

**Minutes of the Meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Council Chamber, M-Tek Building, Armagh Rd, Knockaconny, Monaghan, on Monday 10 February 2025 at 2.00 p.m.**

**Chair:** Cllr P. Gibbons, Cathaoirleach

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

Mr. R. Burns, Chief Executive, Mr. C. Flynn, Ms. C O'Hare, Ms. P. Monahan, Ms. O. McConnon, Directors of Services, Mr. G. McMahon, A/Director of Services, Ms. M. McGarvey, Meetings Administrator, Ms. M. McMahon, Staff Officer

**MS Teams:** Cllr B. McAree

### **Storm Éowyn**

At the outset, the Cathaoirleach referred to the exceptional scale of damage and disruption caused by the recent severe weather event, Storm Éowyn on 24 January. He stated that whilst it had been an extremely challenging times for many, it had been heartening to see the community of Monaghan come together to support one another and he thanked each and every individual for their commitment to helping their neighbours during the difficult period following the storm. He also extended thanks to Council staff, civil defence, emergency services and crews from ESB who went out in all weather conditions in a bid to reconnect people as quickly as possible.

The Cathaoirleach informed the members that he had received a notice to suspend Standing Orders in the names of Cllr. PJ O'Hanlon and Cllr. P. Treanor to discuss matters of urgent business at the start of the meeting.

In accordance with Section 44, Schedule 10, 16. (g) of the Local Government Act 2001, the Cathaoirleach declared the Standing Orders suspended to discuss matters of urgent business at the start of the meeting.

The Cathaoirleach invited the Chief Executive, Mr. R. Burns to provide an overview to members regarding the Council's preparedness and response to Storm Éowyn.

The Chief Executive commenced by stating that it had been a very difficult two weeks for citizens of the county with significant disruptions to power, water and communications following Storm Éowyn. He informed the members that as of Saturday 08 February power and water had been restored for all customers in County Monaghan, however, a small number of communication networks were still in the process of restoring their services. He referred to the clearing of over 500 fallen trees and how this formed a major part of the Council's initial response. Approximately 150 roads across the three municipal districts were impacted. National roads were impacted by 17%, regional roads were impacted by 24% and local roads were impacted by almost 60%.

He stated that the Crisis Management Team (CMT) were prepared as best as they could be prior to the storm. The CMT met before, during and after the Storm and the decision to have fire crews in the fire station from 5.00pm on the evening before the storm proved to be a prudent measure.

Maintenance crews had been put on stand-by for the removal/clearing of trees once the red weather warning had ended and once it was safe to do so, the crews worked tirelessly to clear the majority of roads the following day after the storm. In addition, maintenance crews cleared routes

identified by HSE where vulnerable patients resided to enable care workers access to their homes. The Council also contributed 12 staff to the ESB to supplement their works in clearing lines to restore connections. In addition, the Council contributed drones and drone operators to ESB to help identify faults in overhead power lines.

Mr. Burns advised the members that on the Sunday following the storm the Community Response Helpline was set up and functional. The helpline was well received by members of the public and it became a conduit for other agencies such as, HSE, Uisce Éireann and ESB. In addition, 15 Community Hubs were set up across the county to provide, water, tea/coffee, refreshments, showers and charging facilities. He highlighted that whilst 8 of the Community Hubs were based in Monaghan County Council's own premises, the community groups/GAA Clubs that facilitated Hubs in their premises deserved to be commended.

He stated that whilst the Council made every effort to communicate information available as best possible with the public and elected representatives alike, the situation was less than ideal.

Mr. Burns informed the members that the Council is in the process of diligently collating information to make a preliminary claim of €1.14m upwards, to the Department of An Taoiseach to cover costs associated with the response to Storm Éowyn. He stated that the claim also includes future proofing costs, to purchase back-up generators for Clones, Carrickmacross Fire Stations and the Civic Offices in Carrickmacross and it includes a provision of approximately €60k to assist community centres to purchase generators, provide shower facilities, put in tea/coffee making facilities.

Mr. Burns stated that the CMT met almost every day since 24 January, to date and they were extremely grateful of the excellent points of contact that they had in, ESB, Garda Síochána and Uisce Éireann. He advised that one of the lessons learned related to communication, and in particular, the sharing of information pertaining to those most vulnerable between agencies and this will be looked at further. In addition, he stated that a key lesson learned was the need to adapt, with the focus changing daily, as the situation evolved. Furthermore, with public safety in mind, he stated that the Council would be giving consideration to developing a Trees Policy through the SPC. In terms of next steps, he informed the members that an Emergency Response and Recovery Group would be setup to, follow up on any remaining issues in the aftermath of Storm Éowyn, carry out an interim review of the Council's preparedness and response, garnering input from; staff; Elected Representatives; community groups; and other agencies involved in the storm response, and make recommendations to improve Monaghan County Council's resilience and response to future crises.

To conclude, the Chief Executive thanked the staff of Monaghan County Council, the Executive and the staff on the Community Helpline or Community Hubs and the Communications Team for their all of their work and support in the response to Storm Éowyn.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the Chief Executive for his comprehensive overview. He referred to the severity of the Storm on a national level and stated that whilst it is evident that there are various issues that need to be addressed in relation to, tree management, power, water, communications and the sharing of information, he welcomed the Members involvement in the review process. The Cathaoirleach reiterated his gratitude to the staff of Monaghan County Council at all levels, the emergency services and the wonderful community of County Monaghan who went above and beyond to help others in need.

The elected members conveyed their gratitude to the Executive and the staff of Monaghan County Council at all levels, the HSE, Uisce Éireann, An Garda Síochána, Community Groups, and members of the wider community in Monaghan who assisted in the response to Storm Éowyn. The elected

members commended Mr. Dermot Brannigan, Chief Fire Officer, for his responsiveness, proactive approach and the exemplary manner in which he carried out his role. Furthermore, the elected members conveyed their gratitude to, Ms. Carmel O'Hare, Director of Services for providing them with a comprehensive daily update regarding power outages, water supplies and information relating to the Community Response Service.

*On the proposal of Cllr S. Conlon, seconded by Cllr N. Keelan, it was agreed to enter 'into Committee' to discuss whether to accept the motions of urgent business.*

Following a short discussion, it was agreed to take the motions of urgent business at the start of the meeting.

*On the proposal of Cllr P. Treanor, seconded by Cllr S. Coyle, it was agreed that the Council revert to public session.*

### **Urgent Business:**

1. *Cllr S. Flynn proposed, Cllr N. Keelan seconded –  
That Monaghan County Council, write to the office of the Taoiseach Micheal Martin and to the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage James Browne, to request clarification on provisions for emergency funding following severe weather conditions and to request the government to issue emergency funding to local authorities to assist with the cleanup and repair of infrastructure throughout the county following Storm Eowyn.*

*In addition, Monaghan County Council write to the Minister for Finance, requesting confirmation that all capital infrastructure approved from now on will include provision for a backup power generator and those current buildings providing essential services (health centres, water treatment plants, public service providers etc) will receive funding for the installation of a backup power generator.*

*Monaghan County Council also write to the Dept of Environment, Climate & Communications together with An Taoiseach Micheál Martin requesting the development and implementation of a strategic plan for future storms to ensure power is restored more efficiently, investment is made to telecommunications, electric and water infrastructure and for all future electrical infrastructure, including the North/South Interconnector, to be undergrounded. Ensure preventative measures are continuously reviewed, to increase resilience and minimise disruption before another ferocious storm hits Ireland.*

*In addition, Monaghan County Council write to the Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, Peter Burke, requesting that he put in place financial supports to assist small businesses who were impacted by Storm Éowyn because of no power, water and telecommunications and were unable to operate their day-to-day business.*

*Furthermore, Monaghan County Council write to the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister of State for Forestry, requesting that they introduce an ash dieback scheme without delay, to assist the farming community to remove trees affected.*

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

2. *Cllr PJ O'Hanlon proposed, Cllrs S. Coyle and R. Aughey jointly seconded - That Monaghan County Council, Water Services department consider the installation of generators at Water Plants that have none.*

*Furthermore, that the North South Interconnector is undergrounded. After Storm Éowyn there is no way that 400KV lines can be over grounded.*

*In addition, that the Roads department undertake an immediate Roads survey on Trees adjacent to Electricity and Phone lines.*

*When there is a storm in the future, it is vital that all Municipal Districts meet as often as is required, to keep everyone in the locality updated in relation to what is happening.*

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

Cllr S. Gilliland proposed, Cllr R. Truell seconded –  
*That Monaghan County Council, writes to the Tanaiste, An Taoiseach, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, seeking funding for the local authority to survey, identify and remove any trees along public roads that pose a risk to power lines, communication lines and the safety of road users. The survey must include ash dieback. The local authority is the only body capable of executing a plan to prevent such a disaster that Storm Éowyn caused to infrastructure in County Monaghan.*

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

#### *Proposals arising from Storm Éowyn discussions:*

1. *Cllr S. Coyle proposed, Cllr R. Aughey seconded –*

*That Monaghan County Council commend, all front-line services personnel for their work in addressing the horrific consequences of Storm Eowyn, the Executive, outdoor staff of Monaghan County Council, An Garda Síochána, the HSE, Uisce Éireann, ESB staff, and volunteers who assisted those in need and the community groups who provided their facilities for community hubs. However, lessons must be learned from the experience of Storm Éowyn i.e. generator facilities were not in place at Uisce Éireann water reservoir pumping stations etc. and unfortunately, many homes were without electricity for 13-14 days. Monaghan County Council demand of ESB that goodwill payments be made to those householders as a means of alleviating the suffering and financial cost of the lengthy period of electricity outage. In addition, there is a requirement for preparedness for future similar events. Ireland must be proactive and not reactive.*

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

2. Cllr S. Coyle proposed, Cllr PJ O’Hanlon seconded –

*That Monaghan County Council, in view of the recent effects of Storm Éowyn, demands of the Government and Eirgrid to cease/abandon all works on the proposed overgrounding of the North-South 400 KV Interconnector and condemns the actions of Eirgrid in issuing threatening letters to property owners in the form of ‘proximity payments’ and ‘access agreements’ to landowners and their neighbours at a time when one million householders on the island of Ireland were without electricity supply due to Storm Éowyn.*

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

3. Cllr R. Aughey proposed, Cllr PJ O’Hanlon seconded –

*That Monaghan County Council writes to the Department of Housing and to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Mr. James Browne, T.D., requesting that they include solar PV panels, and if possible, a battery system, on all new social housing schemes and fit all existing social housing with same.*

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

## **1. Confirmation of Council Meeting Minutes held on 06 January 2025**

*On the proposal of Cllr P. Treanor, seconded by Cllr P. Clerkin, it was agreed that the minutes of the Council meeting held on the 06 January 2025 be confirmed.*

## **2. Correspondence**

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

- Email from the Interim Chief Executive, Mr. Hugh Creegan, National Transport Authority regarding the Active Travel Budget for 2025.
- Acknowledgement letter from the Office of the Taoiseach, Mr. Simon Harris, T.D., regarding the National Disability Strategy.
- Acknowledgement email from the office of the An Tánaiste, Mr. Micheál Martin, T.D., regarding the North-South Interconnector.
- Acknowledgement email from the Private Secretary to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Mr. Darragh O’Brien, T.D., regarding rainwater harvesting.
- Acknowledgment email from the Private Secretary to the Minister for Transport, Mr. Eamon Ryan, T.D., regarding the Active Travel Budget for 2025.
- Acknowledgement email from the Private Secretary to the Minister for Mental Health and Older People, Ms. Mary Butler, T.D., regarding funding and support for SOSAD Ireland.
- Acknowledgement email from the Private Secretary to the Minister for Health, Mr. Stephen Donnelly, regarding funding and support for SOSAD Ireland.
- Acknowledgement email from Mr. John Noone, Uisce Éireann, regarding connection fees.
- Resolution from Clare County Council regarding fees for under 16’s attending GAA matches.

- Resolution from Clare County Council regarding the housing aid for Older People's Grant, in connection with the exclusion of new fossil fuel boilers, oil or gas.
- Resolution from Leitrim County Council, regarding voting entitlement.
- Resolution from Roscommon County Council, regarding rural and urban isolation and loneliness.

## **2.1 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 new Minister of Transport, Mr. Darragh O'Brien, T.D., regarding funding of Active Travel.
- Email from Mr. Larry Kelly, Higher Executive Officer, Regional and Local Roads Division, Department of Transport, acknowledging and thanking all Local Authorities for the work they carried out regarding the implementation of Rura Local Speed Limit reductions.

### **Proposals arising out of correspondence:**

*On the proposal of Cllr C. Carthy, seconded by Cllr N. Keelan, it was agreed that this Council, support the Clare County Council motion to make urgent contact with the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage regarding housing aid for Older People's Grant in connection with the exclusion of new fossil fuel boilers, oil or gas.*

*On the proposal of Cllr C. Carthy, seconded by Cllr S. Flynn, it was agreed that this Council support the Roscommon County Council motion calling on the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste to consider that in the formation of the incoming government that the matter of rural and urban isolation and loneliness is directly allocated to a Ministry.*

*On the proposal of Cllr C. Carthy, seconded by Cllr S. Flynn, it was agreed that this Council call on the new Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Mr. James Browne, T.D, to consider offering a grant for rainwater harvesting that would lower the demand on current domestic supplies and could be used for flushing toilets, washing cars, power washing and any other use of treated water supplies around dwellings, farms and industrial settings.*

*On the proposal of Cllr C. Carthy, seconded by Cllr S. Flynn, it was agreed that this Council write to the Minister of State with responsibility for Disability, Ms. Hildegard Naughton, T.D, 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 C. Carthy, seconded by Cllr S. Flynn, it was agreed that this Council, calls on the new Minister for Transport, Darragh O'Brien TD, to review the allocation of funds to the Active Travel schemes throughout the state that discriminates against rural counties and is allocated in favour of 'areas of greatest impact' like larger urban centres (Dublin, Cork, Galway etc) – counties like Monaghan continue to be impacted by this approach due to our smaller towns and population.*

*On the proposal of Cllr PJ O'Hanlon, seconded by Cllr N. Keelan, it was agreed that this*

*Council, support the Clare County Council motion opposing the recent decision by the GAA, whereby children under the age of 16 will be charged a fee to gain admittance to GAA matches, and this Council calls on the GAA to reverse this decision as a matter of urgency.*

*On the proposal of Cllr N. Keelan, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor, it was agreed that this Council, support the Leitrim County Council motion calling on the next Government and all elected members of both Houses of the Oireachtas to pass the required legislation to hold the referendum, as promised by the previous administration, to allow our diaspora to vote in the next Presidential Election which is to be held in November of this year.*

*On the proposal of Cllr P. Treanor, seconded by Cllr S. Coyle, it was agreed that this Council, issue an invite to the Chief Executive of ICBAN (Irish Central Border Area Network), Mr. Shane Campbell, to address a future meeting of this Council.*

*On the proposal of Cllr S. Gilliland, seconded by Cllr. R. Truell it was agreed that this Council, write to the relevant departments, requesting that they consider Active Travel Schemes being administered and run by local authorities, who are best placed, in relation to their own demographic needs and requirements, as opposed to the National Transport Authority.*

*On the proposal of Cllr S. Conlon, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor, it was agreed that this Council calls on each Municipal District to agree an identified Local Road where high occurrences of speeding is known and install speed detection monitoring devices for the purpose of measuring the level of speed limit compliance and to assess the outcomes of the recently introduced Local Speed Limit Reduction Measures.*

**3. To consider a Resolution to borrow up to €3.04m for the Cost Rental Scheme (S106, LGA 2001)**

*On the proposal of Cllr R. Aughey, seconded by Cllr C. Carthy, it was agreed that this Council approves the resolution to borrow €3.04m for the Cost Rental Scheme in accordance with Section 106 of the Local Government Act 2001.*

**4. To consider Affordable Housing – proposed Scheme of Priority**

Ms. H. McKenna, Staff Officer, Housing, provided the members with a presentation on the Scheme of Priority for Affordable Housing, made under Section 11 of the Affordable Housing Act 2021 (No.25 of 2021) and is in accordance with the Affordable Housing Regulations 2023 (S.I. No. 20/2023) and Affordable Housing (No.2) Regulations 2023 (S.I. No. 21/2023).

She stated that the purpose of the Scheme is to set out the manner in which affordable dwelling purchase arrangements are to be made available and gave an overview of the methodology that will be applied to determine the order of priority to be accorded to eligible households where the demand for such arrangements exceeds the number of dwellings available.

Ms. H. McKenna and Mr. N. O'Connor, Senior Executive Officer, Housing responded to Members' queries.

*On the proposal of Cllr C. Carthy, seconded by Cllr PJ O'Hanlon, it was agreed that the Scheme of Priority for Affordable Housing, as circulated, be adopted.*

**5. To receive the Audit Committee Report on AFS and LGA Statutory Report for Year Ended 2023.**

In accordance with the Local Government Act 2011 (as amended) and the Ethics Framework, Cllr A. Johnston declared a conflict of interest in relation to this item and withdrew from the meeting whilst the matter was being dealt with.

Members noted the Audit Committee Report on the Annual Financial Statement 2023 and the Local Government Auditors Report 2023 on the Accounts of Monaghan County Council for year ended 31 December 2023, all of which had been circulated to the members.

**6. To approve the Draft Audit Committee Charter for 2025**

The members noted the Draft Audit Committee Charter for 2025 which had been circulated with the agenda.

*On the proposal of Cllr A. Campbell, seconded by Cllr S. Coyle, it was agreed that the Draft Audit Committee Charter for 2025, as presented, be adopted.*

**7. To approve the Draft Audit Committee Work Programme for 2025**

The members noted the Draft Audit Committee Work Programme for 2025 which had been circulated with the agenda.

*On the proposal of Cllr A. Campbell, seconded by Cllr S. Gilliland, it was agreed that the Draft Audit Committee Work Programme for 2025 as presented, be adopted.*

**8. To approve the appointment of an external member to fill the existing vacancy on the Audit Committee**

The members noted the recommendation of the CPG dated 21 January 2025.

*On the proposal of Cllr A. Campbell, seconded by Cllr P. Gibbons, it was agreed that Mr. Gary Ogle be appointed as an external member of the Audit Committee to fill the existing vacancy.*

**9. To approve Strategic Policy Committee Standing Orders for 2024-2029**

*The members noted the Draft Standing Orders for the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) 2024-2029, which had been considered by the Corporate Policy Group and circulated to the SPC Members or their information.*

*On the proposal of Cllr S. Coyle, seconded by Cllr P. Clerkin, it was agreed that the Draft Standing Orders for the Strategic Policy Committees 2024 – 2029, as circulated, be approved.*



**10. To approve the appointment of an external member to fill an existing vacancy on the Strategic Policy Committee for Transport**

*On the proposal of Cllr P. Clerkin, seconded by Cllr C. Carthy it was agreed that Mr. Conan Connolly be appointed as an external member to the Strategic Policy Committee for Transport to fill the existing vacancy.*

**11. To consider a delegation to Fort Augustus, PEI for 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Benevolent Irish Society (1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2025)**

*Following a short discussion in relation to the invitation from Fort Augustus Irish Descendants, Prince Edward Island for a delegation to attend the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Benevolent Irish Society Celebrations from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2025, it was agreed to defer the decision regarding the delegation to the March Co Co meeting.*

**12. To consider recommendations and minutes from Corporate Policy Group 21 January 2025**

The members noted the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 21 January 2025, which had been circulated.

*On the proposal of Cllr R. Truell, seconded by Cllr C. Carthy, it was agreed that the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 21 January 2025 and the recommendations contained therein be approved.*

**13. To receive Management Report – January 2025**

The Chief Executive introduced the Management Report for January 2025 which had been circulated with the agenda.

The members noted the Management Report for January 2025 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 PJ O’Hanlon, seconded by Cllr R. Aughey, it was agreed that this Council write to the Minister for Transport, Mr. Darragh O’Brien, T.D., seeking funding of €1 million required to finish the feasibility study required for the N2 Ardee to Castleblayney Road Scheme.*

**14. To receive reports from Members attending Conferences/Training events**

The members noted the report from Cllrs C. Carthy and R. Truell, in relation to their attendance at the following Conferences/Training events:

- LAMA Autumn Seminar, 18 October 2024, Newgrange Hotel, Navan, Co. Meath.
- Celtic Conference – Entitlements, 13-15 December, Clonakilty, Co. Cork.

**15. Business Submitted by the Chief Executive**

**Delegations to Nashville and New York**

The Chief Executive referred to the discussions in relation to the St. Patrick’s Day celebrations at the last Council meeting and stated that he hoped to be part of the official delegation, alongside, the Cathaoirleach, Cllr P. Gibbons and Ms. P. Kerr, Head of Local Enterprise Office

that would be afforded the opportunity to attend Nashville. He stated that the key focus of the visit would be on economic development and building civic socio-cultural ties.

The Chief Executive informed the members that an invitation had been received from Mr. Denis Mulcahy, President of Project Children for delegation to attend the Yonkers Parade, led by Project Children in New York. He referred to the 'Move to Monaghan' campaign which is currently ongoing with Project Children and the significance of the representation to strengthen connections made from previous visits. He proposed that an official delegation comprising of, Ms. O. McConnon, Director of Services, Mr. D. McCreesh, Manager – Patrick Kavanagh Centre, be afforded the opportunity to attend the Yonkers Parade, led by Project Children, in New York on 22 March 2025.

*On the proposal of Cllr. A. Campbell, seconded by Cllr S. Gilliland it was agreed that a delegation comprising of the Chief Executive, Ms. P. Kerr and the Cathaoirleach, Cllr. P. Gibbons attend the St. Patrick's Day Celebrations in Nashville.*

*On the proposal of Cllr. A. Campbell, seconded by Cllr. S. Gilliland it was agreed that a delegation comprising of, Ms. O. McConnon, Director of Services, Mr. D. McCreesh, Manager – Patrick Kavanagh Centre and Leas-Cathaoirleach, Cllr P. Conlon attend the Yonkers Parade, led by Project Children, in New York on 22 March 2025.*

Mr G. McMahon, A/Director of Services referred to the new Community Safety Partnerships which have replaced the Joint Policing Committees. He advised that following receipt of Expressions of Interest to fill the position of Chairperson, a suitability assessment was carried out and recommendation submitted to the Department of Justice. Cllr Alan Johnston was selected to fill the role of Chairperson. This was done prior to his co-option to Monaghan County Council. The members wished Cllr Johnston well in his role.

#### **Extension of Meeting**

*On the proposal of Cllr PJ O'Hanlon, seconded by Cllr P. Conlon, as the time had reached 6.00pm, it was agreed to extend the meeting to 6.30pm to discuss the remaining balance on the agenda.*

#### **16. Matters arising out of the minutes of the Council meetings held on 06 January 2025**

There were no matters arising out of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 06 January 2025.

#### **17. To receive update on N2 National Primary Road Schemes**

No further update on the N2 National Primary Road.

#### **18. To receive update on North/South Interconnector project**

*On the proposal of Cllr N. Keelan, seconded by Cllr S. Coyle, it was agreed that this Council, write to the newly appointed Minister for Climate, Environment, Energy, and Transport, Mr. Darragh O'Brien T.D., requesting a meeting at the earliest opportunity to discuss the ongoing issues and community concerns in relation to the North / South Interconnector project.*

#### **19. To receive update on the Ulster Canal project**

No further update on the Ulster Canal project.

## 20. Questions and Replies

Clr C. Carthy asked:

1. Has the Council Executive a timeframe for the completion of snags in the 'Taking in Charge' of Alderwood estate and an expected date for presentation to council? Similarly, is there a timeframe on presentation of Lough na Glack 'Taking in Charge'?

**Reply:**

**Alderwood:** The Local Authority carried out a further inspection in January 2025. Several outstanding matters remain to be addressed by the developer. The Local Authority is liaising with the developer's agent in this regard. Once these matters have been resolved, the intent to take the estate in charge will be advertised.

**Lough Na Glack:** The local authority is awaiting the remediation of defects in the estate in relation to public lighting. Once these have been resolved, the recommendation to take in charge the estate will be presented to Council.

2. Has the Housing Executive an indicative figure in relation to new/additional social housing units expected for the Carrickmacross/south-Monaghan area over the next 12 months?

**Reply:**

Housing For All 2025				Delivery Date
Carrickmacross - Castleblayney	Coill an Ri, Carrickmacross	MCC	13	Q2 2025
Carrickmacross - Castleblayney	Mullinary, Carrickmacross Part V	MCC	4	Q2 2025
Carrickmacross - Castleblayney	Radhairc An Bhri. Bree, Castleblayney (Phase 2)	AHB	9	Q3 2025
PROJECTED TOTAL:			26	

*These figures do not include individual acquisitions and mortgage to rent properties.*

3. When is it expected that funding will be provided for Low-Cost Safety schemes to be rolled out in 2025 in Co. Monaghan?

**Reply:**

In 2024 the grant allocation was provided on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, it is expected that we will receive the grant allocations in mid-February. However, this may be affected by the formation of the new government.

4. When is it expected the Monaghan County Play & Recreation Strategy will be presented to the members?

**Reply:**

In order to avoid confusion, it was decided to prioritise the development of the County's Outdoor Recreation Plan due to Statutory Requirements. Once this is adopted by the Council, A Draft Play and Recreation Strategy will be developed. All key stakeholders will be provided with an opportunity to input into the development of the Strategy through extensive public consultation process. It is hoped to have this adopted in 2025.

5. Will the council be considering providing serviced sites for houses in Carrickmacross in 2025?

**Reply:**

Housing Section does not own any land in Carrickmacross that could be made available for serviced sites during 2025. However, we will keep this under review and may acquire lands for this purpose in Carrickmacross or elsewhere in the county.

Clr P. Gibbons asked:

6. I note the ongoing excellent work in the preparation of community plans for our villages. Can the selection criteria used to select these villages be provided? Annyalla is not included in the list provided. It is a long established and growing village and the three Municipal Districts also meet right in the centre of the village.

**Reply:**

The Community Department is in the process of the appointment of three additional

community development workers. A review of communities without a community plan will be part of this team remit. Annyalla will be considered as part of that process. The original communities were selected based on a mapping exercise which identified areas of the county which were failing to avail of the funding opportunities available. These were prioritised for immediate intervention.

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: Stage 2 funding submission has been submitted to the Department of Housing and Local Government with planning permission process to follow on approval of this. Present programme has construction due to commence December 2025.**

**Current proposal is for 22 no apartments in total consisting of 10no. 2 Bed duplex, 7no. 1 bed apartments in main building and, 1no. 2 bed apartment and 4no. 1 bed apartment in the adjacent protected structure.**

8. Does Monaghan County Council have a role in responding to pest sightings and issues in our towns, villages and housing estates. If so, can an overview of this response be provided?

**Reply:**

**We receive a large volume of complaints in relation to pest sightings. All complaints are investigated and depending if it is established that the infestation is arising from a deposit of refuse or waste, this is usually referred to the Environment Section or Litter Warden for further investigation.**

**In the case of individual house infestations, it was agreed we would treat the problems in Local Authority owned housing stock and not get involved in privately owned properties. This is usually carried out by a specialised pest control company.**

9. Can an update be given on the number of applicants waiting on the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) and an estimate be provided on when the initial assessments for the applicants for the 2024 LIS will be completed?

**Reply: There are 32 applications still on the list dating back to 2017/18. There are approximately 270 applications received in 2024. The initial assessment of these applications has begun and should be completed in Q1 2025.**

10. Can an update on the proposed Ballybay to Castleblayney Greenway be provided with timelines provided for next steps?

**Reply: This 15km project has gone through various stages and option Selection has been completed, with a preferred option selected. Currently, there is no potential funding stream to progress this project further. As the proposed greenway route is along the National Cycle Network, TII have been approached with a view to funding the scheme through detailed design and planning. TII have responded they are not in a position to provide funding at this time. MCC will continue to explore all avenues of potential funding sources to revive this project.**

**Clr S. Conlon asked:**

11. Considering the substantial investment of Monaghan County Council and Municipal District funds in building the Bio-Connect Centre at Knockaconny:

- a) What is the anticipated date of commencement at Bio-Connect?

**Reply: The construction contract is presently programmed for substantial completion in Quarter 2, 2025. Operations will commence over the months following substantial completion. At commencement, what number of employees will occupy the building, and what is the forecast for expansion of staff?**

**Reply: BioConnect will build an initial team of 4 direct employees (two in place now) to enable operations to begin. Further recruitment to build a wider team to deliver biotechnology projects for partners and biotechnology training will be dependent on securing further funding. Various large funding opportunities have been identified and are in progression.**

**Leasing of the upper floor of the facility and expansion of direct project is expected to generate up to 150 new jobs.**

- b) Has a promotion/recruitment drive been initiated to attract employees to take up posts at this highly specialised facility?

**Reply: Soft promotional activities have commenced ahead of the completion of the construction contract.**

- c) Who are the committed industry partners?

**Reply: Initial member companies contributing to BioConnect include MBio (Monaghan Biosciences), Lakeland Dairies, Manor Farm, Silver Hill Foods, Dutch DNA.**

- d) What is the total finance committed by the Monaghan Municipal District, Monaghan County Council, other State agencies, and private industry stakeholders?

**Reply:**

		Dec-24	End Construction
Monaghan MD		€370,000	€370,000
Monaghan CoCo		€92,983	€92,983
Monaghan CoCo Cashflow		€650,000	€650,000
Monaghan Mushrooms		€311,669	€350,000
Lakeland dairies		€50,000	€50,000
Manor Farm		€0	€50,000
Silver Hill		€0	€30,000
PE Services/ Linwoods/ SB		€0	€30,000
Enterprise Ireland		€4,619,228	€5,311,358
Service Billing		€42,122	€91,000
		€6,136,002	€7,025,341

- e) What agency/stakeholder will have managerial oversight, and on what basis will annual running costs of the facility be met?

**Reply: BioConnect will convert its existing board into a governance board and techno-commercial advisory board.**

**The role of the governance board will be managerial oversight and will comprise existing board members from MoCoCo, industry partners and representatives of Enterprise Ireland and government agencies. Additional members will be invited from key academic and education partners.**

**The advisory board will be created to advise BioConnect on activities, partnerships, technical matters and commercialisation. Its membership will include industry technical experts, key academic partners and innovation specialists.**

Operational costs will be met through a combination of income from customer projects, rental income from first floor leasing, training income and large strategic grant funding.

f) What are the core objectives, and anticipated outcomes, of Bio-Connect?

**Reply:** The core objective of BioConnect is to support companies (start-ups, existing SMEs and large organisations) seeking to innovate using state-of-the-art biotechnology to develop new high value products and processes with a clear focus on reduction of environmental impact (reduced carbon emissions, waste minimisation / valorisation). Such products/processes will include biogas / biomethane, products from precision fermentation e.g. enzymes, novel foods etc. Outcomes will be companies commercialising new products with lower carbon footprint, a vibrant hub for innovative biotechnology in the region and a pipeline of skilled talent. From day 1, BioConnect will form a key part of the national bioeconomy strategy across the island of Ireland along with existing programmes at the Irish Bioeconomy Foundation, multiple Universities, Teagasc and industry with a particular focus on activities in and needs of the local region. BioConnect will also provide training in state-of-the-art commercial biotechnology to ensure the delivery of a skilled workforce to support these new opportunities in member and partner companies.

12. In relation to proposed Active Travel measures throughout County Monaghan which have advanced to Stage 5, Detailed Design and Procurement, what is the total estimated cost to advance these projects to completion and to Stage 7, Close Out and Review?

**Reply:**

The following Active Travel schemes are currently at stage 5, Detailed Design and Procurement. The table below shows the allocation for 2025 and the estimated construction cost.

Project Code:	Project Name	2025 Allocation	Estimated Construction Cost	NTA Phase Jan 2025	Expected NTA Phase Q4 2025
MN/21/0013	Monaghan Town Horseshoe Bridge Active Travel Measures	€1,075,000	€1,075,000	5	7
MN/21/0014	Monaghan Town Ballyalbany Bridge Active Travel Measures	€50,000	€900,000	5	5
MN/21/0020	Low Cost Junction Tightening/Pedestrian Crossing Schemes	€160,000	€160,000	5	7
MN/23/102	Woodview to Glen Road connectivity - Monaghan Town	€210,000	€210,000	5	7
		<b>€1,495,000</b>	<b>€2,345,000</b>		

13. Has the Department of Transport / Transport Infrastructure Ireland, given an explanation why the annual Active Travel Measures funding recently allocated has been reduced to €2.5 million, a reduction of €500,000 on the previous annual allocations. Aligned to that, has an

explanation been provided as to why the 2024 allocation, originally €3 million, has been substantially reduced?

**Reply:**

**Due to budget constraints, there has been a reduction in the allocation for Active Travel with almost all local authorities' grants being lower than the 2024 funding.**

**The progress on active travel schemes in Monaghan in 2024 could only be advanced in line with the project approval guidelines and the necessary NTA processes of approval required. As such the expenditure on a small number of schemes was not as expected. The NTA, as the approving authority for funding, is required to work within the available budget on a yearly basis and are responsible for approving projects in line with the guidelines.**

**Clr N. McCooey asked:**

14. For the purpose of improving road safety along this busy National Primary Route, can the council provide an update on the progress of the Strategic Assessment Report for the N12 Silverstream to Armagh border realignment project submitted to Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in 2020?

**Reply: The following is the response received by TII. There has been no update. *The National Development Plan (NDP) and its review, which has been developed by Government to underpin the implementation of the National Planning Framework, provides the strategic framework for Transport Infrastructure Ireland's (TII) national roads programme for the period from 2021 to 2030. The focus of TII's national road improvement schemes over the coming years is, accordingly, being directed towards the national road improvement schemes that are named in the NDP. It is further acknowledged that the NDP does provide that additional projects to those listed in the NDP may be progressed over the lifetime of the NDP, however, both TII's and local authorities' (as road authorities) ability to progress additional national roads projects is constrained by the funding made available to TII.***

**The N12 Road Realignment proposal is not included amongst the projects that are identified in the NDP and the advancement of the proposed scheme cannot, therefore, be accommodated in the national roads programme at present.**

**Clr N. Keelan asked:**

15. In welcoming some progress on the provision of affordable housing, what plans have the Council to roll out affordable housing schemes across the county including in the Carrickmacross / Castleblayney area, and also in our village areas, where a need and demand have been established?

**Reply: Housing Section is continuing to engage with developers in the County to expand affordable housing provision in the County. There are currently no agreements in place for any affordable housing scheme in Carrickmacross/Castleblayney.**

16. In relation to rented property, approximately how much is Monaghan County Council paying per annum in rent and other associated costs for office space and other facilities, in order to carry out our functions as a local authority?

**Reply: Costs relating to MCC offices:**

**Rental Costs €400k**

**Other associated costs including Repairs & Maintenance €100k, Cleaning/ Caretakers €250k, Energy Costs €130k, Rates payable €100k**

17. What is the up-to-date position in relation to the taken in charge by Monaghan County Council of the Sliabh Dubh estate at Corduff Carrickmacross? Is this process still been held back by Uisce Éireann?

Reply: Sliabh Dubh is served by a standalone wastewater treatment plant which is not maintained by the original developer, this is classed as developer provided infrastructure. Monaghan County Council has previously intervened and carried out remedial works relating to this plant when a public health matter has arisen.

In a letter to Local Authorities in 2024, Uisce Éireann have advised that they been assigned responsibility for the remediation of developer provided infrastructure. They further advised that this will take time to resolve and that a range of resolution options are likely to be considered and used.

When taking in charge an estate, the Local Authority is obliged to take in charge all infrastructure and cannot decide to omit certain elements (such as standalone wastewater treatment systems). In the case of the taking in charge of Sliabh Dubh, if the Local Authority proceeds to take in charge the development before any remediation by Uisce Éireann, it will be liable for the future maintenance and repair of the wastewater treatment system, which is defective.

The Planning Authority are seeking further information from Uisce Éireann with regards timelines for addressing developer provided infrastructure.

18. What is the up-to-date position in relation to the preparation of our village plans, what plans have been completed, what plans are outstanding and when is it hoped to commence work on the outstanding plans? Reply: The status of all plans as at January 2025 is as follows:

Scotshouse	Complete
Newbliss Killeevan	Complete
Oram	Complete
Ballinode	Complete
Aughnamullen	Complete
Drum	Complete (plan produced by outside consultant as Town & Village Fund project & led by Ballybay Clones MD).
Rockcorry	Complete (plan produced by outside consultant as Town & Village Fund project & led by Ballybay Clones MD).
Emyvale	Plan to be completed in 2025
Smithborough	Information gathering phase complete. Draft Plan to be completed end February 2025. Public consultation to follow. Final Plan launch September 2025.

It is intended to review the community plan work schedule in light of additional resources being added to the Community Department in 2025.

19. How much did Monaghan County Council collect in commercial rates in 2024? How does this figure compare with pre-covid times 2018/2019?

Reply:

Year	Demand Amount (include Op bal)	Amount received	Percentage
2018	€15,662,079	€10,539,374	67.3%
2019	€16,034,019	€10,458,447	65.2%
2024	€17,614,197	€13,820,103	78.5%

Cllr S. Flynn asked:

20. Hackney services in Monaghan have declined significantly over the last number of years, this is having a crippling effect on rural businesses & rural hospitality. Can Monaghan County Council please provide confirmation on whether there were any requests for approval for a proposed local hackney service and whether Monaghan County Council have any proposed plans to increase a hackney service within Monaghan County? Reply: The RSA grants licenses to taxi and hackney operators. These operators are prohibited from being based in urban areas, although they may bring customers to urban areas once they are picked up in a rural location. The other restriction is that they may only serve a defined area which they must plot on a map.

Hackney services are for the private sector to provide. The Local Authority will provide support when requested to the RSA and the applicant by providing information that

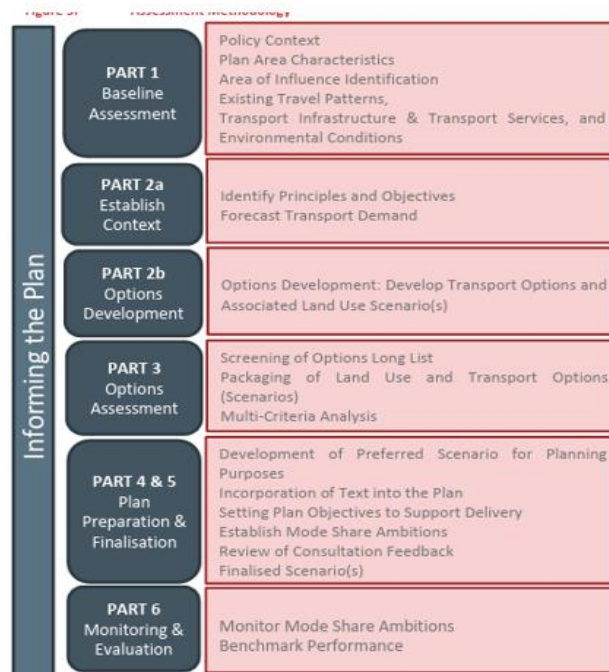


would support the need for a hackney in a particular area.

21. Further to my question in November on the “Ring Road/By-Pass” for the Clones Road, Monaghan Town. Can you please provide an update in relation to the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the expectation when same may be complete? **Reply: The Local Transport plan is being progressed through the methodology as set out in the national guidance and suite of Advice Notes and guidance documents that provide a framework for the carrying out of ABTAs and the preparation of LTPs.**

Each part must be discussed and agreed with the NTA prior to moving forward. The consultant appointed to complete the Monaghan Town LTP are finalising Part 2a content after the most recent meeting with the NTA in Jan 2025 and incorporating their comments and requirements. Work is advancing on Part 2b to allow us to progress and accelerate this part once final agreement on Part 2A is completed.

It is expected to commence public consultation on the draft plan in Q2 of 2025 with the plan to be complete in Q3 of 2025.



**21. Notices of Motion**

Following a short discussion on the motion, consideration of Notice of Motion 21(1) was deferred to the March Council meeting.

Consideration of Notice of Motion 21 (2) was withdrawn.

In the absence of Cllr McAree, consideration of Notice of Motion 21(3) was deferred to the March Council meeting.

**22. Votes of sympathy/congratulations**

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

- Pauric Duffy, Ganger/Driver, Carrickmacross-Castleblayney MD, on the death of his sister Noreen Duffy, Benmore, Tullynahinera, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan.

- Kieran Garvey, Assistant Staff Officer, Roads Section on the death of his mother, Helena Garvey, Dunsinaire, Monaghan Town, Co. Monaghan.
- Janice Eardley, Finance section on the death of her father, Myles Eardley, 27 Glenview Drive, Monaghan Town, Co. Monaghan.
- Adrienne Burns, IS Project Leader on the death of her father Hugh Shannon, Lurganboy, Scotshouse, Co. Monaghan.

### 23. Conferences

*On the proposal of Cllr N. Keelan seconded by Cllr C. Carthy it was agreed that the Council be represented at the following training events by the members listed below:*

Promoting Authority	Subject/Theme	Venue	Dates	Members Selected
Celtic Conferences	Corporate Governance	O'Donovan's Hotel, Clonakilty, Co. Cork	07, 08 & 09 February	Cllr. S. Coyle
Assoc. of Irish Regions	Annual Training Seminar	Raddison Blu, Athlone	05 & 06 February	Cllr. S. Coyle Cllr. S. Conlon
AILG	Spring Training Seminar – Wind Energy	Fairways Hotel, Dundalk	20 February	Cllr. P. Treanor
AILG	Spring Training Seminar – Wind Energy	Southern Region – Kilkenny Newpark Hotel	22 February	Cllr. R. Truell Cllr. S. Gilliland Cllr. S. Coyle
AILG	Embracing Equality Cultivating Local Communities	Clayton Galway	22 March	Cllr. R. Truell Cllr. P. Treanor Cllr. S. Coyle Cllr. S. Conlon

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cathaoirleach

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Meetings  
Administrator

Date: \_\_\_\_\_