



## ***Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes***

### ***Ordinary Meeting***

***3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020, Council Chamber @ 1.30p.m.***

#### **Presiding**

Councillor Wayne Harding, Cathaoirleach

#### **Councillors Present:**

Councillors Tom Behan, Mike Bray, Eugene Cassidy, Francis Deane, Aisling Dempsey, Seán Drew, Eddie Fennessy, Brian Fitzgerald, Pdraig Fitzsimons, Joe Fox, Noel French, David Gilroy, Trevor Golden, Wayne Harding, Annie Hoey, Suzanne Jamal, Sharon Keogan, Nick Killian, Alan Lawes, Paul McCabe, Stephen McKee, Paddy Meade, Ronan Moore, Maria Murphy, Damien O'Reilly, Tommy Reilly, Amanda Smith, Niamh Souhan, Alan Tobin, Emer Tóibín, Sharon Tolan, Gillian Toole, Conor Tormey.

**Apologies:** Councillors Yemi Adenuga, Joe Bonner, Deirdre Geraghty-Smith, Johnny Guirke, Gerry O'Connor, Darren O'Rourke, Sarah Reilly,

#### **Officials in attendance:**

**Chief Executive:** Jackie Maguire

**Directors of Service:** Des Foley, Fiona Lawless, Barry Lynch, Kevin Stewart

**Meetings Administrator:** Robert Collins

**Senior Executive Officers:** Larry Whelan, Dara McGowan, Fiona Fallon

#### **1 Confirmation of Minutes**

1.1 Confirmation of minutes of Ordinary Meeting held on 2nd December, 2019

The minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019 were confirmed on the proposal of **Councillor Eugene Cassidy** and seconded by **Councillor Trevor Golden**.

#### **2 Matters arising from the Minutes**

#### **3 Expressions of Sympathy and Congratulations**



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Sympathy was extended to:

- The family of the late Michael Lenihan former Trim UDC Member.
- The family of the late Jack Devine former Rate Collector and his late wife Marcella (Cella)
- The family of the late Liam Murphy.
- Alison Ryan, Planning on the death of her father-in-law, Patrick Murphy.
- The family of the late Fergus Duffy, former employee.
- John Brady, Security Guard, Buvinda House on the death of his mother, Eileen Brady.
- David Jones, Housing on the death of his father Gerard (Gerry) Jones.
- Helen McEntee T.D. and the family of the late Margaret (Madge) McEntee.
- The family of the late Seamus Mallon.

Congratulations were extended to:

- Councillor Alan Tobin and Michelle on the birth of their daughter Mia;
- Dunshaughlin and District Historical Society for its recent publication on graves;
- John Grant of the Kells Musical Society;
- MCC's Climate Change Team for the recent Citizen Climate Leadership workshop;
- Various Shop Local Initiatives that ran over the Christmas period;
- MCC 's Environment section for the on-going Bulky Waste initiatives;
- Councillor Sharon Keogan for her recent Drugs Talks (solidarity was expressed by a number of Councillors to Councillor Keogan following the recent attach on her office);
- Kevin McGrath, winner of the national indoor under-23 title for 1,500m;
- MCC Arts Office for the production of 'In the Middle of' in Kells Cultural Centre in January;
- Councillor Wayne Harding, Cathaoirleach, on his response to the proposed R.I.C. Commemoration.

#### **4 Disposal of Land in accordance with Statutory Notices circulated pursuant to the provisions of Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001**

#### **5 Statutory Business**

##### **5.1 Community**

##### **5.1.1 To receive details and approve the allocation under the Knockharley Environmental Community Projects Scheme 2019, as recommended by the Knockharley Community Liaison Committee and endorsed by the Ashbourne Municipal District Councillors on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020.**

The allocation was approved on the proposal by **Councillor Conor Tormey** and seconded by **Councillor Amanda Smith**.

##### **5.2 Environment**



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### **5.2.1 To receive a presentation in respect of the preparation of the Beach Management Plan for the area between the River Boyne and River Nanny and to consider proposed amendments to the County Meath Foreshore Bye-Laws 2010 arising from recommendations from the said plan and if thought fit, to adopt the revised Bye Laws.**

A presentation was made by Ms. Bernadine Carry, Environment Section, setting out the main components of the Beach Management Plan, the specific constraints and obligations under the various nature designations in the coastal area, the proposed amendments to the Foreshore Bye-Laws and the key issues emerging from the public consultation process. Following consideration of the significant volume of submissions made, a revised set of Bye-Laws was proposed to and approved by the Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District. The presentation also addressed some implementation aspects.

There was a discussion with the Elected Members, with contributions from **Councillors Tom Behan; Sharon Tolan and Alan Tobin**, on the value of good communications, the use of comments received as part of the consultation process; how the new bye-laws would be enforced and future possibility of the beach receiving Blue Flag status. Mr. Larry Whelan provided a response.

On the proposal of **Councillor Sharon Tolan** and seconded by **Councillor Tom Behan**, the revised Bye-Laws were adopted.

### **5.2.2 To receive an update on Climate Action activities for 2020**

A presentation from Caroline Corrigan, Climate Action Officer, set out the implementation, thus far, of the Council's Climate Action Strategy, an assessment of performance on some key targets; the range of stakeholder engagements that have taken place or are planned; an outline of future networking and strategic projects and call for support and involvement by the Elected Members, Council staff and the wider community.

There was a discussion with the Elected Members, with contributions from **Councillors David Gilroy; Noel French; Alan Tobin, Gillian Toole, Maria Murphy, and Paul McCabe**, on the good work of the Climate Action Team, the emissions targets and baselines used; the transition of the MCC fleet, LED public lighting, reaching out to youth and men's shed groups; sustainable transport, recycling drop-off centres and charging points for e-vehicles. Clarifications were provided and Mr. Des Foley gave an up-date on the national roll-out of the LED public lighting programme.

## **5.3 Corporate Services**

### **5.3.1 To adopt the Annual Service Delivery Plan 2020**

The Annual Service Delivery Plan 2020 was adopted on the proposal of **Councillor Alan Tobin** and seconded by **Councillor Paul McCabe**.



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### **5.3.2 To adopt the draft Standing Orders for the Strategic Policy Committees**

The draft Standing Orders were considered, with interventions from **Councillors Sean Drew; Nick Killian** and **Gillian Toole**, on ensuring that the business of the SPCs was relevant and specific; that training be provided for the external members of the SPC and that a higher threshold be included in the Standing Orders for non-attendance of external members at SPC meetings. As a result of these inputs, two amendments to Standing Orders no. 9 and 13 were agreed.

On a proposal by **Councillor Gillian Toole** and seconded by **Councillor Tommy Reilly** the draft Standing Orders, as amended, were adopted.

### **5.3.3 To appoint a replacement Councillor to the Meath Local Sports Partnership Committee following the resignation of Councillor Tommy Reilly**

It was agreed to defer this item.

## **6 Reports**

### **6.1 Chief Executive's Report**

Clarification was sought by **Councillors Nick Killian; Gillian Toole; Alan Tobin; Pdraig Fitzsimons; Sean Drew; Paul McCabe** and **Paddy Meade** on a number of matters in the Report. The main issues focused on:

**Water** – Request for report to MD meetings on outages;

**Housing** – Delivery in 2019; availability of land for future own-build housing; reliance on AHBs reasons for emergency accommodation provision; the system for the allocation of housing; ASB complaints

**Transport** – Lack of footpaths; road surfaces in housing estates; sustainable transport and cycling links to Fingal; update on Navan 2030 works; accessibility to park 'n ride in Navan; bus shelters; CIS allocations; the public lighting programme in Kells area

**Planning** – public display of the draft County Development Plan; number of submissions received to date;

**Economic Development** – Retail strategy for Ashbourne;

**Community** – Roll out of the Healthy Ireland Programme in libraries;

Responses and clarifications were provided on the issues raised by the Management Team.

### **6.2 Report from the Corporate Policy Group**

The Meetings Administrator advised the meeting that the Corporate Policy Group reviewed the agenda for the full Council meeting and received information on the particulars of some items. The CPG received an overview of the Roads Programme 2020 and on the various Community schemes



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for 2020. The CPG also approved a recommendation from the Planning, Economic Development and European Affairs SPC on the composition of the Naming Committee for Housing Developments. The report was noted by the Elected Members.

### **6.3 Report from the Protocol Committee**

The Meetings Administrator gave a summary of items considered by the Protocol Committee, including: agreement on a number of civic events for the Navan, Laytown-Bettystown and Ashbourne Municipal Districts and approved the list of conferences and training events in accordance with Circular LG 04/2019.

Both **Councillors Nick Killian** and **Sean Drew** sought clarification on the nature of the agreed civic events and also on what the Council was planning as part of the Decade of Commemorations for 2020. Both Councillors underlined the need to ensure that any planned commemoration be inclusive, non-partisan and non-political nature. Clarification was provided and the issue of the commemorations programme would be an item for consideration at a future Council Meeting. The report was noted by the Elected Members.

## **7 Correspondence**

7.1 Correspondence from the Department of Health in response to Notice of Motion 9.13 adopted at the September 2019 meeting of the full Council re. provision of respite for children and adults with intellectual disabilities in Meath.

**Councillors Mike Bray** and **Gillian Toole** expressed their disappointment with the response received and the approach adopted by the HSE to this issue.

The correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

7.2 Correspondence from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in response to Notice of Motion 9.9 adopted at the November 2019 meeting of the full Council re. update on the local planning implications of the 'Flemish Decree' judgement by the European Court of Justice.

**Councillor Damien O'Reilly** considered that the response was unsatisfactory.

The correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

7.3 Correspondence from Transport Infrastructure Ireland re. 2020 National Roads Allocations.

Noted by the Elected Members.



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- 7.4 Correspondence from Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport re. 2020 Regional and Local Road Grant Allocations.

Noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.5 Correspondence from LGMA re. Social Enterprise Development Fund 2020.

**Councillor Nick Killian** asked if the Council would be making an application. It was clarified that the Fund was for NGOs specifically.

The correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.6 Circular WP01.20 – Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment re. Waste Management (Prohibition of Waste Disposal by Burning) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 (SI No. 684 of 2019).

Noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.7 Circular F.01/20 – Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government re. 31 January 2020 deadline for the reporting of political donations by elected members

Noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.8 Circular RST 04/2019 – Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport re. Safe Overtaking Width for Cyclists Sign and Provision of funding.

This item was considered together with Item 9.5

The correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

## **8 Notice of Question**

### **8.1 Submitted by Councillor Nick Killian**

*“To ask the Chief Executive to outline how many legal actions have taken place for 2018/2019 as a result of inspections carried out by the Housing Section of Meath County Council. In addition can the Chief Executive outline the total number of inspections carried out by the housing inspectors in 2018/2019 and what were the top five standards that were not adhered to under the regulations.”*

**Response:**



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The number of private rented inspections conducted by Meath County Council has increased from 414 in 2018, to 1,134 in 2019.

Where non-compliance with the minimum private rented standards is identified, improvement letters are issued, which outline the corrective actions required on behalf of the landlord. Thereafter, there is ongoing engagement to ensure properties reach compliance within a reasonable time period.

Two Improvement Notices were issued in 2019, under Section 18a of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1992, while in 2018, no property inspected warranted an escalation to Improvement Notice stage.

It is only in instances where there is serious non-compliance, including the presence of fire safety concerns, that the matter of an Improvement Notice, and possible subsequent Prohibition Notice will be invoked.

The Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2017, sets out the nine standards by which a rental property is inspected against for compliance, including; Structural Condition; Sanitary Facilities; Heating Facilities; Food Preparation; Storage & Laundry; Ventilation; Lighting; Fire Safety; Gas, Oil & Electricity Installations.

An analysis of 2019 inspections indicated that the most common Regulation breached was in respect of Regulation 4 - Structural Condition (window restrictors, structural repair, dampness), followed by Regulation 6 - Heating (heating system capable of providing effective heating, in good working order and installation of carbon monoxide alarms where necessary) and Regulation 8 - Ventilation (adequate ventilation including for the removal of water vapour from every kitchen and bathroom).

**Councillor Nick Killian** welcomed the response and suggested that the Council use the response in its future communication activities.

### **8.2 Submitted by Councillor Paul McCabe**

*“To ask the Executive the number of Excluding Orders, Refusal/Deferrals, Verbal Notices, Written Notices, Statutory Warnings and Termination of Tenancies issued by Meath County Council to tenants or prospective tenants in 2017, 2018, and 2019.”*

**Response:**

Outlined in tabular format below is a summary of actions undertaken by the Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation team in respect of complaints received in each respective year.

- Summary of Anti-Social Behaviour Complaints 2017-2019

	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
<i>No. of ASB Investigation Complaints/Cases*</i>	<i>253/96</i>	<i>340/198</i>	<i>374/281</i>
<b>Action Taken</b>			



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<i>(one case can result in multiple actions)</i>			
No ASB Found	7	73	77
Advice/Instruction Given	120	64	195
Verbal Warning	19	25	24
First Written Breach of Tenancy Notice	12	25	5
Second Written Breach of Tenancy Notice	3	10	2
Statutory Warning	5	7	3
Notice to Quit Served	0	0	3
Exclusion Orders Granted	1	0	1
Repossession due to ASB	0	0	0

- One Case can include multiple Complaints

Current analysis indicates that there are in the region of 30-40 applicants where an allocation is deferred due to convictions under various Sections of the Criminal Justice (Public Order Act) 1994 within the preceding five years

**Councillor Paul McCabe** sought clarification on the level of actions taken.

### 8.3 Submitted by Councillor Alan Lawes

*"To ask the Chief Executive to provide an explanation as to why, I as an elected member of Meath County Council received no assistance or even a call back when I called the emergency number twice on January 9th seeking assistance with a homeless man sleeping out in the freezing cold in Bettystown."*

#### **Response:**

In the case cited, the homeless gentleman was assessed by a Settlement Officer on the 10<sup>th</sup> January, and an emergency accommodation bed sourced, though the client voluntarily exited emergency accommodation within an hour of this placement. The Settlement Office was in contact with Cllr Lawes on the 10<sup>th</sup> January in relation to this case.

Meath County Council's Emergency Out of Hours number covers all services provided by the Local Authority, including Housing, in the event that an emergency situation arises outside normal working hours.

In respect of Housing Services, the volume of emergency calls received relate to maintenance issues reported by tenants, while a small proportion of calls concern homelessness.

The homeless service provided through the Emergency Out of Hours number is focused where the need for emergency accommodation arises from an emergency, namely instances where families/persons are rendered homeless as a result of fire/flood. All calls received by the Emergency Out Of Hours facility from such emergency scenarios were responded to.





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All other calls logged regarding homelessness are dealt with on the next working day. The vast majority of such calls relate to clients already known to the Homeless Service, and prior engagement has already taken place.

In addition to the above, the necessary emergency out of hours arrangements for homelessness are instigated through the Emergency Out of Hours Service for severe weather episodes, as and when such episodes occur, and annually, for the public holidays that occur during the course of the Christmas season.

**Councillor Alan Lawes** sought clarification on whether the Council will provide assistance to people using the emergency number on a Friday. Mr. Barry Lynch clarified that having reviewed calls to the service for 2019 a total of 16 calls were received which related to the Settlement Team activities. The number of individuals was less than 16 as more than one call was received about some clients. The calls for the homeless service all related to existing clients who had already been engaging with the Settlement Team and as such were not emergency situations. These calls were followed up and dealt with during office hours. In relation to the case highlighted by Councillor Lawes, as stated in the response provided, the individual concerned voluntarily exited emergency accommodation within an hour of being placed. The Council will continue to deal with emergency situations arising from fire or flood or severe weather events as outlined in the written response.

### **8.4 Submitted by Councillor Gillian Toole**

*“What are the minutes of the meeting[s] that took place with the Meath East Oireachtas members, prior to the Meath County Council submission to EMRA/RSES, in early 2019?”*

#### **Response:**

Meath County Council’s approach to our submission to the draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (R.S.E.S.) process was developed over a number of meetings and presentations in 2018 culminating in the formal submission in January 2019. It was discussed and debated at full Council level and at the Planning & Economic Development S.P.C. which was opened up to the full Council given the importance of the issues involved and the long term effects on the county.

Councillors will recall that our vision for the county envisaged that additional towns in south Meath should be brought into the Dublin Metropolitan Area and this was a central point in our submission. This request was articulated clearly in the submission and was supported by all Councillors. Many other important issues such as the distribution of population in the region and within the county were also included. Records of the various Council meetings show that at all times officials were urged by Councillors to brief the Oireachtas members and to enlist their support for this strategy. This happened at various stages in the process and included a comprehensive letter to Minister Eoghan Murphy following one such briefing on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2018. At all times the Oireachtas members expressed support for our approach.



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As the interactions with the Oireachtas members were in the nature of briefings on the process and on the contents of various reports and submissions rather than formal meetings no minutes were kept.

Councillors will also be aware that while we were able to secure some beneficial changes in relation to population and other matters in the final R.S.E.S. the proposal to include additional Meath towns in the Metropolitan Area was not successful. Work on the implementation of the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (M.A.S.P.) is currently underway at Regional level.

**Councillor Gillian Toole** asked if any of the briefings were face-to-face meetings. Mr. Kevin Stewart indicated that most were.

### **9 Notice of Motion**

#### **9.1 Submitted by Councillor Johnny Guirke**

*“That this Council should work with neighbouring councils in Westmeath and Cavan to enhance tourism potential.”*

#### **Supporting Information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered.**

Meath County Council has long recognised the benefits of adopting a regional approach to Tourism development and our collaborations with Louth to develop the Discover Boyne Valley and Boyne Valley Flavours brands as part of Ireland’s Ancient East have now become established nationally and internationally. The further development of the Boyne Valley brand will continue to be the central focus of our tourism policy and will be reflected in the next Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy which will replace the current 2016-2020 strategy.

However the benefits of close collaboration with all our neighbouring counties is recognised and there are already a number of examples of quality regional initiatives including:

The development of the Royal Canal Greenway in partnership with Kildare, Westmeath and Longford Councils, Waterways Ireland and Failte Ireland.

The development of the funding application for the Navan to Kingscourt (Royal County to Lakelands) greenway with Cavan and Louth County Councils

Examination of opportunities for collaboration on Loughcrew/Fore with Westmeath County Council

The inclusion of actions in Cavan, Westmeath and Monaghan in the Failte Ireland Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP) that will require a broader regional collaborative approach.



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In summary, Meath County Council is already working proactively with our colleagues in neighbouring counties including Cavan and Westmeath and will continue to engage with them to identify further projects of mutual benefit.

This item was deferred.

### **9.2 Submitted by Councillor Johnny Guirke**

*“In light of the Council's projected €3.2 million spend on legal fees during 2020, that Meath County Council would tender in future for legal services.”*

#### **Supporting Information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered.**

The Council's projected spend on Legal and Professional Fees for 2020 is €3,122,498, which includes a range of professional fees for the following: the Review of the County Development Plan and the provision of other Planning services; the External Veterinary Inspector fees; Housing Professional Costs and Valuation Certificates; Transport Professional Costs; Water Services Professional costs; Energy efficiency projects; fees and costs associated with Unauthorised Landfills; the preparation of Data Protection Procedures and other services.

The projected spend on legal fees is approximately €770k for 2020, which includes: planning and environment legal fees and compensation, the cost of the Coroner's Office; parking legal fees and cost recovery; and other legal services.

As part of a regular review of procurement practice and procedures, the Council has assessed the current Office of Government Procurement (OGP) Framework for Legal Services and is currently preparing a procurement process to drawdown legal services from this Framework in 2020.

This item was deferred.

### **9.3 Submitted by Councillor Alan Tobin**

*“That Meath County Council looks into the feasibility of the development of a creche facility when designing and building the new Council Chamber. The creche would be used for staff and visitors, as well as, elected representatives and would make the Council a truly family friendly organisation and help young Councillors to fulfill their public duties.”*

#### **Supporting Information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered.**

Meath County Council is currently working with the Design Team for the new chamber, to look at various options for inclusion in the new building at Buvinda. It is intended to complete this process by April 2020 at which stage the design proposals will be presented to the Councillors.



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The supporting information and motion, proposed by **Councillor Alan Tobin** and seconded by **Councillor Sharon Tolan**, were noted.

### **9.4 Submitted by Councillor Pdraig Fitzsimons**

*“That all Meath County Council housing tenants must have house and contents insurance.”*

#### **Supporting Information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered.**

All housing units owned by Meath County Council are insured under Meath County Council’s insurance policy in respect of structure (home, driveways, footpaths, walls, gates and fences), for such structural damage caused as a result of fire, storm, flood or explosion. Thereafter, it is the tenant’s responsibility for putting in place adequate insurance cover for the contents of the dwelling. This requirement is cited under Section G of Meath County Council’s Tenancy Agreement.

The supporting information and motion, proposed by **Councillor Pdraig Fitzsimons** and seconded by **Councillor Tom Behan**, was noted and referred to the Housing, Community and Culture SPC for consideration.

### **9.5 Submitted by Councillor Maria Murphy**

*“That Meath County Council assess locations on our roads with a view to erecting the new official road signs advertising minimum passing distances for cyclists and that, in the first instance, priority should be given to areas frequented by cycling clubs.”*

#### **Supporting Information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered.**

Circular RST 04/2019 from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport invited applications from Road Authorities to ascertain their requirements for the provision of Safe Overtaking Width for Cyclists signs.

Meath County Council submitted their requirements for signage in January 2020 and subject to funding being available from the Department, the signage will be erected in 2020.

They will be erected where there is an existing warning sign indicating cyclists, and on roads approaching cycling infrastructure such as the Royal Canal (Dublin-Galway) Greenway.

This item was considered under Item 7.8. There were interventions by **Councillors Maria Murphy** and **Councillor Nick Killan** and a clarification from Mr. Des Foley. The supporting information and motion, proposed by **Councillor Maria Murphy** and seconded by **Councillor Sharon Tolan** was noted.

### **9.6 Submitted by Councillor Paul McCabe**



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*“That Meath County Council expresses its concern and disappointment to the IDA and the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation in light of only 3 official IDA visits to county Meath in 2019 and to encourage further investment in North Meath.”*

### **Supporting Information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered.**

The number of IDA visits per county is just one indicator published by the agency on an annual basis. The key consideration for any county is not the number of visits, it is the number of investments secured by that county and the value of those investments to the local economy. In that context Meath has been one of the most successful counties outside of the main cities in securing IDA backed investment in recent years. Councillors will be aware that, working closely with IDA officials, we were successful in attracting Facebook, Takeda (formerly Shire), Emeri Nutrition and most recently Amazon to choose Meath as a business location. Councillors will have seen the massive Facebook site currently under construction adjoining the M3 at Clonee/Pace, their first phase is complete, Takeda is operational, Emeri have completed construction and fitout in Navan and are actively recruiting and Amazon have just applied for planning permission for a major project in Drogheda.

A recently published report by Facebook shows that between 2015 and 2018 the Clonee site stimulated almost €1.55 billion of activity in the Irish economy, over €900 million was spent on Irish goods and services and the project supported in excess of 1300 jobs during and since construction. That was before the commencement of the current phase which, if anything, is likely to result in even more impressive outcomes in due course.

The main role of the IDA is to win investment and jobs for Ireland and the recently published report on their Investment Strategy 2015-2019 shows that all targets were met by them and that there are now almost 250,000 people employed in the multinational sector in Ireland. IDA client companies contribute over €21.5 billion to the Irish economy and FDI exports are almost €220 billion. Their target of an increase in investment in every region of between 30% and 40% has also been met. The agency has a strong remit to support existing IDA clients, to help them to expand or to retain current employment numbers and ensure that they remain committed to Ireland in the face of fierce international competition and again they have been very successful in this regard.

In summary, and as articulated in our Economic Development Strategy, we will focus on continuing the excellent working relationship that we now have with IDA which has been very successful to date and which has resulted in billions of euro of investment to Meath and the wider economy in recent years.

The supporting information and motion, proposed by **Councillor Paul McCabe** and seconded by **Councillor Tom Behan**, were noted.

### **9.7 Submitted by Councillor Alan Lawes**



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*“That Meath County Council allows Meath Councillors to inspect any properties used as emergency accommodation and clarifies its position as previously discussed by this Council and the Navan Municipal District”.*

### **Supporting Information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered.**

Meath County Council fulfils its statutory function regarding homelessness with a professional, dedicated team of Settlement Officers, who provide a range of supports to those experiencing, or at risk of homelessness.

A range of providers are engaged with in the provision of emergency accommodation, including Drogheda Homeless Aid, Simon Community, Peter McVerry Trust and private suppliers (landlords and B&Bs).

The Housing Department is aware of its responsibilities towards individuals placed in emergency accommodation. As part of its on-going operations, the Settlement Team regularly visits properties used for emergency accommodation, and will relay advise on standards to the property owner when required. Furthermore, Meath County Council will deal with any complaints received and conduct all necessary investigations on any matters raised. It is therefore imperative that any complaints regarding standards are relayed to the Settlement Office, so as to allow for the necessary follow up to take place.

The inspection of properties is an operational matter, which is delegated to the appropriate staff, and is therefore not something that falls within the remit of the Elected Members. Equally, the need to maintain and respect the privacy of clients placed in emergency accommodation must be apparent in any inspection process, and this is best achieved by the completion of same by the appropriate staff members.

This in no way impacts on the ability of an Elected Member to advocate on behalf of an individual at risk of homelessness or who may be experiencing issues with their accommodation, and who has given the Elected Member the appropriate consent.

Introducing his motion, **Councillor Alan Lawes** eluded to a number of properties that he considered to be unsuitable for emergency accommodation but which are currently used as housing options by the Council. He considered that the current inspection regime was not satisfactory, that landlords were not meeting their obligations and that service level agreements were required between them and the Council. Further, he also asserted that the Council Executive had provided misinformation at a previous Council meeting, regarding the use of one particular property for single people.

There were a number of interventions from other Elected Members, including: **Councillors Nick Killian; Alan Tobin; Sean Drew; and Maria Murphy**. They felt that the Housing Department staff was doing its best in a very difficult situation, they appreciated on-going efforts in trying to resolve certain cases and felt that they, as Elected Members, did not have the expertise to inspect properties. Given the scale of the problem, Councillors asked if alternative properties exist to house the people currently in the properties referred to by Councillor Lawes. There was agreement that



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sub-standard properties should not be used and that this issue should be considered further by the Housing, Community and Culture SPC.

In response, Mr Barry Lynch rejected the assertions that Councillor Lawes had been misled in July 2019 in relation to emergency accommodation. In line with commitments given to the previous council one particular property in Navan is not being used to provide emergency accommodation for families and is for single individuals only. One isolated departure from this policy occurred in November 2019. This matter was rectified as soon as it was identified by the Head of the Settlement Team. The Director of Service had no knowledge of this matter until January 2020 and the policy has been restated to staff to ensure that this does not recur. As regards the standard of emergency accommodation the Director noted the circulation of out of date images of one such property on social media. The inspection of these properties is an operational matter as outlined in the response to the motion and the Settlement Team will respond to any complaints received.

With regard to the inspection of private rented properties including those used for both HAP and emergency accommodation the Council has significantly increased resources and inspection activity in this area. It was noted Councillor Lawes had in fact been assisted with one such inspection report in advocating for one of his constituents.

The Director indicated that he was in agreement with a proposal by Councillor Murphy to discuss the matter of emergency accommodation at the Strategic Policy Committee.

The supporting information and motion, proposed by **Councillor Alan Lawes** and seconded by **Councillor Edward Fennessy**, was noted and referred to the Housing, Community and Culture SPC for consideration.

### **9.8 Submitted by Councillor Edward Fennessy**

*"That Meath County Council writes to the new Minister with responsibility for Children requesting that the Government acknowledges Adoptee Identity Rights, as advocated by Aitheantas, and immediately allows adoptees access to their own information on health, history and heritage."*

The motion, proposed by **Councillor Edward Fennessy** and seconded by **Councillor Alan Lawes**, was agreed.

### **9.9 Submitted by Councillor Paul McCabe**

*"That Meath County Council write to Irish Water, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Competition Authority regarding the prohibitive and exorbitant costs associated with connecting into the public water, public waste water and sewerage systems particularly for one-off houses. And that we acknowledge that these excessive costs are resulting in further pollution of our environment."*



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The following Elected Members spoke in favour of the motion and outlined the situations they had experienced regarding the connection of houses to the public water supply: **Councillors Damien O'Reilly; Stephen McKee; Sean Drew and Nick Killian**. The motion, proposed by **Councillor Paul McCabe** and seconded by **Councillor Tom Behan**, was agreed.

### **9.10 Submitted by Councillor Alan Lawes**

*"That this Council writes to the new Minister for Children and Youth Affairs calling for an increase in spending to 1% of GDP on Early Years as recommended by the OECD. This will ensure decent pay, sustainable services and a high quality service for Children."*

This item was deferred.

### **9.11 Submitted by Councillor Stephen McKee**

*"That Meath County Council supports the Government's proposed increase in the plastic bag levy as part of our Climate Action obligations and calls on the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment to exempt compostable shopping bags from any levy, in order to encourage shoppers to purchase ecological, plastic-free, sustainable alternative products that are environmentally friendly."*

The motion, proposed by **Councillor Stephen McKee** and seconded by **Councillor Sean Drew**, was agreed.

### **9.12 Submitted by the Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District Councillors**

*"That Meath County Council calls on Minister Kevin Moran to provide funding for a playground at the Battle of the Boyne site at Oldbridge."*

The motion, proposed by **Councillor Wayne Harding** and seconded by **Councillor Sharon Tolan**, was agreed.

## **10 Schedule of Chief Executive & Approved Orders (For information only)**

- 10.1 Schedule of Chief Executive's Orders - Transportation
- 10.2 Schedule of Chief Executive's Orders – Environment & Water Services
- 10.3 Schedule of Chief Executive's Orders – Housing
- 10.4 Schedule of Chief Executive's Orders – Community

Noted by the Elected Members.





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### **11 Any Other Business**

**Councillor Maria Murphy** raised a number of problems she was experiencing with the MCC tablets, in particular access to historical email and Members Representations. **Councillor Paul McCabe** requested an up-date on progress with providing Elected Members with access to their email accounts on their personal GSMs.