a dedicated teenage hangout space within Ballybay Town Park, featuring the installation of an innovatively designed Youth Shelter. This application was successful in securing funding of €39,150 plus match funding of €4,350 (provided by the MD) for the delivery of this project. To add to this funding, Monaghan Sports Partnership have been successful through the Dormant Accounts Fund to install accessible fixed equipment such as outdoor table tennis table, innovative sports equipment storage / use solution to encourage increased play and activity and complement other developments at the park. It is envisaged that these projects will provide a safe, inclusive and positive environment for the Youth of Ballybay which will benefit both the teens themselves and the wider community.

Dormant Accounts Funding has also been secured in the sum of €30,000 by Monaghan Sports Partnership for the purpose of Urban Outdoor Adventure and will be used in 2025 to support activity at Clones Marina with a focus on teens and young adults.

Monaghan County Council acquired McMahon's 'Red Boy's, Main Street, Emyvale under Town & Village – Building Acquisition Measure. The property will be considered as an amenity for teenagers as part of a multi-use community hub. Currently the project is at development stage with community consultation taking place on Thursday 28th November 2024.

Monaghan Sports Partnership have also secured funding of €15,000 for the development of open changing shelter at Emy Lough to support outdoor swimming.

Funding provided from Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media through Sport Ireland of €60,000 towards the installation of 3 Outdoor Basketball courts at two locations, Lough Muckno and Ballybay Town Park (both projects supported by additional funding of €18,750 for the purposes of Biodiversity development at both sites (as an additional funded condition to be included).

The new Peace Programme will provide funding for the following amenities suitable for young adults and teenagers:

- Outdoor recreational exercise equipment in Oram Village.
- Teen Haven Clones

The Community Development section in collaboration with the MD's continue to utilise all funding opportunities to source new playgrounds across the county and enhance public spaces and amenities for teenagers and young adults.

13. Following the recent campaign by our Vacant Housing team to bring derelict properties in Co Monaghan back into use; has the Executive any reports on the response, so far, from building owners and/or plans to deal with properties that have been highlighted?

Reply:

Following the approval of the Councils new policies and procedures in relation to derelict sites, the Town Regeneration Section successfully engaged with the Department of Housing and Local Government regarding URDF Call 3 for Monaghan town and increased the number of properties approved for funding significantly from 22 to 50.

Under this programme, following engagement with owners, 2 properties have been returned to use, 7 properties owners are undertaking renovations, 9 properties are listed for sale and 2 properties have been compulsory acquired, one which will be advertised for sale on the open market by December 2024 and the other will facilitate the progression of the Dublin Street Regeneration scheme.

Discussions are ongoing with the remaining property owners, and it is expected that further progress in bringing these properties back into use will be made in Q1 2025.

Throughout the rest of the county, the Town Regeneration Section have engaged with a further 95 property owners. To date feedback has been generally positive with 38% of owners committing to conduct renovation works and 16% are in process of selling their properties. We have entered 36% of properties onto the derelict site register. 5% of properties were not derelict on further review and the remaining 5% have been given time to respond with plausible actions to make property non derelict.

The Town Regeneration Section have compulsory acquired a further 2 properties/sites in 2024. The Councils Housing section have identified a need to redevelop one property in Newbliss and the other site in Monaghan town will be either developed by the Housing Section or offered to the open market for resale.

CPO process will be completed on an unfinished housing estate in Carrickroe in January 2025. The Councils Housing Section will complete the unfinished properties, and the local community have issued a scoping report for a community hub building at this location.

It is proposed to commence the Compulsory Acquisition process on a number of properties that have been entered on the Derelict Site Register. 9.no properties have been initially identified to be compulsory acquired and resold on the open market in Q1 2025.

The Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant has 177 approved grants amounting to over €10 million with more than €2.1 Million successfully paid out to date.

550.no Engagements have been undertaken with the Vacant homes officer since March 2024 with 143.no new applications received in 2024.

The Vacant homes officer has conducted public consultations in Carrickmacross, Clones and Monaghan along with presenting at open evenings (retrofit ready) in Ballybay and Glaslough. There has also been numerous social media posts through the MCC platform and a article printed in the Northern Standard demonstrating success stories as well as presenting the achievements of the grant at October's council meeting.

Cllr N. Keelan asked:

14. What plans have the council to upgrade the regional roadway (R178) from the Carrickmacross to Shercock town in particular which is a very important economic link and currently not fit for purpose given the large numbers of HGVs using this roadway on a daily basis and also given the number of accidents on this stretch of roadway?

Reply:

The Department of Transport (DOT) and County Council Senior Engineer working group meet regularly to identify strategically important sections of the East/West link Project which includes the section on the R178 from Shercock to Carrickmacross and Dundalk. It is planned to apply for funding for this section along with other Strategically important sections in the county under the DOT Strategic/Specific Improvement Scheme.

- 15. In or around April time of this year 2024 a number of potholes appeared along the N2 at Broomfield, as a result of this some vehicles were very badly damaged, luckily no one was injured. Could the council give the members some information or a report on this serious issue, when this issue was reported, what action was taken and when, who is responsible for carrying out urgent repairs etc?**

Reply:

MCC secured funding from TII under the Capital Maintenance Programme, to address localized distressed sections of the national road network. This included the N2 at Broomfield. Works were implemented over the months of Sept/Oct 24. MCC made a further funding application to TII under this Program, as additional sections of the network were showing signs of distress, however, TII insisted that additional funding is not available in 2024. MCC will make a further funding application in Q1 2025 to carry out repairs on a prioritized basis.

- 16. In order to support local businesses across the county, what is the council policy in terms of buying goods and services locally, what plans have the council to run a (Shop local campaign) in the run up to Christmas, working with local chamber of commerce organizations and town teams etc.?**

Reply:

Monaghan Town MD:

The council run a Shop Local campaign every Christmas and will run another campaign this Christmas.

The Monaghan Municipal District also operate the Monaghan Town Voucher which can only be spent in the Monaghan Town and Municipal district area.

The voucher sales for 2023 were over €1.8m

Ballybay-Clones MD:

The Ballybay Clones MD are involved in County Council the Shop local campaign like previous years.

The MD have also provided funding for the erection and installation of the Christmas lights and Christmas Lights turn on events in both Ballybay and Clones to attract people to the towns and shop local.

The turn on event in Clones attracted over 3,000 people into the town and on Friday night last and the Christmas Market and switch on in Ballybay attracted over 2,000 into the town.

Funding was also provided to villages such as Rockcorry, Scotshosue and Newbliss.

This year the Council assisted by the Ballybay Town team hosted a very successful Christmas market event which provided a platform for local vendors to showcase their products and produce whilst also preserving the local and cultural heritage and provided a boost to the local economy.

Carrickmacross-Castleblaney MD:

The Municipal District provides an annual contribution to both the Carrickmacross Chamber of Commerce and Castleblaney Town Regeneration Team to help create a trade-friendly environment in both main towns in the run up to Christmas. With the support of the Municipal District, both the Carrickmacross Chamber of Commerce and the Castleblaney Town Regeneration Team lead initiatives and events such as Shop Local campaigns, the promotion of Town Voucher Schemes and Christmas lights switch on.

- 17. Over the course of the last 4/5 years what has been the approximate percentage increase in the costs of resurfacing and upgrading roadways?**

Reply:

There are many different factors that influence the cost of roadworks. From 2019 the National Oversight and Audit Commission has required Local Authorities to report on those costs for publication in the annual Performance Indicators Report. Based on that data, the cost of local road strengthening (Restoration Improvement) in County Monaghan in 2020 was €24.85/m². By 2023 the cost had increased to €43.67/m², an increase of 76% over three years.

- 18. How many litter fines have been handed out over the course of this year 2024?**

Reply: 37 Fines

Cllr A. Campbell asked:

- 19. With the recent works having being carried out by Monaghan County Council in the Hope Castle and the Annex.**

- (a) What surveys works etc. have now to be competed?**
(b) When will these works be completed?

Reply:

Monaghan County Council have conducted a procurement competition for the provision of Topographical, Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) and Measured Building Survey Services for Hope Castle, Annex & Adjacent Outbuilding in Lough Muckno Estate. Following completion of the tender assessment process, the executive is currently awaiting the preferred tenderer to submit supporting information. Subject to the satisfactory submission of relevant documents, it is expected that the contract for engagement of the surveying company will be executed in December 2024. It is anticipated that the surveying services will commence before the end of the year and are expected to be completed in January 2025.

- 20. With regard to the Master Plan for Muckno, Hope Castle and the Annex and the surrounding area.**

- (a) Has the process to appoint a consultant concluded?**
(b) When will the work on this process begin?
(c) What important steps have been put in place with this process to include public consultation?
(d) What time scale will this process take.

Reply: The evaluation of tenders for consultancy services is substantially complete. The preferred tender has been identified and subject to the submission of the requested information by them, it is anticipated that the appointment of the Consultant can be made before the end of the year. Work on the Masterplan shall commence immediately following their appointment, with an anticipated completion period of 9 – 12 months.

In respect of public consultation, and in order to ensure comprehensive engagement, the Consultant shall be required to prepare and implement a Stakeholder Engagement Plan, details of which shall be agreed with the Local Authority following appointment.

21. What is the update on the tender process to begin the works at the Market House in Castleblayney?

Reply:

A total of six tender submissions were received under Stage 1 of the procurement procedures in relation to prequalification of contractors through suitability assessment. The Stage 1 tender evaluation process is substantially complete, the executive is currently awaiting submission of requested information to verify the tenderers that are to be shortlisted for Stage 2 of the procurement process. Following conclusion of the Stage 1 tender obligations, Monaghan County Council will commence preparation of a detailed Project Brief & Procurement Strategy for submission to the DRCD, seeking approval to progress Stage 2 of the tender process.

22. With the plans to now in place to build new homes on the old machinery yard and fire station.

- **How many houses are envisaged to be build out in this town centre site?**
- **When is it hoped that this work will commence?**
- **How long will this project take to complete?**

Reply - See reply to Q 7.

19. Notices of Motion

1. Cllr C. Carthy proposed, Cllr P. Treanor seconded,

That Monaghan County Council calls on the new Minister for Housing:

- *To significantly increase funding for social and affordable housing in order to deliver a lot more homes over the coming years.*
- *To introduce the necessary reforms to enable Councils to increase and accelerate the delivery of public housing and to ensure that affordable homes to rent and buy are delivered at prices that working people can actually afford.*
- *To introduce a 3-year rent freeze to secure private rental accommodation while the delivery of public housing is ramped up.*

Following a short discussion on the motion, the Cathaoirleach put it to the meeting. A vote by show of hands resulted in 9 for and 7 against. The Cathaoirleach declared the proposal carried.

2. Cllr P. Clerkin proposed, Cllr S. Gilliland seconded,

That Monaghan Co Council ask the Department of Housing and Uisce Éireann to investigate expensive connection fee costs.

Several families, building their first homes have been charged over €15,000 for connection fees, which is putting extreme stress on their finances.

When queried, local contractors said they would do the same work, for 50% less than what Uisce Éireann had quoted.

Following a short discussion on the motion, the Cathaoirleach put it to the meeting, and it was agreed unanimously.

3. Cllr P. Clerkin proposed, Cllr B. McAree seconded,

That Monaghan County Council ask the Department of Health, The Department of State for Mental Health and the HSE to provide sustainable funding and support to SOSAD (Save Our Sons and Daughters).

- *For 17 years, SOSAD Ireland has been at the forefront on mental health and suicide prevention across Co. Monaghan. The future of the organisation is at imminent risk of closing due to the lack of state funding.*
- *This is not just a financial issue, it is a humanitarian issue and I would ask that funding be made available to SOSAD, so they can continue their critical service in our community.*

Following a short discussion on the motion, the Cathaoirleach put it to the meeting, and it was agreed unanimously.

20. Votes of Sympathy/Congratulations

It was agreed that votes of sympathy would be extended to the following:

- Monica (Mona) Hughes, née Murphy, Knockbane, Middletown, Co Armagh on Saturday, 23rd November 2024 (Mother of Stephen Hughes, IS Technical Officer, IS Department)
- Former Cavan/Monaghan TD, Andrew Boylan, Derrygarra, Butlersbridge, Cavan, on 6th December 2024.

It was agreed that votes of congratulations would be extended to:

- Monaghan Fire & Civil Protection who were awarded in the Emergency Services category at the 15th Leading Lights in Road Safety Awards.
- Oran Kiernan on winning the Adult Handball Singles final in Monaghan.
- Shane McGurk from Aughnamullen on winning the 2024 Mens World Darts Championship.

Civic Reception

The members agreed that a Civic Reception be held in honour of Shane McGurk in February 2025 to mark his achievement.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the Executive for their work throughout the year. The Chief Executive thanked the Members for their efforts and contributions and staff for their work during the year.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Signed: _____
Meetings
Administrator

Date: _____