

**MINUTES OF FEBRUARY MONTHLY MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN
ARAS AN CHONTAE, PORTLAOISE ON 23RD OF FEBRUARY 2009**

PRESENT: Councillors

Tom Jacob	In the Chair
William Aird	John Bonham
Paddy Bracken	Ray Cribbin
James Daly	James Deegan
Geraldine Delaney	John Joe Fennelly
David Goodwin	Catherine Fitzgerald
Michael Lalor	Laurence Kavanagh
Jerry Lodge	Seamus McDonald
Michael Moloney	Dick Miller
Paul Mitchell	John Moran
Martin Phelan	Michael Rice
Brian Stanley	Mary Sweeney
John D. Turley	Brendan Phelan

IN ATTENDANCE:

Messers Peter Carey, County Manager, Gerry Gibson, Director of Services, Declan Byrne, Director of Services, Gerry Murphy, Head of Finance, John Daly, Director of Services, Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services, Ms. Carmel McNicholl, Senior Executive Officer & Ms. Michelle McCormack, Executive Secretary

10. VOTE OF SYMPATHY

It was proposed and unanimously agreed that a vote of sympathy be extended to Mr. Declan Byrne, Director of Services on the recent death of his sister, Ann.

A vote of sympathy was also extended to Ms. Orla Barrett, Area Engineer on the death of her father.

11. FAIRTRADE WEEK

Mr. Tom Jacob, Cathaoirleach indicated to the Members that Fairtrade week is to commence this week for a period of two weeks and requested the Members support of same to ensure that Portlaoise retains it's status as a Fairtrade town. It was also agreed that appropriate signage be provided in the town in relation to it's Fairtrade status.

12. VOTE OF CONGRATULATIONS

It was unanimously agreed and supported by all Members that a vote of congratulations be extended to Fr. John Byrne on being named the Laois Person of the Year. It was agreed that he be thanked for all the work he is doing in the parish. Congratulations was also extended to all the nominees involved.

13. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

On the proposition of Councillor William Aird seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly, it was agreed that the Minutes of the January meeting held on the 26th of January 2009 as circulated be adopted and signed.

14. DISPOSAL OF LAND UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001 IN RESPECT OF PROPERTY AT 26 WILLOW GROVE, MOUNTMELICK

On the proposition of Councillor Patrick Bracken seconded by Councillor David Goodwin, it was agreed that the Council dispose of property at 26 Willow Grove, Mountmellick in the townland of Mountmellick for a consideration of €183,000

15. PART VIII OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT) REGULATIONS, 2001 – 2007 IN RESPECT OF MOUNTMELICK PLAYGROUND

The Members were circulated with a copy of the planning report on this proposed development. The Members were informed that the project will involve the installation of a children's playground with equipment suitable for children aged 1 – 12 years. The size of the playground is approximate 1 acre and will be fenced with low level fencing appropriate to a children's playground.

On the proposition of Councillor David Goodwin seconded by Councillor Michael Moloney, the Members unanimously agreed to the proposed development.

16. APPROVAL TO THE RAISING OF A LOAN NOT EXCEEDING €30,000,000 FROM THE HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY PLC., FOR HOUSING PURPOSES

A discussion took place in relation to affordable houses and affordable housing stock. It was suggested that affordable houses should be made available to those on the social housing waiting list.

It was also indicated that the Housing SPC in conjunction with Management should agree revised housing policy to address the concerns raised.

Members requested that Laois County Council should adopt a flexible approach, where possible, to people who are genuine in trying to maintain their homes in the current climate. The County Manager stated that Laois County Council have a very good record of managing arrears and urged people who are having difficulty to make early contact with the Council.

The County Manager indicated, also, that Laois County Council are aware of the volatility in the economy and the impact in terms of our role as a housing authority and that the Council have been hugely successful to date as a provider of social and affordable housing. He extended compliments to the staff of the housing department for their work in this regard. There are currently 120 units on hand and there is a submission being made to the Department regarding these units.

Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services indicated that the approval to the raising of this loan of €30,000,000 is to cover new mortgages which would include affordable houses and home improvement loans. She also indicated that the Department are looking at various leasing options at the moment.

On the proposition of Councillor Michael Lalor seconded by Councillor William Aird, the Members unanimously agreed to the raising of a loan not exceeding €30,000,000 from the Housing Finance Agency Plc., for housing purposes.

17. WELCOME

Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald formally welcomed visiting pupils from Scoil Choist Ri and their teacher Ms. Dollard.

18. LOCAL ELECTIONS 2009

The Members were circulated with documentation in relation to the polling date and also the spending limits for candidates. These two documents were noted. A discussion ensued regarding posters. Councillor Deegan indicated that local industries should be supported for the manufacturing of posters. The Cathaoirleach, Mr. Tom Jacob indicated that there should be no posters.

In relation to the Register of Electors, Councillor Catherine Fitzgerald suggested that we seek clarification regarding the issue of people having to go to the Garda Station to get onto the Register and that there should be a facility that they can come into Laois County Council and show identification. It was agreed that this matter would be examined further.

The Members were informed that the contact person for the Registers of Electors is Mr. Gerry Ryan, S.O., Corporate Affairs Department. The closing date for forms for the supplement is the 19th of May 2009. Councillor William Aird proposed that we have a meeting with the Gardaí and officials and this was seconded by Councillor Larry Kavanagh

19. TAKING IN CHARGE OF INCH GROUP WATER SCHEME

On the proposition of Councillor James Deegan seconded by Councillor Mary Sweeney, it was unanimously agreed to take in charge of Inch Group Water Scheme. Members were informed that the Inch group water scheme was constructed in 2001. It serves 8 houses using the Stradbally public water supply as source. A map showing the location and extent of the scheme was circulated to the members.

20. PRESENTATION BY MS. CAROLINE FEEHAN, CO-ORDINATOR ON LAOIS SPORTS PARTNERSHIP DISABILITY INITIATIVES

A short presentation was made outlining the work undertaken by the Laois Sports Partnership and their Social Inclusion Officer in relation to developing services for persons with a disability. The Members & the County Manager extended their gratitude and compliments to the Sports Partnership in the work undertaken to date.

21. ADOPTION OF ROADWORKS PROGRAMME 2009

The Members were circulated with a copy of the Roadworks Programme for 2009. The programme was adopted on the proposition of Councillor William Aird and seconded by Councillor Brian Stanley.

A lengthy discussion ensued during which Members expressed concern in relation to the poor condition of the roads in certain locations and in particular in Borris-in-Ossory and the impact of the works being carried out by the National Roads Authority. Concern was also raised in relation to the non-replacement of staff retiring in the Borris-in-Ossory area towards the end of the summer period.

Councillor Martin Phelan proposed that a special meeting be held on site with representatives of the National Roads Authority with a view to resolving the issues in this area. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Michael Lalor. The discussion on the conditions of the road was also supported by Councillors John Joe Fennelly, Laurance Kavanagh, Paul Mitchell.

Councillor John Joe Fennelly asked for a meeting with the Director of Services and the Engineering staff in the Borris-in-Ossory area. Mr. Gerry Gibson, Director of Services indicated that he shared the concerns of the Members. Councillor John Joe Fennelly requested the Director of Service to arrange a special meeting on site with the NRA to discuss the conditions of the roads.

22. LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES 2009

The Members were circulated with a list of the Local Improvement Schemes 2009 to be undertaken. On the proposal of Councillor Mary Sweeney, seconded by Councillor Brian Stanley, The Local Improvement Schemes for 2009 were unanimously agreed.

23. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN ROADWORKS SCHEME 2009

The Members were circulated with a list of the applications under the Community Involvement in Roadworks Scheme totaling €220,000. On the proposal of Councillor Michael Lalor seconded by Councillor Brendan Phelan, the Community Involvement in Roadworks Scheme for 2009 was unanimously agreed.

24. ADOPTION OF PHASE 2 OF PARKING AREAS & CAR PARK BYE-LAWS MOUNTMELICK

The Members were circulated with a copy of the draft parking areas and car park bye-laws 2008 for Mountmellick. The bye-laws were proposed by Councillor Paddy Bracken and seconded by Councillor Seamus McDonald.

25. CORRESPONDENCE

The Members were circulated with the following two pieces of correspondence received since the January meeting

- (i) Correspondence dated the 2nd of February 2009 from the Health Service Executive in response to Notice of Motion No. 29/08 regarding Home Help provision in Laois/Offaly Local Health Office catchment areas.

- (ii) Correspondence dated the 19th of February 2009 from the Office of the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Dublin 2 in response to Notice of Motion No. 38/08 regarding the Young Famers Installation Scheme. A discussion ensued during which the Members indicated that Laois County Council write back to the Minister regarding the grant.

26. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Notice of Motion No: 02/09 – Councillor Michael Moloney

Councillor Michael Moloney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That, we the members, of Laois County Council call on the Government to change the legislation so as to restrict any sitting member of either houses of the Oireachtas from receiving a pension relating to a previous position held in the Oireachtas or Government, that is while still TD or Senator”

As there was no seconder the motion was not carried.

Notice of Motion No: 03/09 – Councillor Michael Moloney

Councillor Michael Moloney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“In light of the ever increasing numbers of people losing their jobs and aware of the importance of The St. Vincent De Paul Society in these times, that we the Members of Laois County Council forgo our conferences expenses for the remainder of this year and in December’s estimates the Members allocate these monies to the St. Vincent de Paul Society across the County to enable them to help the needy especially at Christmas”

This motion was seconded by Councillor John D. Turley

In subsequent discussion and debate on the issue, it was agreed that the issue of what charity organisations are supported and how they are supported is a matter for each individual Councillor.

Notice of Motion No: 04/09 – Councillor Michael Moloney

Councillor Michael Moloney proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That the Government, as a matter of policy set up a register in all Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment, of all Boards of State and Semi-State Bodies whereby individuals can submit their C.V.’s for consideration for appointment to these same Boards when vacancies arise”

This motion was seconded by Councillor William Aird

Notice of Motion No: 05/09 – Councillor Tom Jacob

Councillor Tom Jacob proposed the following Notice of Motion:-

“That this Council calls on the Government to expand the F.A.S. scheme in Portlaoise to clean the rivers and remove all the debris that is impeding the natural flow of water and prevent flooding”

This motion was seconded by Councillor Martin Phelan.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

_____ **Cathaoirleach**

_____ **Director of Corporate Affairs**