



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

Ordinary Meeting

10th May 2021, (via Zoom only) @ 1.30p.m.

Presiding

Councillor David Gilroy, Cathaoirleach

Councillors Present:

Councillors Yemi Adenuga, Tom Behan, Joe Bonner, Mike Bray, Eugene Cassidy, Francis Deane, Aisling Dempsey, Seán Drew, Edward Fennessy, Brian Fitzgerald, Pdraig Fitzsimons, Joe Fox, Noel French, Michael Gallagher, Deirdre Geraghty-Smith, Trevor Golden, Wayne Harding, Suzanne Jamal, Geraldine Keogan, Nick Killian, Alan Lawes, Paul McCabe, Elaine McGinty, Stephen McKee, Paddy Meade, Ronan Moore, Maria Murphy, Gerry O'Connor, Aisling O'Neill, Damien O'Reilly, Sarah Reilly, Tommy Reilly, Amanda Smith, Niamh Souhan, Alan Tobin, Emer Tóibín, Sharon Tolan, Gillian Toole, Conor Tormey.

Apologies:

Officials in attendance:

Chief Executive: Jackie Maguire

Directors of Service: Des Foley, Fiona Lawless, Barry Lynch, Martin Murray

Meetings Administrator: Robert Collins

Senior Executive Officers: Dara McGowan, Sean Clarke, Larry Whelan; Fiona Fallon

Law Agent: Rory McEntee

1 Confirmation of Minutes

1.1 Confirmation of minutes of Ordinary meeting held on 12th April 2021.

The minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on 12th April 2021 were confirmed on the proposal of **Councillor Tommy Reilly** and seconded by **Councillor Tom Behan**.

1.2 Confirmation of minutes of Special Planning meeting held from 16th November 2020 to the 6th March 2021.

The minutes of the Special Planning meeting held from 16th November 2020 to the 6th March 2021 were proposed by **Councillor Joe Fox** and seconded by **Councillor Alan Tobin**.

There were interventions by **Councillors Gerry O'Connor; Brian Fitzgerald; Michael Gallagher; Elaine McGinty; Wayne Harding; Gillian Toole and Joe Bonner**. Councillor Fitzgerald spoke on behalf of the Technical Group and indicated that it was not satisfied with the draft minutes and wanted a copy of the recordings for each Group member. Councillor Gallagher indicated that the Sinn Fein members had a similar view. Councillor McGinty spoke about the recordings, as did Councillor Toole but also with reference to the roll of councillors as data controllers, while Councillor Bonner indicated that he considered the draft minutes to be incorrect or incomplete on Page 16 and Page



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84. Both Councillors O'Connor and Harding agreed with the draft minutes, highlighted that no factual inaccuracies or errors had been raised by any Councillor in the draft minutes and requested that the matter be put to a vote. A roll call vote was conducted as follows:

	Agree	Not Agree	Abstain	Absent
ADENUGA, Yemi	X			
BEHAN, Tom	X			
BONNER, Joseph	X			
BRAY, Mike	X			
CASSIDY, Eugene	X			
DEANE, Francis			X	
DEMPSEY, Aisling	X			
DREW, Sean	X			
FENNESSY, Eddie			X	
FITZGERALD, Brian			X	
FITZSIMONS, Pdraig	X			
FOX, Joe	X			
FRENCH, Noel	X			
GALLAGHER, Michael			X	
GERAGHTY-SMITH, Deirdre				X
GILROY, David	X			
GOLDEN, Trevor			X	
HARDING, Wayne	X			
JAMAL, Suzanne	X			
KEOGAN, Geraldine			X	
KILLIAN, Nick			X	
LAWES, Alan				X
MC CABE, Paul	X			
MC GINTY, Elaine		X		
MC KEE, Stephen				X
MEADE, Paddy			X	
MOORE, Ronan	X			
MURPHY, Maria	X			
O'CONNOR, Gerry	X			
O'NEILL, Aisling			X	
O'REILLY, Damien	X			
REILLY, Sarah	X			
REILLY, Tommy	X			
SMITH, Amanda			X	
SOUHAN, Niamh	X			
TOBIN, Alan	X			
TÓIBÍN, Emer		X		
TOLAN, Sharon	X			
TOOLE, Gillian		X		
TORMEY, Conor			X	



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In agreement = 23, Not in agreement = 3, Abstain = 11, Absent = 3. In accordance with this decision, the minutes of the Special Planning meeting held from 16th November 2020 to the 6th March 2021 were adopted.

2 Matters arising from the Minutes

An Cathaoirleach informed the meeting that following the discussion at the previous Council meeting concerning the Notices of Motion and the efficiency of Council Meetings that the Corporate Policy Group at its meeting on May 7th had agreed to review the relevant Standing Orders under the direction of the incoming Cathaoirleach and would make recommendations to Council in the early Autumn. This review was welcomed by **Councillor Amanda Smith** and noted by the meeting.

Councillor Gillian Toole requested that future Chief Executive Reports provide a greater breakdown of information on planning enforcement cases. **Councillor Emer Tóibín** sought clarification on when the Council would be voting on the recordings from the Special Planning Meeting. An Cathaoirleach informed her that the issue was not on the agenda and no vote was required.

3 Expressions of Sympathy and Congratulations

Sympathy was extended to:

- Mel Nugent, IT Department, on the death of his father Noel Nugent;
- The Murtagh family on the death of their son Kevin;
- The Meegan family on the death of Michael Meegan;
- The Reynolds family on the death of Kathleen Reynolds, wife of former Taoiseach Albert Reynolds;
- The Eiffe family on the death of Lorraine, wife of the late Sergeant Sean Eiffe
- The Rattigan family on the death of Paddy Rattigan.

Congratulations were extended to:

- All those responsible for the establishment and on-going operation of the Vaccination Centre in Simonstown;
- MCC Library staff for the rollout of Poetry Trail during the month of May;
- MCC staff for the lighting of buildings in the county and the Hill of Slane in support of Darkness into Light;
- All Meath businesses that are re-opening following the easing of public health restrictions.

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 Transportation

5.1.1 To enter into an agreement with Westmeath County Council pursuant to Section 85 of the



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Local Government Act, 2001, whereby Meath County Council will exercise the statutory powers, functions and duties of Westmeath County Council which are described in the Schedule to the Agreement, in relation to the scheme for the N51 Pavement Repair and Renewal Scheme from Higginstown in the County of Meath to Crowinstown Great in the County Of Westmeath.

Approved on the proposal of **Councillor Alan Tobin** and seconded by **Councillor Trevor Golden**.

5.2 Community

5.2.1 To receive details of and approve the allocations under the Carranstown Environmental Projects Grants Scheme 2020, as recommended by the Indaver Community Liaison Committee and endorsed by the Laytown/Bettystown Municipal District Councillors on 15th April 2021.

Approved on the proposal of **Councillor Alan Tobin** and seconded by **Councillor Amanda Smith**.

5.2.2 To consider Arts Grants, Bursaries & Awards Spring 2021 recommendations.

Approved on the proposal of **Councillor Paul McCabe** and seconded by **Councillor Noel French**.

5.2.3 To receive an update on the Meath Digital Strategy.

Mr Cormac McCann, Broadband Officer, made a presentation on the Meath Digital Strategy which addressed a number of aspects. Despite the pandemic, a number of service improvements were implemented as part of the strategy. The presentation addressed improved infrastructure, including the BCPs delivered and planned, and improved connectivity with the roll out of wifi4eu and the on-going work of National Broadband Ireland (NBI) in the county. Mr McCann also outlined a number of initiatives to support the improvement of digital skills across the county and highlighted specific initiatives of the Council in terms of delivering digital services.

There were a number of interventions from the following **Councillors: Paddy Meade; Sarah Reilly; Gerry O'Connor; Ronan Moore; Wayne Harding; Joe Fox; Paul McCabe; Gillian Toole; Michael Gallagher; Eugene Cassidy; Nick Killian; Maria Murphy; Emer Tóibín; and Trevor Golden**. Members acknowledged the work undertaken to date and the impact that the provision of broadband projects has had in many areas of the county. There were specific questions on wifi4eu and the role of the County Chamber; how it would be rolled out in other towns; the work of NBI and its responsiveness to elected members and how difficult to access housing estates are being addressed as part of the national broadband plan. Responses were provided by Mr. McCann.

5.3 Environment and Climate Action

5.3.1 To receive a presentation on the Decarbonization Zones and related matters.

Ms Caroline Corrigan, Climate Action Officer made a wide ranging presentation on the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Urbact project in which the Council is a partner, the designated Decarbonisation Zone in Trim, the work of the Climate Action Forum and a call to action for leadership on climate. She also pledged to give a more detailed presentation at the June series of Municipal District meetings.



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There were a number of interventions from the following **Councillors: Sarah Reilly; Ronan Moore; Paddy Meade; Deirdre Geraghty-Smith; Alan Tobin; and Sean Drew;** which addressed specific and related points raised in the presentation. **Councillors Nick Killian and Gillian Toole** raised the role of solar farms and the significant number of planning applications for same in Meath. Mr Pdraig Maguire, Senior Planner, gave an overview on the national policy context and the planning process and proposed to provide further information to the Planning SPC. **Councillor Elaine McGinty** wished to include Data Centres in such a presentation. In concluding, An Cathaoirleach encouraged members to get involved in the work of the Climate Action Forum and thanked Ms. Corrigan for her work.

5.4 Finance

5.4.1 To note the Quarterly Financial Statement as at 31st March 2021.
The report was noted by the Elected Members.

6 Reports

6.1 Chief Executive's Report

There were comments and clarifications sought by **Councillors Nick Killian; Michael Gallagher; Gillian Toole; Paul McCabe; Tom Behan; Maria Murphy; Gerry O'Connor; Damien O'Reilly; Sean Drew; Elaine McGinty; Paddy Meade; Alan Tobin; Brian Fitzgerald; Aisling O'Neill; Ronan Moore; Mike Bray; and Joe Fox** on a number of matters in the Report . The main issues focused on:

Housing	Role of investment funds in the Irish housing market; purchase of lands for social housing; completion times for housing projects (direct build and AHB projects); the Lagore and Ashbourne developments; attempts to buy lands from NAMA; Alverno Court refurbishment timelines; housing allocations and HAP Payments in 2020; variation in HAP rates between Meath and Fingal; St Mary's Dunboyne; choice-based-letting; affordable serviced sites; Ledwidge Estate, Slane; dezoning of housing lands; the Kenny Report.
Transportation	2021 Roads Programme – price increases and timelines; update on the N52; Public Lighting Programme 2021 and capital projects.
Corporate	Map Alerter app; Mí Meath launch; Simonstown vaccination centre; implementation of the vaccination programme in Meath; Spine Road naming competition; use of social media to inform elected members.
Environment	Litter and anti-dumping initiatives; cost of the Green kilometre scheme; magnet fishing; designation of the river Boyne; Ashbourne bottlebank.

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

6.2 Report from the Corporate Policy Group

The Meetings Administrator informed the meeting of the following that were agreed by the CPG:

- to commence a revision of the Standing Orders relating to Motions, under the direction of



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the incoming Cathaoirleach;

- that the AGM of the Council would be held as an in-person meeting in the Solstice Theatre on Monday, June 14 at 10.30am and that the June Monthly Meeting would also take place on June 14th, at 1.30pm but as an online meeting;
- a proposed joint virtual meeting with the Cary local authority, in recognition of Cary's 150th anniversary later this year.

There were comments and questions from **Councillors Amanda Smith; Sharon Tolan; Nick Killian; Joe Bonner; Gillian Toole; Wayne Harding; Brian Fitzgerald; Trevor Golden; Eugene Cassidy; Sean Drew** and **Tom Behan**. The Meetings Administrator provided responses, where necessary.

6.3 Report from the Protocol Committee

The Meetings Administrator informed the meeting that the Protocol Committee received an up-date from the IT Department and was informed of the decision to replace the tablet device that each member has received for Council business with a laptop. The roll-out of the laptops will take place over the summer months. This was noted.

6.3.1 At its meeting on April 12, 2021, the Protocol Committee agreed the following recommendation: *"To retain the Prayer in its current format but combine it with a Period of Reflection"*

The recommendation was proposed by **Councillor Paul McCabe** and seconded by **Councillor Paddy Meade**. Both **Councillors Ronan Moore** and **Sharon Tolan** spoke against the recommendation. The recommendation was adopted by a show of hands vote with 27 members in agreement and 7 members (Councillors Moore; Adenuga; Tobin; O'Neill; Tolan; Geraghty-Smith and Lawes) not in agreement

6.3.2 At its meeting on April 12, 2021, the Protocol Committee agreed the following recommendation: *"That the new road from the intersection of the R153 Kentstown Road and Metges Road to Farganstown, be named: Hodgett Road – Bóthar Hodgett in memory of Thomas Hodgett"*

The recommendation was proposed by **Councillor Paul McCabe** and seconded by **Councillor Padraig Fitzsimons** and agreed.

7 Correspondence

7.1 Circular Letter PL 06/2021 – Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage re. 1. Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) (No. 3) Regulations 2021 (S.I. 208 of 2021), 2. Planning and Development (Street Furniture Fees) Regulations 2021 (S.I. 209 of 2021), 3. Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021 (S.I. 210 of 2021), 4. Consideration of section 254 licences to better facilitate outdoor dining.

Councillor Nick Killian sought clarity on the requirement for planning permission for outdoor dining areas and **Councillor Eugene Cassidy** enquired about the rateable valuation on such enterprises.



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Responses were provided by Mr Des Foley, Mr Padraig Maguire and the Chief Executive. The correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

It was also agreed that correspondence relating to Residential Densities would be considered at the June Council meeting.

8 Notice of Question

8.1 Submitted by Councillor Tom Behan

"To ask Meath County Council to give a full update as to what progress has been made to address the parking issues in Coastal Meath since our April Council Meeting?"

Response

As the Members will recall a report was submitted to the April Council meeting setting out the position in respect of alternative car parking locations and pinpointing a number of available sites and ones being progressed. A number of other potential sites have since been suggested and these are being investigated, but the main focus is on a particular site to the rear of the Funtasia development which is convenient to the beach and in this regard there is ongoing discussions with the owners concerned and an adjoining landowner in terms of access.

The Environment Department has also had discussion with our Planning Department colleagues in terms of any planning and environmental impact issues, as well as the Transportation Department regarding traffic management and access issues for this site. It is proposed to brief the Laytown Bettystown MD on any progress with regard to the identification and delivery of alternative sites.

Noted by the Elected Members.

8.2 Submitted by Councillor Gerry O'Connor

"Are Meath County Council's casual trading bye laws up to date to maximise the opportunity to support outdoor trading during the summer and to avail of the funding stream provided by Government?"

Response

The legal position in relation to casual trading is as set out in responses to Notices of Motion submitted to the March meeting of the Council however, notwithstanding same, the Council recognises the numerous challenges that Covid 19 has created for retailers and businesses throughout the County and every effort is being made to support such businesses in reopening and in line with Government Guidelines.

The need for such businesses to diversify and respond to the pandemic is also recognised and in this regard the Council are working closely with other stakeholders in providing short term measures, which can be quickly implemented to help create safe urban public spaces where people can walk, cycle and gather outdoors this summer.



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The Council are strongly promoting in association with Fáilte Ireland, the Outdoor Dining Enhancement Scheme which will provide funding for individual tourism and hospitality businesses to develop and increase their own outdoor seating capacity. The Council have received in excess of 100 applications under this scheme which provides for grants of up to €4,000 and in respect of the provision of such items as Tables, Chairs, Umbrellas, Heaters, Screens, etc.

The scheme also provides separate funding for weatherproofing and outdoor dining infrastructure and the Council are currently examining one or two projects for submission to Fáilte Ireland. Other schemes being examined for implementation include the Outdoor Public Places Scheme (funding of up to €250k for one location) and the Urban Animation scheme which provides funding for up to 10 locations for projects that animates and rejuvenates structures and streetscapes.

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Fund which focuses on Rural Areas also provides a funding stream and the 2021 Town & Village Renewal Scheme to be announced shortly will support enhancement of the public realm and greater vibrancy in our town centres.

Subject to announcements on reopening of businesses and particularly the hospitality sector, the Council through the Tourism Officer, propose to initiate a marketing campaign to encourage the public to avail of the outdoor facilities provided locally.

Noted by the Elected Members.

8.3 Submitted by Councillor Emer Tóibín

“To ask Meath County Council what measures have been undertaken in Meath to ascertain the viability of pedestrianisation of one or 2 streets in a town in each LEA, to work out cost benefit analysis to businesses operating in the town, to list back up options to car park spaces forfeited and to explain how the Council in tandem with the Chamber of Commerce hopes to encourage additional footfall and increased commercial activity to town centres in the short term and in the long term.”

Response

Meath County Council has not undertaken an appraisal to ascertain the viability of pedestrianising streets in each of the Municipal Districts.

However, while there has been no appraisal undertaken, if a request is received from a Business Group to pedestrianise a street with the support of the businesses in that town, Meath County Council will work with this Business Group to investigate the feasibility of introducing pedestrianisation.

Noted by the Elected Members.



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9 Notice of Motion

9.1 Submitted by Councillor Damien O'Reilly (deferred from April Meeting)

"To call on Meath County Council to permit outdoor dining at all commercial premises until the COVID-19 vaccine programme has administered all second vaccines. This would entail the use of outdoor awnings, canopies, seating and tables on pathways along all commercial hospitality frontage. This motion will greatly assist commercial premises who had to close due to Covid-19 restrictions and can only reopen with limited socially distanced dining indoors."

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

There is currently a process to facilitate commercial properties requesting to place tables and chairs on footpaths/public spaces outside of their premises. While considering public health guidance, applications made under this Section 254 process will be administered as quickly as possible and for the remainder of 2021, all fees associated with this application process will be waived. It is important to note, that when assessing the applications, those that can keep a clear 2m unobstructed footpath through the identified area and are approved by the Council's Access Officer, will not be unreasonably denied.

In addition to this, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, has recently reviewed the planning regulations in relation to restaurants operating as takeaways and awnings/outdoor coverings. Meath County Council will deal with any applications received for these items, in line with the relevant and reviewed regulations in place when the application is made.

The supporting information and the motion, proposed by **Councillor Damien O'Reilly** and seconded by **Councillor Wayne Harding** was agreed.

9.2 Submitted by Councillor Deirdre Geraghty-Smith (deferred from April Meeting)

"That Meath County Council calls on the Minister for Climate Action to introduce a nationwide local authority led reusable nappy scheme; as a measure to inform, support and encourage households in reducing single-use plastic waste in line with the sustainability objectives of the Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy, 2020."

The motion was introduced by **Councillor Deirdre Geraghty-Smith** who outlined the current dependence on plastic, the volumes of waste produced and the potential benefits of a re-useable nappy scheme. She also responded to a question from Councillor **Aisling O'Neill** on the disposability of the lining of nappies. The seconder of the motion also spoke in its favour. The motion, proposed by **Councillor Deirdre Geraghty-Smith** and seconded by **Councillor Mike Bray** was adopted.

9.3 Submitted by Councillor Alan Tobin (deferred from April Meeting)

"That Meath County Council asks the Minister for Transport to consider penalty points for road traffic violations as added deterrent to the fines already in place for the following parking offences:



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- *In disability space*
- *On a footpath*
- *On a cycle lane*
- *Taxi rank*
- *Loading bay*
- *Within 5m of a road junction*
- *Within 15m of a pedestrian crossing”*

Councillor Alan Tobin introduced his motion and the reasoning for tabling it. The seconder of the motion also spoke in its favour. A number of members were not in favour of the emphasis on penalty points in the motion, including **Councillors Padraig Fitzsimons; Tom Behan; Damien O’Reilly** and **Wayne Harding**. Councillor Behan proposed an amendment to replace “*penalty points*” with “*stricter penalties*”, which was acceptable to the proposer of the motion.

The motion, as amended, was proposed by **Councillor Alan Tobin**, seconded by **Councillor Sharon Tolan** and agreed.

9.4 Submitted by Councillor Emer Tóibín (deferred from April Meeting)

“That Meath County Council calls on the Department of Education to halt the withdrawal of SUSI funding from 77 Meath students at this very difficult time during the Covid-19 pandemic and that they request a timely return of the funding to the students affected.”

The motion was proposed and introduced by **Councillor Emer Tóibín** and seconded by **Councillor Amanda Smith**. **Councillor Sean Drew** accepted that a review might be necessary, he considered the motion to be too vague and that Elected Members could not take a view as they did not know the circumstances of the 77 applicants.

On a show of hands vote, with 7 members in agreement and 19 members not in agreement, the motion was rejected.

On a proposal from **Councillor Alan Tobin** and seconded by **Councillor Alan Lawes**, it was agreed to take two 15 minute extensions to 6.30pm.

9.5 Submitted by Councillor Sharon Tolan

“In light of the enormous numbers of the public participating in sea swimming along the Meath coastline, I call on Meath County Council to immediately begin water quality testing and publishing of results at every beach in Meath, so that the public can make informed decisions regarding their health and safety before they go for a swim.”

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



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Local authorities are responsible in accordance with the Bathing Waters Directive and the Bathing Water Quality Regulations 2008 for sampling and analysis of bathing waters with the designated Bathing Waters area. Bathing waters are sampled on a regular basis from the end of May to mid-September to assess the microbiological quality of the water and to minimise any public health risk.

The minimum number of samples is five over the bathing season, one during the preseason sampling period (22 – 31 May) and four samples distributed evenly throughout the bathing season (1 June - 15 September). Most local authorities take more than five samples, weekly in some cases and additional samples are often taken by the local authorities such as to confirm water quality after heavy rain or other events.

The only designated bathing area in Meath is an area to the north of the main entrance at Bettystown Beach where the greatest footfall exists in terms of visits to our beaches. Testing of water quality at this location is carried in accordance with the above requirements and generally in tandem with the presence of the lifeguards and thereafter results are published on beaches.ie.

There is an annual call for proposals from members of the public etc to nominate additional bathing water areas for designations and in assessing such nominations, various considerations are taken into account including resource implications, infrastructural provisions such as toilets, water quality testing arrangements, discharge issues, as well as other health and safety and habitats implications.

Local Authorities are required to submit to the EPA details of any identified bathing waters they propose to monitor in that year by 24th March each year.

It is acknowledged that the Covid pandemic has seen a considerable increase in the numbers engaged in swimming and other water based activities however, pending the receipt of requests for additional bathing waters to be designated and consideration of all the various factors involved including resource implications, it is not proposed to engage in routine water quality testing at other locations

It is pointed out however, that if we become aware of a pollution incident that could impact on the beach then we would inspect and if necessary, test the water in the same way as we do for other water bodies.

The motion was introduced by Councillor Sharon Tolan who provided the context for the motion and arguments for extending the period during which water quality testing is conducted. There were supporting comments from Councillors Tom Behan; Alan Tobin; and Amanda Smith, with clarifications provided by Mr Larry Whelan.

The supporting information and motion proposed by **Councillor Sharon Tolan** and seconded by **Councillor Tom Behan** was agreed on a show of hands vote of 29 members in agreement, with no member not in agreement.



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9.6 Submitted by Councillor Emer Tóibín

“That Meath County Council reviews its pre-planning process and the pre-planning clinic so that applicants for one-off planning permission specifically are fully appraised of the rigours of submitting a planning application”.

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

The Planning Department offers an invaluable pre application discussion (previously called pre planning clinic) on a fortnightly basis for all members of the public. This is quite unique in that many Local Authorities throughout the country do not offer this service at all, and throughout the Covid 19 pandemic, most Planning Authorities that offer the service either significantly reduced or ceased their pre application discussions altogether. Meath Planning Authority has maintained the service throughout the Covid 19 pandemic and offers it on a hierarchy of importance and priority e.g. priority is first given to large strategic and economic projects that bring significant benefits to the local economy and provide further employment opportunities for the people of County Meath. Smaller and more local development proposals also receive pre application discussions that are communicated via a telephone discussion or online meetings, where resources and capacity exists.

Pre Application Discussion clinics provide specific advice to applicants and/or their agents on the relevant National, Regional and Local planning policy and guidelines relating to a proposed development and outline the principles of proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The meetings are attended by all staff from relevant sections of the Local Authority that will be involved in the assessment of any future planning application. Relevant amendments are suggested, where appropriate, and this assists in reducing the issues that may arise during the course of processing an application and ultimately lead to faster and more positive decisions that are determined within 6-8 weeks of receipt of an application.

Regarding pre application discussions for one off houses in the countryside, the Planning Authority continues to process these via telephone conversations. The reasons for this are threefold:

1. The volume of such requests for meetings would mean that applicants would have to wait 4-6 months for a face to face meeting (or online as is the case during the current restrictions). Currently, applicants get a pre application discussion via telephone between 2-3 weeks from their request for same;
2. Larger strategic and economic projects would not otherwise be prioritised and get the time required in terms of the Council’s support for the local economy and business; and
3. Evidence and experience of former face to face pre application meetings on one off housing is that applicants and agents do not always adhere with guidance provided and the subsequent planning applications may not be submitted with the information that was presented at the original pre app meeting. This seriously undermines the resources of the Planning Authority and ultimately the value of such meetings.



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Finally, the vast majority of applications for one off houses in County Meath are submitted by agents acting on behalf of applicants. The majority of the agents are very well briefed and familiar on the procedures within MCC and rural planning policy in County Meath. There is an onus and responsibility on these agents to ensure they incorporate all advice provided and adhere to the National, Regional and Local planning policy and guidelines in order to ensure a more positive outcome for applicants. Where training or refresher courses are required for agents or those submitting planning applications for one- off houses, the Planning Authority will provide workshops or training in whatever format is considered appropriate. Based on the above, the Planning Authority intend to continue with the current format for pre application discussions as it is effective and fit for purpose and generally well received by the public.

The motion was introduced by **Councillor Emer Tóibín** who spoke about the pre-planning process but in doing so made comments regarding the conduct of staff in the Planning Department during the pre-planning process. An Cathaoirleach intervened to ask the councillor to clarify or retract the statements she had made. Both the Director of Services for Planning and the Chief Executive intervened to refute any suggestions of impropriety in how the pre-planning process is conducted in Meath County Council and expressed their concern about the language used. While **Councillor Nick Killian** spoke in favour of the motion and informed the meeting of the usefulness of the leaflets produced recently by the Office of the Planning Regulator a number of other elected members, **Councillors Paul McCabe; Paddy Meade; Wayne Harding; and Joe Fox**, spoke in support of the work of the Planning Department staff, the pre-planning process in Meath and the onus on planning applicants to be informed, be prepared and to have the right advice before entering the planning application process. While Councillor Tóibín stated that she had corrected the language she used earlier, she did not clarify or retract the comments made. **Councillor Brian Fitzgerald** asked Councillor Tóibín to accept the report from the Executive.

The motion, proposed by **Councillor Emer Tóibín** and seconded by **Councillor Nick Killian**, was voted on by a show of hands vote with no member in agreement and 26 members not in agreement. The motion was therefore rejected.

9.7 Submitted by Councillor Suzanne Jamal

"That Meath County Council writes to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage Darragh O' Brien seeking to amend Circular LG 4/2019 "to recognise where a member loses an "immediate relative" should NOT in that instance be subjected to a financial penalty under the 80% attendance of meetings rule". If this motion is passed, that it should be forwarded to all other Local Authorities, LAMA and AILG.

Councillor Suzanne Jamal introduced the motion by saying she had no difficulty with the 80% rule but that there are times when there needs to be an accommodation for members that lose a close family member and are not able to attend meetings. **Councillors Sharon Tolan; Sarah Reilly and**



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Alan Lawes spoke in favour of the motion. The motion proposed by **Councillor Suzanne Jamal** and seconded by **Councillor Sharon Tolan** was adopted.

9.8 Submitted by the Technical Group

"This council calls upon the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to make provision in law for elected members of local government to have access to independent legal advice in the discharge of their duties either through the office of the chief state solicitor or otherwise; and in addition to have provision made in law for elected members of local government to have funded access to independent planning consultants to support them in the delivery of better local government."

This item was deferred.

9.9 Submitted by Councillor Gerry O'Connor

"That Meath County Council calls on the Minister for Finance and the Government to explore with our European partners, the potential to finance the exceptional Covid 19 expenditure by setting up a reparation fund, similar to those previously set up after major wars, with a fixed interest rate for the duration of the scheme, and which does not affect current National Capital expenditure by excluding the fund from European Fiscal Rules regarding limits on National spend."

This item was deferred.

9.10 Submitted by Councillor Gerry O'Connor

"That Meath County Council call on the Government to explore the German Sparkasse Community Banking model, to provide balance for the Irish Banking system and to avoid potential banking monopolies which could damage availability at reasonable cost, to necessary finance for our citizens."

This item was deferred.

9.11 Submitted by Councillor Alan Lawes

"Meath County Council calls on the Government to fully comply with the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCPRD), ratified by Ireland in March 2018, and specifically to support, through legislation if necessary, the right to Personal Assistance Service (PAS) for disabled people to have freedom, choice and control over all aspects of their lives to enable them to fully participate in an inclusive society as equals".

This item was deferred.

9.12 Submitted by Councillor Stephen McKee



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

“That Meath County Council calls on the Minister for Education to reinstate the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative, which ended in 2012, to promote foreign language skills for young children and furthermore, to fully implement the Languages Connect Strategy, launched in 2017, which sets out that Ireland should be among the top ten countries in Europe for the teaching and learning of modern foreign languages.”

This item was deferred.

9.13 Submitted by Councillor Noel French

“That Meath County Council write to the Chinese Ambassador asking him to request his government to carry out an enquiry into the treatment of Uighur citizens of their country.”

This item was deferred.

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

10.3 Schedule of Chief Executive’s Orders – Housing

10.4 Schedule of Chief Executive’s Orders – Community & Enterprise

Councillors Damien O’Reilly and Alan Tobin made comments on the CE Orders.

Noted by the Elected Members.

11 Any Other Business

Councillor Paddy Meade congratulated An Cathaoirleach on his term in office and how he has chaired the significant number of Council Meetings during his term.