



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

Chief Executive's Report for Elected Members

Monthly Management Report
May 2020

This Monthly Management Report is prepared in accordance with Section 136(2) of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, and provided to the Elected Members for consideration and information.

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Introduction by the Chief Executive

To Members,

This Monthly Management Report gives an overview of the on-going governance of Meath County Council at a very challenging time for the Council, the county and the country more generally.

This report is being provided for your consideration and information and gives an overview of how the Council continues to respond to the Covid-19 situation by providing critical and essential services.

Earlier this month, the Government published its Roadmap for Reopening Society and Businesses and the Return to Work Safely Protocol. We are assessing these and have been active in recent weeks in planning for a return to more normal working arrangements and greater service delivery. This work is on-going but whatever we do, we need to ensure that we are in line with policy and procedures agreed nationally. This process of reopening will take time and we will work through the various phases that the Government has set out in the Roadmap.

As Chief Executive, I have been conscious of the need to keep lines of communication open during this crisis. Throughout this period I have endeavoured to keep you all informed of developments and will continue to do so.

I am also finding new means of communicating with the staff of the Council, as many remain at home or continue to operate and live under the restrictions. I am also liaising with my colleagues in other local authorities and with the national authorities in shaping the sector's actions for the next phases of the Covid 19 response. Finally, the Council continues to provide information to the general public on our services, using our website and social media accounts. As a Council we will continue to do this as best we can.

I also want to thank the Cathaoirelach and other members for their support during this difficult time for working with us in putting the right responses in place and for reinforcing the key messages, as we try to deliver essential public services at a time of national crisis. I must also thank our excellent staff, many of whom are on the frontline, for their energy and commitment during this time. They will be vital in the coming months, as we move through the next phases of this situation.

Jackie Maguire
Chief Executive

Response to the Covid 19 Situation

Current Situation

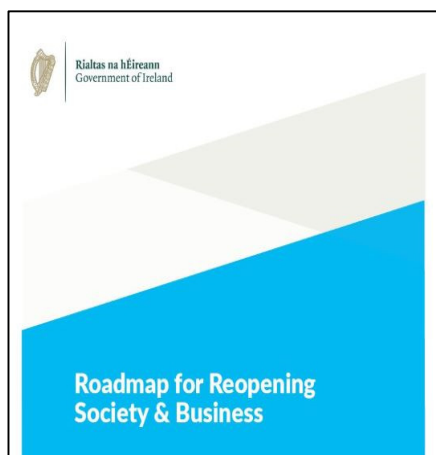
The Council is still operating within the restrictions introduced on **March 27**, with the focus still on the delivery of critical and essential services. These critical services were broadly identified for the sector at national level, with some local discretion. During April, there was agreement that the grass-cutting and maintenance of some public open spaces would resume.



In line with Government direction, the Council's public offices and most other facilities remain closed to the public. The offices are still in use by some staff for the provision of critical services. Those staff that can work from home continue to do so, with a number of staff working from Buvinda House and the MD offices. Outdoor staff continue to work the shift roster, in line with the critical service requirements.

The Community Resilience Forum of representatives from agencies, sports clubs and community groups was established in March and continues to meet on a regular basis to coordinate local actions to the crisis. The Community Support Line also continues to operate on an 8am-8pm, 7-day a week basis. The number of calls to the line has begun to decline in recent weeks. The Council is also involved in the next phase of the Community Call - #InThisToghter, which is a programme of initiatives at national and local levels to keep people active, connected and to ensure they look after their mental health.

Implementing the Roadmap for Reopening



Roadmap and Protocol Published

On Friday, **May 1**, the Government published its **Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business**. This set out a series of measures of easing restrictions over 5 three-week phases beginning on May 18th.

The Council is assessing the Roadmap to determine what it means for service provision, the opening-up of Council facilities and public amenities and the return to work of Council staff and contractors.

The Council is working with the LGMA on developing a coherent approach by the local government sector to the reopening and the lifting of restrictions.

On Friday, **May 8**, the Government adopted the national **Return to Work Safely Protocol**, setting out measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. The protocol was developed following discussion between Government, Trade Union and Employer representatives. The protocol incorporates current advice about measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and is applicable to all industry sectors, including the local government sector.

In advance of the Protocol being published, Meath County Council has been planning for the return to more normal service levels and working arrangements over the last number of weeks. In particular, the Council is modifying the workplace, so that Buvinda House and the Civic Offices will accommodate greater levels of staff whilst complying with the physical distancing requirements. These measures will require a new shift roster for office based staff, which will be implemented in line with the Roadmap.

Other measures being implemented include: modifications to the public counters, to help protect staff and the public alike; possible restrictions on the number of people entering the public buildings; additional health checks; and a new induction process for all staff and measures to protect outdoor workers that share vehicles. All planned measures will be reviewed in light of the Protocol and enhanced where appropriate.

Corporate Services

Council Meetings

Meeting of the CPG: An online meeting of the CPG on Friday, May 1st, considered the planning for future meetings of the Council, the Municipal Districts and other committees.

The CPG has decided that the June Council meeting will take place in Solstice Theatre on Monday, June 8th, to facilitate physical distancing for all 40 members, as well as members of the press and public. It was agreed that no online platforms would be used to enable members to participate remotely. It is proposed that there will be three meetings on June 8th, as follows:

- 10.30 Special Council Meeting (Co-option of New Members)
- 11.30 Annual General Meeting (Election of Cathaoirleach and Leas Chathaoirleach)
- 12.30 Lunch
- 13.30 Ordinary Council Meeting

The CPG also agreed that future meetings of the Council should take place in the Solstice Theatre for the foreseeable future. This will require a decision of the full Council.

In terms of MD Meetings, the CPG agreed that online briefings will continue for May and that the AGMs and Ordinary Meetings should take place on the scheduled dates in June, with the Council Chamber being used to allow for sufficient physical distancing.

| Municipal District | AGM Date | Time | Proposed Venue |
|--------------------|----------|---------|--------------------|
| Ashbourne | June 9 | 10.00am | County Hall, Navan |
| Ratoath | June 10 | 9.30am | County Hall, Navan |
| Laytown-Bettystown | June 11 | 9.30am | County Hall, Navan |
| Kells | June 15 | 4.00pm | County Hall, Navan |
| Navan | June 17 | 10.00am | County Hall, Navan |
| Trim | June 19 | 2.00pm | County Hall, Navan |

The CPG also agreed to postpone any meetings of the SPCs, until there was more clarity on the easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

The CPG also requested that a protocol be developed for the holding of virtual meetings, in order to facilitate more efficient meetings and establish some ground rules by which these meetings are conducted. This has been circulated to all members and is based on best practice by other organisations.

Customer Services

While the public counters are currently closed, the Customer Service Team continues to manage phone and email calls. The volume of calls to the Council's contact centre has increased during the

period of restrictions with an average of 450 calls a day during April. Members Representations continue to be received and responses issued.

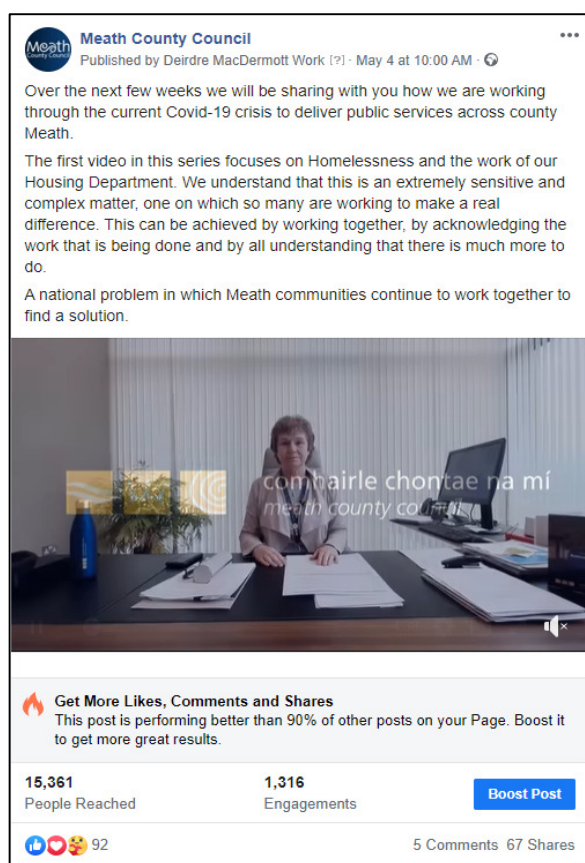
Community Call Support Line: Customer Services led on the establishment of the new Community Call Support Line, which was operational from Monday, March 30. Members of the Customer Service team and other staff handle the calls to the support line, from 8am-8pm, Monday to Sunday.

Communications

Video Series on Council Services:

The Communications Unit is currently preparing a series of videos to be published on the Council's social media accounts. The videos are intended to give an insight into the work of the Council's service departments and information on the various measures that have been put in place during the Covid-19 crisis.

The first video, which featured housing and homelessness, the provision of isolation units for the homeless, Traveller community and the clients of the Meath Women's Refuge and the various other measures put in place over the last six weeks, was published on Monday, May 4th. The reaction to the video has been generally very positive. The series will continue with a video on economic development supports available through the Local Enterprise Office and a video on planning and the impact of the Covid emergency measures on the review of the County Development Plan and development control processes.



#InThisTogther: On Friday, April 24th, the Taoiseach launched a new cross-government Wellbeing campaign - In This Together - which aims to help people to Stay Connected, Stay Active, and look after their Mental Wellbeing during the COVID-19 Emergency. This is essentially the next phase of the Community Call and a key part of the campaign is the role of local authorities in providing content and promoting the various activities and events at national and county levels. An internal working groups is currently developing a programme of activities and online content for the residents of Meath.

Twinning Arrangements

Donation from Guiyang: The County's Sister-Cities partner, the City of Guiyang in China has made a donation of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the Council, to help with the efforts to stop the spread of the virus in Meath. The donation which includes: surgical masks, gloves and goggles was delivered to Buvinda House on April 28th. Some of the equipment has been provided to the HSE for frontline services, as well as to the Civil Defence and the Meath Women's Refuge. The Council is also retaining equipment for use by its own staff.



The Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive providing some of the donated PPE to the Civil Defence and the Meath Women's Refuge

Housing Services

Capital Programme - Summary Profile of Approved Direct Construction Projects 2017-2021

| PROJECT NAME | NO. OF UNITS | APPROVED BUDGET € | ESTIMATED START DATE | ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE |
|--|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| PROJECTS COMPLETED | | | | |
| Bettystown (Phase 1) | 16 | 3,437,478 | Complete | N/A |
| Athboy (Phase 1) | 32 | 8,850,320 | Complete | N/A |
| Proudstown Road Navan | 4 | 819,737 | Complete | N/A |
| Summerhill | 19 | 3,854,980 | Complete | N/A |
| Ratoath | 17 | 3,662,700 | Complete | N/A |
| Cortown* | 10 | 6,922,971 | Complete | N/A |
| Kilmainhamwood* | 4 | | Complete | N/A |
| Oldcastle* | 16 | | Complete | N/A |
| The Belfry, Trim | 3 | 560,000 | Complete | N/A |
| Totals | 121 | 28,108,186 | | |
| CONSTRUCTION STAGE – ALL SITES CURRENTLY CLOSED DUE TO COVID-19** | | | | |
| Bettystown (Phase 2) | 15 | 3,426,308 | Q1 2019 | Q3 2020 |
| Kells | 40 | 8,555,683 | Q1 2019 | Q3 2020 |
| Carlanstown | 13 | 2,719,237 | Q2 2019 | Q3 2020 |
| Lagore, Dunshaughlin | 26 | 5,813,948 | Q1 2020 | Q2 2021 |
| Totals | 94 | 20,515,176 | | |
| TENDER FOR CONSTRUCTION | | | | |
| Donore | 21 | 4,165,565 | Q4 2020 | Q4 2021 |
| Totals | 21 | 4,165,565 | | |
| PART 8 PLANNING PROCESS | | | | |
| Nobber | 19 | 3,657,000 | - | - |
| Totals | 19 | 3,657,000 | | |
| DESIGN PHASE | | | | |
| Farganstown | 42 | 11,204,000 | Q4 2020 | Q2 2022 |
| Ashbourne | 76 | 19,730,587 | Q4 2020 | Q4 2021 |
| Kells Archdeaconary | 20 | 3,826,010 | Q4 2020 | Q4 2021 |
| Blackhill Crescent, Donacarney | 2 | 418,369 | Q4 2020 | Q3 2021 |
| Nangle Court, Navan | 6 | 1,096,600 | Q4 2020 | Q4 2021 |
| Church View, Rathmoylon | 9 | 1,719,002 | Q4 2020 | Q4 2021 |
| Lagore, Dunshaughlin | 34 | 7,996,502 | Q3 2021 | Q4 2022 |
| Totals | 189 | 45,991,070 | | |
| GRAND TOTALS | 423 | 102,436,997 | | |

* Rapid Build Delivery Projects

** Sites due to reopen 18th May 2020

Summary of 2020 Approved Funding Submissions

| PROJECT NAME | PROJECT TYPE | NO. OF UNITS | FUNDING APPROVED € |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Dunboyne | Part V | 10 | 2,025,748 |
| Dunshaughlin | Part V | 8 | 2,222,861 |
| Trim | Part V | 6 | 1,549,664 |
| New Lane, Navan | Direct Construction | 5 | 985,945 |
| Athboy (Kildalkey Rd) | Direct Construction | 20 | 4,135,500 |
| Totals | | 49 | 10,919,718 |

Summary of Current Funding Submissions

| PROJECT NAME | PROJECT TYPE | NO. OF UNITS | FUNDING SOUGHT € |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|
| Navan | Turnkey | 26 | 6,255,445 |
| Totals | | 26 | 6,255,445 |

Expression of Interest for Turnkey Schemes and/or Lands

There is currently an open call for proposals (no deadline applies) regarding the supply of development sites or completed housing schemes that are fit for purpose for social housing within the County. Details regarding same and required forms can be found on www.etenders.gov.ie. or via the following link on Meath.ie <http://bit.ly/EOIHouseSchemesAndOrLand>

Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability

Grants to the value of €1,006,578 have been awarded to 149 Households under the various Grants schemes prior to Covid-19 restrictions.

Local Authority Vacant Units Currently Unavailable for Allocation

Outlined below is a summary per Municipal District of the number of vacant properties that currently require works before they can be re-tenanted, as at 5th May 2020. For the period from 21st February 2020 to 5th May 2020, works were completed on 14 vacant units; while 15 units became vacant during this period.

Covid-19 restrictions, particularly those announced on March 27, has led to a delay in pre-let repairs.

| | No. of Units Vacant < 3 Months | No. of Units Vacant 3-6 Months | No. of Units Vacant > 6 Months | No. of Vacant Units Currently Subject to Works | No. of Vacant Units not with Contractors |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Ashbourne | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Kells | 5 | 8 | 4 | 11 | 6 |
| Laytown/Bettystown | 2 | 2 | **1 | 5 | 0 |
| Navan | 4 | 3 | **1 | 8 | 0 |
| Ratoath | 5 | 4 | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| Trim | 0 | 3 | **1 | 4 | 0 |
| TOTALS | 17 | 20 | 7 | 37 | 7 |

**Note: Works include major renovations aiming to upgrade BER rating to B2.

Summary Profile of Approved Housing Body Approved Projects 2017-2021

| PROJECT NAME | NO. OF UNITS | AHB | Delivery |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------|---|
| Churchfields, Ashbourne (Part V) | 8 | Tuath Housing | Complete - 2017 |
| Grangehall, Dunshaughlin | 6 | Tuath Housing | Complete - 2017 |
| Ardmore, Bettystown | 1 | North & East Housing | Complete - 2017 |
| Royal Oaks, Enfield (Part V) | 4 | Cluid Housing | Complete - 2017 |
| Seabury Lawns, Mornington | 6 | Cluid Housing | Complete - 2018 |
| Kellets Grove, Dunshaughlin (Part V) | 6 | Tuath Housing | Complete - 2018 |
| Milltown Meadows, Ashbourne | 67 | Cluid Housing | Complete - 2017 |
| Emmet Street, Trim | 11 | North & East Housing | Complete - 2018 |
| Dunville, Navan (30 units Part V) | 64 | Tuath Housing | Complete - 2018 |
| Ceamach Close, Donacarney | 16 | Cluid Housing | Complete - 2018) |
| Blackcastle, Navan | 26 | Tuath Housing | Complete - 2018 |
| Grangehall, Dunshaughlin | 8 | Tuath Housing | Complete - 2018 |
| Ashewood, Ashbourne | 12 | Cluid Housing | Complete - 2018 |
| Churchfields, Ashbourne | 18 | Tuath Housing | Complete - 2018 |
| Frederick Manor, Ashbourne | 11 | Cluid Housing | Delivery Due – Q2 2020 |
| Fitzherbert Wood, Navan | 46 | Tuath Housing | 5 Complete 2018/17 Complete 2019/ 24Delivery Due 2020 |
| Churchfields, Ashbourne (Part V) | 25 | Tuath Housing | 10 Complete 2018/15 complete Q4 2019 |
| Eastham Square, Bettystown(Part V) | 5 | Cluid Housing | Complete –Q1 2019 |
| Station Road, Dunboyne | 24 | Respond | Complete – Q1 2019 |
| Slan Duff, Kentstown | 2 | Cluid Housing | Delivery Due – Q4 2020 |
| Dunville, Navan | 6 | Tuath Housing | Complete – Q2 - 2019 |
| Broadmeadow Vale, Ratoath (Part V) | 12 | Tuath Housing | Delivery Due Q4 2019 |
| Commons Road , Navan | 12 | North & East Housing | Complete - Q 4 2019 |
| Commons Road, Navan | 58 | Tuath Housing | Delivery Due – (20 units) Q4 2019 |
| Maudlins, Duleek | 20 | Respond | Delivery Due – Q4 2019 |
| Dun Eimear, Bettystown | 23 | Cluid | Complete – Q4 2019 |
| Moyvalley, Longwood | 13 | Tuath | Delivery Due – Q2 2019 |
| Dunville, Navan | 54 | Tuath | 18 Complete/36 Delivery Due – Q2 2020 |
| Ledwidge Hall, Slane | 28 | Oaklee | Delivery Due – Q4 2020 |
| Athboy Road, Trim | 25 | Oaklee | 16 Complete/9 Delivery Due Q2 2020 19 |
| Athboy Road, Navan | 63 | Respond | 2021 |
| The Bungalows, Dunshaughlin | 8 | Circle | Q2 2020 |
| Whitefield Hall, Bettystown | 29 | Tuath | Q2 2020 |
| Total | 717 | | |

Homeless Service

| | SINGLE ADULTS/COUPLES | HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN | TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Placements at 30 th April 2020 | 109 (116) | 27 (37 Adults, 64 Children) | 136 |
| Of the 27 households with children, 11 families are placed in short term private rented accommodation (house/apartment) through Settlement Team's intervention and 7 Families in PMVT Family Hubs. Reasons for emergency accommodation placement in order of frequency: Primary reason is Notice to Quit & unable to a find property to rent; followed by family breakdown; addiction; mental health and young person leaving Tusla aftercare | | | |

51 tenancies were secured through the support provided by the Homeless HAP Placefinder Service for the period January 1st to April 30th 2020.

Two clients to date required placement in Isolation Units as suspected Covid-19 cases. There are currently no placements in isolation, with no recorded confirmed cases for Co. Meath to date.

Social Housing Supports

362 new applications for Social Housing Support were received for the period January 1st to April 30th 2020.

Outlined below is the number of households that have had their accommodation needs met by Meath County Council in the period January 1st to April 30th 2020.

| Allocations/Housing Supports | Number |
|------------------------------|------------|
| MCC Direct Allocations | 89 |
| Approved Housing Bodies | 57 |
| RAS | 0 |
| HAP | 198 |
| TOTAL | 344 |

Planning Services

Current Service Provision

Following the enactment of the Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (Covid 19) Act 2020, the following services have been identified by the Government as essential services with regards to planning and development;

- Accepting, registering and validating files. Please note that only desktop validation can be done as site visits to inspect site notices are prohibited. These site notice inspections will be carried out once the current measures are lifted.
- Building Control – including processing of Disability Access Certificates, Fire Certificates and compliance in relation to commencement notices, certificates of completion and Seven Day Notices.

Development Control

All planning timelines have been paused from March 29, 2020 to May 23, 2020 inclusive. A total of 56 days/8 Weeks.

As a result, activities such as the inspection of site notices, the planning assessment of the site and the issuing of final grants cannot be carried out. Decisions, which had passed the five-week public consultation statutory timeframe and had planning inspections carried out prior lockdown, have issued. However, no final grant can issue on these as the statutory timeframe for appeal by a third party is paused.

In the period 29th March to 7th May, a total of 164 planning applications were received. This compares to 211 in the same period last year.

It is important to reiterate that the activation of the legislation does not freeze the planning system, rather it extends the timelines within which decisions can be made. Where appropriate public consultation timelines are extended also if they had not exceeded the five-week period prior to the introduction of the legislation.

Transportation

Current Service Provision – Outdoor Services

Following on from the announcement of the COVID-19 measures on Friday, March 27, the Transportation Operations list of Essential Services was extended from Wednesday, April 1, as follows:

- Street Cleaning, Bins & Street Cleansing as required
- Administration of cemeteries in Ashbourne, Duleek & Navan
- Road Crews on standby for emergency repairs and callouts
- Support to Environment Section for removal of illegal dumping
- Public lighting – essential repair
- Traffic Signals – essential repair
- Grass Cutting – public spaces and parks
- Weed spraying
- Pot holes – essential repair

Roads Contracts – Overview and Current Situation

The procurement of contractors for the roadworks programme is being advanced. Following the publication of the Government's Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business on May 1, the Council is communicating with contractors to agree arrangements for the commencement of works as soon as possible after May 18, in accordance with Government policy and public health requirements.

Consultants employed by the Transportation Department on all projects have all indicated that they have put arrangements in place so that work on schemes in the design process can continue. All works contracts at construction stage have ceased for the time being but discussions are taking place with contractors with a view to re-commencing on site from May 18.

Parking

For the duration of the current emergency period the revised role of our warden services will be to ensure that parking for essential businesses is maintained and ensure that:

- There is no illegal parking such as would restrict or prevent access to any of these essential services by customers or key workers
- Parking is generally available for people using or providing these essential services
- There is no improper use of disabled parking bays such as would prevent access for people with disabilities to these services
- There is no illegal parking that could constitute a danger to other road users or pedestrians.
- Loading bays are kept clear for the delivery of supplies to these essential services.

Environment

Environmental Services -Impact of Covid 19 Situation

A number of environmental functions fall under headings of essential service contained in the public health guidelines including Waste Collection / Disposal, Water Quality/Labs, Burial Grounds and Veterinary Services.

Illegal Dumping

The Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authorities (WEARLAs) have been monitoring complaints and illegal activities across the local authority sector and report a 25% increase in complaints relating to waste activity of which approximately 50% relate to illegal dumping. These are trends which are in keeping with this Council's records. A national awareness campaign emphasising the continuity of waste services and enforcement arrangements to discourage illegal dumping has been launched and aired on local and national radio as well as on our Social Media sites.

The Regional Waste Management Plan Offices who are charged with monitoring capacity in the waste industry report that landfill disposal, waste and thermal recovery and exports are in line with expectations.

Anti-Dumping Initiative

Under the Anti-Dumping Initiative Government funding is provided to Local Authorities who in collaboration with local community groups and other state agencies arrange for the clean up of locations which are subject to continual dumping. The Council have submitted applications for funding for the clean-up of 24 different locations comprising of a mixture of urban and rural settings including bogs. The total value of such projects is €230k and we await decisions on these from the Waste Enforcement Area Regional Offices who administer the scheme.

National Spring Clean

An Taisce who run the National Spring Clean have advised that from the 18th May small clean ups in local areas will be permitted – the Council will continue to support groups involved in such an initiative through the provision of equipment and other supports.

Food Waste Project

The Council in collaboration with Ballyknockan House are working on a new food waste project which is designed to assist families in meal planning, shopping, cooking and preventing food waste - it is considered the project will be particularly relevant during the current Covid 19 pandemic.

Recycling Centres

As Waste collection and disposal is designated as a critical and essential service agreement was reached that Civic Amenity sites to remain open to facilitate acceptance of essential waste and for households who are not in receipt of a kerbside / door to door collection service. The Civic Amenity Sites at Navan, Kells and Trim have remained open Monday to Saturday (8.30am to 4.45pm)

however the public are advised to use the sites only if essentially required and alternatively to store materials where possible at this time.

Removal of cash handling and the introduction of appropriate signage are just two of the measures designed to ensure compliance with COVID 19 requirements.

Burning of Agricultural Waste

While the issuing of permits to burn agricultural waste was suspended in response to concerns from the Fire Service Bodies this suspension has now been lifted but any new permits will be subject to additional conditions and which take account of such concerns as well as Covid 19 provisions.

Dog Fouling

There has been a significant increase in the amount of complaints relating to dog fouling and prompting the Council to engage in an extensive social media campaign as well as the putting in place of signage at locations where members of the public are still using for exercise purposes.

There is a Dog Fouling Awareness Campaign on LMFM running from March until June, the Billboard and Cinema adverts have been postponed for current period.

Water Quality/Labs

While the normal weekly water framework directive sampling was suspended it is expected that such activity will recommence shortly. Staff are continuing to respond to complaints received in respect of illegal discharges to water bodies and particularly where such discharges are liable to create an environmental risk.

Veterinary Service

The Veterinary service provided by the Council) which has been designated as an essential service during Covid 19, is the subject of a service contract with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) and primarily in respect of the enforcement of food legislation as it applies to slaughterhouses, meat plants, cold stores and food vehicles (wholesaling meat). Inspections of such premises will be the main priority of the Veterinary Officer in the current climate and other normal duties such as in relation to Dogs and Horses only being dealt with on an emergency basis.

Burial Grounds

In response to rapidly diminishing capacity within the existing burial ground on the Rooske Road in Dunboyne and primarily relating to an increase in burials arising from Covid 19, the Council deemed it necessary to provide as an interim measure two additional rows within the adjoining land holding owned by the Council and for which a Part 8 Planning approval is in place. To facilitate the development it is necessary to transport some 18,000 of subsoil and topsoil from a Housing / Community Council project in Navan and which will facilitate development of the full site over time. The material is being transported by Council lorries and a traffic management plan has been put in place which avoids going through Dunboyne and using the M3 Motorway.

Community

Current Service Provision

All Community Department staff continue to answer any queries that arise. Contact can be made through: community@meathcoco.ie, communitygrants@meathcoco.ie or individual staff email accounts.

Community Grants – Overview

Under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme works are on-going on a number of schemes and it is expected that work will restart in line with the National Roadmap. Design work is on-going on the six projects approved under the 2019 scheme.

The project completion date for all projects approved under Healthy Ireland Fund has been extended to 30th June 2021.

ORIS - Three projects under Measure 1 were approved, the design work is on-going and it is hoped to commence work once restrictions are lifted.

Parks and Community Facilities

In line with National guidelines, all playgrounds and outdoor exercise equipment are closed.

Restricted access to Blackwater Park in Navan is being considered for those over 70 and who are cocooning. Details will be circulated once confirmed.

All other parks are open however social distancing must be observed by those using them. This is being monitored by An Garda Síochána.

Pride of Place

Given the current Covid-19 emergency, the 2020 Pride of Place initiative will not take place this year.

Covid Community Response Forum

The Meath Community Response Forum continues to meet on a regular basis with the next meeting is scheduled for May 15.

On 24th April, the Government launched “In This Together”. In This Together draws together a huge range of activities that you can pursue in your home or your locality, by yourself or with family members or with friends online. There are ideas and activities for people of all ages. Details can be found on <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a09d8f-local-authorities-supporting-community-wellbeing/#meath-county-council>.

Through the Community Response Forum, a pack is being delivered to isolated and vulnerable individuals. The pack contains some treats, pen, puzzles, newspaper – simple things that people mightn't have had the opportunity to do recently.

A dedicated Community Support Line, freephone 1800 808 809, continues to operate together with the dedicated email address covidsupport@meathcoco.ie from 8am – 8pm seven days a week. Information is provided to callers on groups in their area who can provide the service that they need, e.g., delivering shopping, collect prescription etc.

FREE-PHONE 1800 808 809
Monday to Sunday, 8.00am to 8.00pm

Are you an **older person** or a **member of a vulnerable group** and have been asked to cocoon and stay indoors during the current period of this national emergency?

Meath County Council is working with a range of other state agencies, local groups and sports clubs to provide you with assistance:

- Do you need medication collected?
- Do you need food or other essentials delivered to your home?
- Do you need transport to a health appointment?
- Or do you have other needs at this time?

Call our dedicated support line: 1800 808 809 or Email covidsupport@meathcoco.ie

Meath County Council – we're there to help Supporting Communities across Meath



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

Age Friendly Ireland (AFI)– National Shared Services

The Age Friendly Ireland shared service is continuing to work on its core service delivery plan whilst managing the emerging demands in response to Covid-19. Our team based framework of 31 Age Friendly Programme Managers and 6 Regional Programme Managers are playing a central role in the delivery and co-ordination of the Community Response Teams. A wide range of innovative responses are being delivered at local level, across the 31 local authorities, and the shared service team have captured these in a national repository as a learning tool which we are happy to share with members.

At international level, and following on from last month's update, the shared service worked with key stakeholders at both national and local level to provide submissions to the global collation of good practice. The World Health Organisation received over 180 responses of good practice from over 20 countries across the world. Ireland had the highest response rate with over 90 submissions, followed by Spain (40) and Japan (10). As a result, the WHO would like to do a case study on

Ireland's response to Covid which AFI will support and we hope this document will serve as a practical guidance document for any future emergency events for both national and international audiences

Our Ageing Population Report

The first implementation report on the joint departmental Housing for Our Ageing Population (2019) has been published and records the progress to date which Age Friendly Ireland have played a key role in. The link to the report is as follows <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ea33c1-housing-options-for-our-ageing-population-policy-statement/>

In addition the shared service has continued to support the implementation plan specifically around the action areas of mapping, development of a rating tool for age friendly housing developments, site selection criteria model, Age Friendly Primary Care Centre Guidelines, Housing and Public Realm Training and the Housing Allocation Policy for older people. On May 6, we reconvened with the 31 Age Friendly Housing Technical Specialists based in all 31 local authorities to progress the assigned role which we hope to officially launch as a service in June 2020

AFI Website

The shared service has just launched the new Age Friendly Ireland website which hosts a dedicated website for each of the 31 local Age Friendly Programmes www.agefriendlyireland.ie. The websites will contain up to date information on governance, structures, strategies, progress reports, initiatives and contact details for each programme area. The national website will host technical guidance documents, toolkits, methodologies, national policies and case studies under each of the WHO domains. We planned to officially launch the website at the (now deferred) OPC Convention so we will plan an alternative platform for this later in the year. We continue to publish the daily newsletter and encourage members to share as widely as possible.

Libraries Service

Libraries

All 12 libraries and Library HQ are now closed to the public in line with national government policy. Plans are now being produced to prepare for the partial re-opening of library services in line with the general government guidelines on re-opening. The partial re-opening of library buildings is not scheduled until Phase 3 of the government's roadmap and is scheduled for June 29th.

Current Service Provision

Our **online services** are available 24/7 and provide access to a wide range of free services

- eBooks
- eAudiobooks
- Online Newspapers
- Online Magazines
- Language Learning
- Online courses

Over 5,000 items were issued to users accessing the online ebook and eAudiobook services during April 2020.

Library Services staff are continuing to deliver a regular and varied programme of **digital content** on a weekly basis via Facebook. This is over both the Meath County Council and the County Library Facebook pages. This is being delivered from branches and from home by staff who are working remotely. The activities include a mixture of live and pre-recorded

- Interactive story times in English, Irish and Polish on Wednesday and Friday
- Songs and rhymes
- Poetry readings
- Virtual tours of library collections
- Craft activities – Craft Monday
- STEAM events –STEM Tuesday

Housebound Service

Library staff commenced a housebound delivery service to vulnerable borrowers in Kells and Trim. This service will be expanded as additional staff return in preparation for re-opening of library services.

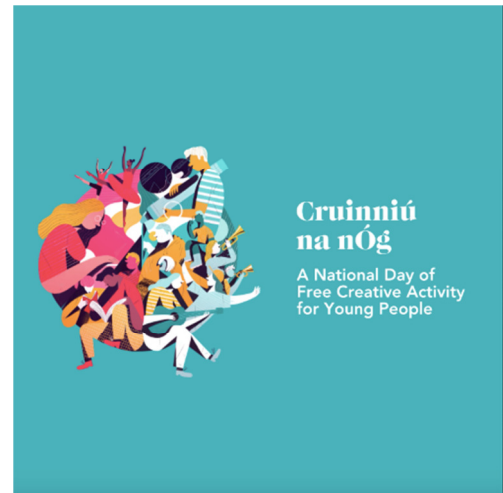
3D Printing

A number of library authorities including Meath are working with Engineers' Ireland and the LGMA to produce face masks. These are produced using the 3D printers acquired under the recent ICT grant. One hundred and thirty one masks have been produced to date by a library staff member in the county and these have been despatched to the HSE for distribution.

Cruinniú na nÓg

Cruinniú na nÓg 2020, (on June 13) is Ireland's national day of free creative activities for children and young people under the age of 18. *Cruinniú na nÓg 2020* is a collaboration between the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the Creative Ireland Programme, local authorities and RTÉ, and is part of the Government's #InThisTogether campaign which is supporting everyone to stay connected, stay active and look after our physical and mental wellbeing.

The majority of the Meath programme which has been developed by the library and arts services will be delivered online on the Meath County Library YouTube channel. The recordings will be available from Friday June 12th to midnight Sunday June 14th only, respecting the broadcasting rights of all contributors.



Economic Development

Current Service Provision

The Meath Local Enterprise Office is well established as a *first stop shop* to support those looking to start, grow or develop a business in Meath. The office acts as a focal point in the county for all state enterprise agencies and for other initiatives, providing information on enterprise incentives and business expansion, training and advice on a range of issues.

However, the focus now is very much on the current crisis and assisting businesses to access the package of supports that have been put in place by national government. These aim to help businesses to re-start, re-connect and re-hire staff who have been laid-off or furloughed.

Business Support Measures

Economic Development and the LEO are the local point of contact for a number of the new Government initiatives introduced specifically to assist micro and small businesses at this difficult time. The most popular of these are:

- Trading on-line Voucher – a voucher worth up to €2500 to assist companies get their business trading on-line. Many companies have future plans to get trading on-line, but now is the ideal time to do it.
- Business Continuity Vouchers, designed to assist companies access specialised support to re-imagine and re-structure their business in the context of Covid-19. The vouchers are worth €2500 each and are proving very popular as almost 200 applications or expressions of interest have been received from companies in Meath.
- The new Microfinance Covid loans of up to €50,000 with an interest and repayment holiday of six months is another very useful product.

LEO staff are also available to assist clients to access the other major recently announced financial products being rolled out by the government – The Restart Fund, the Stabilisation Fund, the Credit Guarantee scheme.

The LEO continues to process business development grants but have obviously had to tailor how business is conducted during the current restrictions. Most of the usual services have moved online, in order to overcome the restrictions currently in place.

Other Support Services

All mentoring services and grant interviews are being held over various online platforms. All training programmes now being delivered on-line and some new training programmes have been developed to help micro and small businesses to better manage in these changed circumstances. These include courses on:

- Managing through the COVID Emergency
- Business through Zoom

- Resilience and Positivity
- Preparing a brief for web developers

Almost two hundred companies have availed of these services to the end of April, along with a constant stream of one-to-one business advice sessions.

Boyne Valley Food Initiative

The Boyne Valley Food initiative is one great example where companies have pivoted quickly to address changing circumstances. In the last number of years small food producers across Meath and Louth have come together, with the help of the Council and the LEO, to jointly market their products and develop the food businesses in the region. A major focus was getting local restaurants to feature local produce – this of course hit the buffers when Covid struck and the restaurants closed down. Over a period of a few days after the lockdown was announced, the collective came together to very successfully develop, market and deliver weekly food hampers to homes across the north-east. Hampers could be ordered and paid for on-line and delivered with no person to person interaction. These deliveries have been growing since the start of the shutdown – a whole new market for these producers.

Water Services

Water Service – Critical Services

Water and Wastewater are essential services, critical to public health and hence, the Water Services Department continues to operate largely as normal, with all indoor and outdoor staff remaining busy and determined, to ensure continued service provision.

Current Service Provision

Drinking Water and Wastewater Operation & Maintenance: Operation and maintenance of all water and wastewater treatment plants and networks continues throughout the county on behalf of Irish Water, to ensure water supply and wastewater collection for the residents, institutions (incl. medical) and essential businesses in Meath, in compliance with drinking water and wastewater regulatory standards.

Customer Service: Responding to customer complaints, unplanned service interruption, service level and asset fault repairs remains in place.

Water Conservation and Management: Management of water demand continues to help maintain service levels through a combination of active leakage detection and repair, pressure management and demand management. Demand for water across all areas of the county has risen significantly over the past number of weeks due to a combination of, people being at home more, regular hand washing and the warm weather. During April the Council produced an average of 48.3 million litres of drinking water each day.

Rural Water (Well Grants): Continued processing of applications, undertaking site inspections, water sampling and analysis and processing grant payments.

Capital Investment: Only essential capital construction works are being undertaken at present. However, design and planning is continuing on a range of Water Services capital projects and a number of important construction projects will recommence on-site during May..

Planning and New Connections: The Water Services Department continues to review and report on all planning referrals, Pre-Connection Enquiries and new connection applications on behalf of Irish Water. However, only essential new connections (for medical) are being constructed during the current period of restriction at present but, we expect on-site work for all connections to resume after 18th May.

Finance Section

Impact and Response to Covid-19 Situation

Commercial Rates

Once provided with the details, Meath County Council will advertise and implement the three month waiver of rates for certain business that have been forced to close due to public health requirements, the same will apply to the proposed Restart Fund that has been announced targeting micro and small businesses that have suffered a dramatic loss of turnover due to COVID-19, (technical and administrative details will be developed in the coming weeks).

Businesses that can continue to pay their outstanding local authority rates should continue to do so in the normal way.

There will be a severe negative impact on the collection of Commercial Rates which is difficult to quantify as the duration of the Covid-19 situation is unknown.

Housing Rents

The Housing Rent charged by Meath County Council is based on Household income and calculated under the Differential Rent scheme. If a tenant's income is reduced as a result of Covid -19 then their rent will decrease to reflect their changed circumstances – similar to normal procedure.

As the situation continues to change in the coming weeks, tenants should contact the Rents section where they will be given a revised amount of Rent to be paid. A formal rent review will follow when the Covid – 19 situation improves.

If any tenant has any concerns regarding rent they should contact rentsfinance@meathcoco.ie
Please note there is no such thing as a Rent Freeze – MCC rents are based on income and not fixed

Housing Loans

Meath County Council is at present implementing the three month freeze option available to mortgage customers whose income has been severely impacted as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. In the cases of existing approvals, and before drawdowns are finalised, the applicants are required to demonstrate their current employment situation as any change may affect the ability to repay monthly instalments.

See below situation with regard to Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans.

| Loans Data 1st February 2018 to 8th May 2020 | |
|--|------------|
| Applications Received | 356 |
| Applications Returned | 16 |
| Applications awaiting further information not Submitted to Housing Agency | 2 |
| Applications Submitted to Housing Agency for Assessment/Recommendation | 338 |
| | |
| Applications Awaiting Assessment /Recommendation by Housing Agency | 2 |
| Applications Awaiting Decision by Meath County Council Credit Committee | 11 |
| Applications Approved by the Meath County Council Credit Committee | 209 |
| Applications Refused by the Meath County Council Credit Committee | 116 |
| | 338 |
| | |
| Approvals Drawdown by Customer for House Purchase | 133 |
| No of customers in MARP | 34 |

All our services continue to operate during these unprecedented and challenging times and will respond to queries on a daily basis where possible. Following Government advice concerning COVID-19 and guidance on working from home where possible, we are implementing remote working arrangements to ensure continuation of service to our customers. We request therefore that wherever possible, communications should be sent to us electronically to ensure a prompt response.