

**MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD
IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE ON THE 14th OF DECEMBER 2015**

PRESENT:	Councillors	Catherine Fitzgerald	In the Chair
		William Aird	Paddy Bracken
		John Joe Fennelly	Caroline Dwane Stanley
		Padraig Fleming	David Goodwin
		James Kelly	John King
		Jerry Lodge	Seamus McDonald
		Paschal McEvoy	John Moran
		Tom Mulhall	Aidan Mullins
		Brendan Phelan	Mary Sweeney
		Noel Tuohy	Ben Brennan

IN ATTENDANCE:

Messers John Mulholland, Chief Executive, Gerry Murphy, Head of Finance, Kieran Kehoe, Director of Services, Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services, Ms. Irene Delaney, Administrative Officer, & Ms. Michelle McCormack, Executive Secretary.

159. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER MEETING HELD ON THE 30TH OF NOVEMBER 2016

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor John Moran, the Minutes of the November meeting of Laois County Council held on the 30th of November were agreed as circulated

160. REPORTS ON MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEETINGS & STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD IN DECEMBER 2015

On the proposition of Councillor Paddy Bracken seconded by Councillor John Moran, the reports on Municipal District & Strategic Policy meetings held in December 2015 were noted and agreed as circulated.

161. FINANCIAL SUPPORTS TO COMMUNITIES

The Members were circulated with a copy of the financial supports which the Council have made available in 2015. Approximately €500,000 has been expended to date.

162. COMMEMORATIVE GARDEN

Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services briefed the Members on the proposals for a Commemorative Garden at Áras an Chontae. On the proposition of Councillor John King seconded by Councillor Paschal McEvoy, the Members gave their approval, in principle to proceed with the works. The Consultants are currently costing the options and some monies will be provided from the 1916 Commemorations Budget towards the works.

163. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001

DISPOSAL OF FREEHOLD AT 55 BELADD LOWER, PORTLAOISE, CO. LAOIS.

On the proposition of Councillor Paschal McEvoy seconded by Councillor Noel Tuohy, the Members unanimously agreed to the disposal of freehold at 55 Beladd Lower, Portlaoise, Co. Laois in the townland of Beladd for a consideration of €300.00.

164. AUDIT COMMITTEE CHARTER 2016

Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services briefed the Members on the Audit Committee Charter for 2016 and outlined the background. On the proposition of Councillor James Kelly seconded by Councillor Mary Sweeney, the Members unanimously adopted the Audit Committee Charter 2016 in accordance with the Local Government (Audit Committee) Regulations, 2014.

165. AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services briefed the Members on the Audit Committee Annual Work Programme. On the proposition of Councillor Jerry Lodge seconded by Councillor Brendan Phelan, the Members unanimously adopted the Audit Committee Annual Work Programme in accordance with the Local Government (Audit Committee) Regulations, 2014.

166. ADOPTION OF DRAFT POLLING SCHEME FOR COUNTY LAOIS

Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services advised the Members that the draft Polling Scheme had been on display for public consultation until the 30th of November 2015. No submissions have been received and the draft scheme remains unchanged. On the proposition of Councillor Jerry Lodge seconded by Councillor John King, the Members adopted the draft Polling Scheme for County Laois.

167. ADOPTION OF PROTOCOLS FOR THE CONFERRAL OF CIVIC HONOURS/RECEPTIONS

Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services advised the Members that the draft protocols had been adopted by the Corporate Policy Group at their last meeting and briefed the Members in relation to same. On the proposition of Councillor Padraig Fleming seconded by Councillor John Moran, the Members unanimously adopted the protocols for the conferral of Civic Honours/Receptions.

168. STATUTORY CONSULTATION ON DRAFT FLOOD MAPS UNDER THE NATIONAL CFAM (CATCHMENT FLOOD RISK ASSESMENT AND MANAGEMENT) PROGRAMME

Mr. Kieran Kehoe, Director of Services outlined the background to this issue. He advised the Members that the OPW have developed draft maps for 7 areas in Laois which give a general overview of the areas of potential flooding and are currently at public consultation stage. The closing date for receipt of submissions/observations is Wednesday, December 23rd 2015 and for objections is Monday, 21st of December 2015. Mr. Kehoe advised that the draft maps are more detailed than previously available. The Director of Services took notes of the issues raised and indicated that members can also contact him directly, Ms. Angela McEvoy, Senior Planner or Mr. Philip McVeigh, Senior Executive Engineer if they wish to make submissions/observations after the meeting today.

169. COVENANT OF MAYORS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE & ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Mr. Kieran Kehoe, Director of Services advised the meeting that to date 7 other Local Authorities have signed up to this covenant. This commits local authorities to adhere to a policy of energy efficiency and reducing dependency on fossil fuels by 2020. By signing up to the covenant, it strengthens the Local Authority's position when applying for this funding and copper fastens what is already being implemented in Laois County Council. A Sustainable Energy Action Plan will be prepared and listed for consideration by the Members in due course.

On the proposition of Councillor John Joe Fennelly seconded by Councillor John Moran, the Members agreed the matter in principle.

170. PRESENTATION BY MS. ROSA FLANNERY, CO-ORDINATOR, MUSIC GENERATION LAOIS

Ms. Rosa Flannery, Co-Ordinator of Music Generation Laois gave a very comprehensive presentation on Music Generation Laois including the various programme strands, the schools and centres around the County. Ms. Flannery also presented details on the funding of Music Generation and the fees etc together with the upcoming events for 2016. The Chief Executive & the Members thanked Ms. Flannery for a very informative presentation.

171. RATIFICATION OF CONFERENCES/ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING

On the proposition of Councillor Seamus McDonald seconded by Councillor Ben Brennan, the Members unanimously agreed to the ratification of conferences/attendance at training as circulated.

172. CORRESPONDENCE

The following correspondence was circulated to the Members since the last meeting of the Council:-

- Letter dated the 7th of December 2015 received from the Office of the Minister for Social Protection in relation to mobile alarm systems for all citizens who reach pension age
- Letter dated the 8th of December 2015 received from the Office of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation in relation to Councillors membership on the Evaluations and Approvals Committees of the LEO's

173. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Notice of Motion No: 71/2015

Councillor William Aird proposed the following Notice of Motion

“That the Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council or her nominee be appointed a member of the Loans Credit Committee of Laois County Council”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John King. The Members were advised that the credit policy for Local Authority House Purchase Loans was made under the Housing (Local Authority Loans) Regulations 2009. The policy is the blueprint used in making decisions on whether to extend credit to a loan applicant. The primary goal of a credit policy is to ensure prudent lending and to avoid extending credit to customers who are unable to pay their accounts. The credit policy in relation to loans provides written guidance for local authorities for the processing of loan applications and the making of loans under the regulations. The criteria for obtaining a loan is set out in the policy and covers such areas as:

- Eligibility and income limits
- Credit checks for applicants (Irish Credit Bureau)
- Capacity to repay and stress testing

The credit committee is an in-house committee of staff members from the Housing and Finance sections and includes:

- Gerard Murphy, Head of Finance,
- Michael Rainey, Senior Executive Officer, Housing
- Julie Bergin, Financial Management Accountant
- Anne Mc Loughlin, Administrative Officer, Housing

The role of the committee is to review all applications and make a determination on behalf of the local authority on whether to offer/refuse an application. It should be noted that applicants will already have sought their mortgage from two lenders (banks or building societies) and have received inadequate funding offers or refusals from

each before making application for a house purchase loan. The elected members perform a wide range of functions that deal with major matters of policy, such as the adoption of the budget, the making of a development plan, the disposal of land, etc. The operational role is performed by the Chief Executive and his/her staff who have responsibility for the day to day administration of the Council. The issue of loans to individuals would be considered to be operational and appropriate to the executive role of the Council. However, The Head of Finance is proposing that the over-sight of the loans function be included in the work programme of the Audit Committee. A lengthy discussion ensued. Mr. John Mulholland, Chief Executive indicated that further consideration would be given to the matter and that the members would be advised in due course.

Notice of Motion No: 72/2015

Councillors Jerry Lodge, John Joe Fennelly, Catherine Fitzgerald, Paddy Bracken, Padraig Fleming, Seamus McDonald & Paschal McEvoy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this meeting calls on the Minister for Education to expedite the construction of the new St. Francis School as this school caters for County Laois and the pupils and staff are in urgent need of a modern building with up to date facilities and furthermore the proposed start date is unacceptable”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly. It was agreed that a letter issue to the Minister for Education in this regard.

Notice of Motion No: 73/2015

Councillor Noel Tuohy proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That Laois County Council make a submission to the Irish Water consultation process seeking it to engage with Bord na Mona and both Laois and Offaly local authorities in joint venture to incorporate the Garryhinch reservoir as part of their Shannon to Dublin Water Supply Plan. This would make the project safer and sustainable from an environment and economic perspective”

This Notice of Motion was seconded by Councillor Tom Mulhall. Councillor Mulhall enquired as to whether a delegation could be invited from Irish Water and give a presentation to the Members on the project. It was noted that a submission had been made previously to Irish Water in this regard and that Mr. Kieran Kehoe, Director of Services would follow up with Mr. Jerry Grant from Irish Water.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

SIGNED: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

CERTIFIED: _____
**DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE
AFFAIRS**

