

## **Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes**

### **Ordinary Meeting**

**8<sup>th</sup> May 2023 @ 1.30p.m.**

**Buvinda House, Navan (and online via zoom)**

#### **Presiding**

An Cathaoirleach, Councillor Nick Killian

#### **Councillors Present:**

Councillors Joseph Bonner, Mike Bray, Eugene Cassidy, Francis Deane, Brian Fitzgerald, Pdraig Fitzsimons, Joe Fox, Noel French, Michael Gallagher, David Gilroy, Trevor Golden, Wayne Harding, Suzanne Jamal, Geraldine Keogan, Alan Lawes, Paul McCabe, Elaine McGinty, Paddy Meade, Ronan Moore, Gerry O'Connor, Damien O'Reilly, Tommy Reilly, Amanda Smith, Emer Tóibín, Sharon Tolan, Gillian Toole.

#### **Councillors Present via Zoom:**

Councillors Yemi Adenuga, Tom Behan, Aisling Dempsey, Sean Drew, Deirdre Geraghty-Smith, Stephen McKee, Maria Murphy, Aisling O'Neill, Sarah Reilly, Niamh Souhan, Alan Tobin, Conor Tormey

#### **Apologies:**

Councillors Edward Fennessy,

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

**Chief Executive:** Jackie Maguire

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

**Meetings Administrator:** Elaine Daly

Due to the over-run of the Tripartite meeting and on a proposal from **Councillor Alan Tobin** and seconded by **Councillor Gillian Toole** it was agreed to delay the commencement of the meeting to 1.50pm.

### **1 Confirmation of Minutes**

1.1 Confirmation of minutes of Ordinary meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023.

The minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023 were confirmed on the proposal of **Councillor Noel French** and seconded by **Councillor Michael Gallagher**.

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

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**Councillor Emer Tóibín** referred to the Protocol Committee report. She expressed her disappointment with the delays in advancing the resolution to the principle of the motion and she noted that she will be re-submitting the motion for the June Council meeting.

**Councillor Gillian Toole** requested that the Planning Section include details of commencement notices submitted for solar farms and sub-stations in the relevant section of the CE report each month. **Councillor Toole** also proposed that Teagasc be invited to discuss matters relating to solar farms, the proposal was seconded by **Councillor Trevor Golden**.

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

#### **Sympathy was extended to:**

Niamh Maxwell, Environment Department on the death of her father, Tom (Thomas) Maxwell.

Yvonne Waters, Finance Department on the death of her father, John Waters.

Irene Lynch, Planning Department on the death of her parents, Matthew (Mattie) and Kathleen Lynch.

#### **Expressions of congratulations were also extended to:**

Darkness into Light Committees in County Meath.

Councillor David Gilroy and his wife, Maura, on the birth of their son, Patrick.

Ashbourne Senior Ladies Division 5 Leinster Cup Winners.

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

None

### **5 Statutory Business**

#### **5.1 Corporate Affairs and Governance**

- 5.1.1 To appoint replacement County Meath Chamber sectoral nominee, Mr. John Paul Gilroy, as member of the Climate Action, Environment and Emergency Services SPC.

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On the proposal of **Councillor Tommy Reilly** and seconded by **Councillor Michael Gallagher**, Mr. John Paul Gilroy was approved as County Meath Chamber sectoral nominee to the Climate Action, Environment and Emergency Services SPC.

### **5.2 Climate Action & Environment**

- 5.2.1 To receive a presentation from Mr. Hugh Coughlan, Regional Co-Ordinator, Eastern-Midlands Region Waste Management Planning Office on the Draft National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy which is the subject of a statutory public consultation process from the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2023 until the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

Mr. Dara McGowan welcomed Mr. Hugh Coughlan to the meeting. He noted that the previous three regional waste management plans were now being reviewed and amalgamated into one national Waste Management Plan.

Mr. Hugh Coughlan provided details in relation to the Draft National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy. He noted that the public consultation period was open until the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2023. He further advised that the plan included targets for reuse, repair, resource consumption and reducing contamination levels. The 13 core policies were outlined, which include protection of the environment, climate action, collaboration and changing behaviours and provided details of the 83 priority actions as well as the 51 key deliverables contained within the plan.

There were interventions from **Councillors: Paul McCabe; Michael Gallagher; Ronan Moore; Yemi Adenuga; Elaine McGinty; Paddy Meade; Trevor Golden; Gillian Toole; Alan Tobin; David Gilroy and Joe Bonner**, with queries focusing on role of Local Authorities, promotion of the consultation process, relevant stakeholders, use of incineration, number of waste facilities within the County and enforcement processes vis à vis improved education. Responses to queries raised were provided by Mr. Hugh Coughlan and Mr. Dara McGowan.

### **5.3 Planning**

- 5.3.1 To receive an update on the implementation of the Residential Zoned Land Tax.

Mr. Alan Russell, Senior Executive Planner, provided an update on the implementation of the Residential Zoned Land Tax. He noted that the objective of the tax was to activate land that is serviced and zoned for residential use in order to increase housing supply. He further noted that there are three main stages to the Residential Zoned Land Tax process and that the Council is currently at Stage 2 of the process – Supplemental Map, which is on display until June 1, 2023. There are 14 additional land parcels included on the supplemental map and public consultation is restricted to those relating to the 14 parcels of land.

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There were queries from **Councillors Sharon Tolan** and **Mike Bray**. Responses to queries raised were provided by Mr. Alan Russell.

### 5.3.2 To receive the Meath Economic Development Strategy Roadmap.

Mr. Des Foley set out the context and background for the Meath Economic Development Strategy Roadmap. He noted that the Roadmap is building on the success of the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath, which was championed by the Chief Executive and addressed issues regarding outbound commuters, expanded the economic and rate base, promoted indigenous industries and encouraged foreign direct investment into the County.

Ms. Majella Farrell, Economic Development Officer provided a broad outlined of the Strategy Roadmap. She noted that the 'Make it Meath' concept has been further developed to 'Meath the place and space to thrive' and that there are 7 key focus areas for future development including indigenous industry/SMEs, foreign direct investment, tourism hospitality and heritage, retail, innovation, agriculture and food industry and the creative economy. She further noted that there are 6 strategic actions included in each of the 4 enabling actions and that economic development will remain as a key focus for the Local Authority.

There were interventions of support and queries from **Councillors: Gerry O'Connor; Joe Fox; Ronan Moore; Brian Fitzgerald; Damien O'Reilly; Alan Tobin; Mike Bray; Paddy Meade; Gillian Toole; David Gilroy; Elaine McGinty; Noel French; Emer Tóibín; Yemi Adenuga** and **An Cathaoirleach**. The Chief Executive was praised for her vision and commitment to the economic development of the County and the successes of the previous strategy were noted. Queries were raised regarding promotion of the strategy roadmap and partnership arrangements with neighbouring counties and 3<sup>rd</sup> level colleges. Responses to queries raised were responded to by the Chief Executive and Ms. Majella Farrell.

## **5.4 Community**

### 5.4.1 To receive details and approve the allocations under the Community Grants Scheme 2023, as recommended by the Housing, Community & Cultural Development SPC on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

The allocations under the Community Grants Scheme 2023 were approved on the proposal of **Councillor Joe Fox**, seconded by **Councillor Wayne Harding** and agreed.

### 5.4.2 To receive details and approve the allocations under the Regional Festivals and Participative Events – Small Grants Scheme in Co. Meath as recommended by the Housing, Community & Cultural Development SPC on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

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The allocations under the Regional Festival and Participative Events – Small Grants Scheme were approved on the proposal of **Councillor Paul McCabe**, seconded by **Councillor David Gilroy** and agreed.

### **5.5 Finance**

5.5.1 To note the Quarterly Financial Statement as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

The report was noted by the Elected Members.

## **6 Reports**

6.1 Chief Executive's Report

**Councillor Damien O'Reilly** expressed his appreciation to the volunteers of Meath Civil Defence for their support of the Darkness into Light Events which had recently taken place across the County.

**Councillor Trevor Golden** thanked Mr. Ciaran Mangan and all involved in the preparations of the recent Dermot Gallagher Memorial Lecture. He further raised a query in relation to the provisions of the shared bike scheme in Ashbourne and a response was provided by Mr. Martin Murray.

6.2 Report from the Corporate Policy Group

The Meetings Administrator reported that the CPG met on Friday, May 5, 2023, and reviewed the agenda for the April Council Meeting, including notices of motion not included on the agenda. She further noted that the arrangements for the tripartite meeting with the Transport Representatives were discussed. Finally, it was noted that the draft minutes of the Climate Action, Environment and Emergency Services SPC meeting which took place on 20th April were noted and the draft minutes of the Housing, Community and Cultural Development SPC which took place on 25th April were noted. Recommendations to the CPG including the Community Grants and Regional Festivals events grant scheme allocations were noted.

## **7 Correspondence**

7.1 Correspondence from Minister Simon Harris TD., Minister for Justice in response to Notice of Motion 10.2 adopted at the September 2022 meeting of the full Council and Item 7.5 at the March 2023 meeting of the full Council re. amending the existing legislation to ban the sale of low alcohol and zero alcoholic drinks to all persons under the legal drinking age.

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**Councillor Tom Behan** expressed his disappointment in the correspondence.

The correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.2 Correspondence from Minister Darragh O'Brien TD., Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage in response to Notice of Motion 9.1 adopted at the March 2023 meeting of the full Council re. Local Authority Home Loans.

**Councillor Damien O'Reilly** expressed his disappointment in the correspondence.

The correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.3 Circular LG 03/2023 – Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage re. Training Events for Elected Members.

The correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.4 Circular Letter: PL 04/2023 – Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage re. Temporary Time-Limited Waiver in respect of Development Contributions.

Mr. Des Foley outlined the details of the waiver in respect of development contributions. He noted that the Council would be re-imbursed for lost revenue on a monthly basis, he also noted that the Council had sought clarification in relation from Uisce Éireann in relation to their processes in applying the waiver. There were interventions from **Councillors Tommy Reilly; Paddy meade; Gerry O'Connor** and **Elaine McGinty**. The correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

## **8 Notice of Question**

### **8.1 Submitted by Councillor Noel French**

*“How much is Meath County Council owed in overdue housing loans and rent and how many housing rent and loan accounts are in arrears for more than 3 months?”*

#### **Response**

Table 1 outlines the total arrears and the number of customers in arrears of 3 months or more for Housing Loans at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

Table 2 outlines the total arrears and the number of customers in arrears of 3 months or more for Housing Rents at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

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**Table 1: Housing Loans**

	31/03/2023
<b>Total Arrears</b>	€572,221
<b>No. of customers in arrears of more than 3 months</b>	37

**Table 2: Housing Rents**

	31/03/2023
<b>Total Arrears</b>	€2,436,657
<b>No. of customers in arrears of more than 3 months</b>	591

A programme of work has been implemented to address the housing rent arrears in 2023, including;

- Face to face engagement with tenants with the highest level of arrears to agree an affordable payment plan
- Development and roll out of payment app and automatic enrolment of new tenants onto the app
- Enhanced early interventions mechanisms with tenants who fall into arrears
- Progress cases through the legal process
- Ongoing debt management development of systems, training and reporting.

Noted by the Elected Members

### 8.2 Submitted by Councillor David Gilroy

*“Can Meath County Council provide an update on progress and an expected date for presentation of the Speed Limit Review.”*

#### **Response**

The Transport Section is currently undertaking a review of the County Wide Special Speed Limit in consultation with the TII and An Garda Síochána. We anticipate that we will be

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in a position to present the details of the review at the June or July MD meetings, with a view to having the Bye-Laws formally adopted in Q1 2024.

**Councillor David Gilroy** sought clarity in relation to process and the timeframes for the speed limit review. Mr. Martin Murray noted that subsequent to the publication of the agenda and the response above the Council had been advised that new guidelines were being prepared and it was likely that the process would not commence until September 2023 at the earliest.

Noted by the Elected Members.

### **8.3 Submitted by Councillor Trevor Golden**

*“Can Meath County Council investigate the possible use of and feasibility of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) Fuel for the fleet of council vehicles?”*

#### **Response**

Decarbonization of fleet is a priority for Meath County Council and will greatly aid organizational emissions reduction to achieve our 2030 targets, however, it is not without challenges for our larger sized fleet where EV or hydrogen technology is not fully proven or readily accessible. In order to strive towards our targets transitional options must be examined, including HVO. In developing transitional solutions, it is important that vehicles can continue to perform as present in terms of range, volume and load capacity, further to this an exercise is currently ongoing to ascertain our future resource needs (including fleet) in a changing environment.

Transportation Operations in collaboration with the Climate Action Team have commenced a trial of HVO in the Navan depot. Three vehicles from the Navan MD have been assigned to the trial plus a Civil Defence vehicle from the adjacent HQ. The trial will run for a period of three months and may be extended for a further three months using a great number of vehicles. HVO fuel consumption will be monitored over the trial period as will vehicle performance.

In consideration of the longer term use of HVO or other alternative fuels there are number of considerations. Firstly, locations and size of the bunded tanks, some of our depots have restrictions on space or may require additional security if large volumes of fuel are to be stored, storage locations would have to be carefully considered to avoid unnecessary driving to re-fuel. Secondly, the fuel must be certified as fully sustainable, that is, made from waste oils and not from processes contributing to deforestation. Additionally, security of supply is important, that fuel is available on an ongoing basis with short lead in times.



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It is recognised technology is constantly changing and the alternative fuels space is a dynamic one, Transportation will continue to engage with the sector to explore options and where appropriate participate in trials, consideration will need to be given on how best to procure alternative fuels and if there are economy of scales benefit in collaborating with other local authorities or agencies. The outcome of this trial will inform options for fleet across all directorates.

Noted by the Elected Members

### **8.4 Submitted by Councillor Emer Tóibín**

*“To ask Meath County Council how many full-time and part-time dog and litter wardens are employed to service the entire county and what plans are now in place to employ additional litter and dog wardens following the Minister's announcement and how do the resources in Meath compare to other counties with similar population and area size?”*

#### **Response**

The Council currently has one full time Dog Warden and three further Wardens two of whom combine dog control and litter/waste management duties. These numbers are consistent with the numbers employed in other Local Authorities across the Country including in Counties of a similar population and size and while there is no funding provision for any additional wardens at present the numbers are kept under regular review and staff diverted as necessary. The Wardens also work closely with the 6 enforcement officers who are primarily involved in waste management enforcement activities.

The issue of dog control crosses a number of different Government Departments as well as the Local Authorities, and in this regard the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Rural and Community Development established a working group to examine relative legislative and enforcement issues and specifically look at fines under the Control of Dogs Act, the provision of dog wardens, microchipping, promoting responsible dog ownership and licences.

It is understood that an interim report prepared by the group containing a series of recommendation and including for the recruitment of additional dog wardens has been presented to the Minister and is the subject of discussion at Government Cabinet level and the Council await notification from the Department in this regard.

**Councillor Emer Tóibín** sought clarification in relation to the total numbers of staff engaged in the services. Clarification was provided by Mr. Dara McGowan.

Noted by the Elected Members.

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### 9 Notice of Motion

#### 9.1 Submitted by Councillor Noel French

*“That Meath County Council consider the webcasting of its meetings to make them available to members of the public who are very restricted in terms of access to these public meetings.”*

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

Members of the public and representatives of the media are entitled to attend Council meetings. To that end, notification of Council meetings is published in accordance with Schedule 10 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014. Since 2022, all Plenary Council and Municipal District meetings are held in hybrid format, in person or broadcast via the Zoom Communications Platform and any requests by members of the public to attend these meetings, either in person or online, are facilitated.

The hardware and software required to operate webcasting is not available in the current Council Chamber, however, the technical specifications required for such arrangements will be considered as part of the works to the extension to Buvinda House. The inclusion of webcasting will also require an amendment to the Standing Orders, and this can be considered at the appropriate time.

Notwithstanding the above, minutes of all council meetings are available on our website and these form the statutory record of Council meetings.

The motion was proposed by **Councillor Noel French** and seconded by **Councillor Paddy Meade**. Councillor French introduced the motion, and he noted that members of the public should be encouraged and facilitated in accessing council meetings. **Councillor Meade** also spoke in its favour. There were some reservations from **Councillors Damien O’Reilly; Gerry O’Connor; Ronan Moore; Alan Tobin; Brian Fitzgerald; Trevor Golden; David Gilroy; Joe Bonner** and **Michael Gallagher** with particular concern regarding the lack of ‘privilege’ in the Council Chamber which could lead to litigation.

Councillor French acknowledged the misgivings in the Council Chamber and withdrew the motion.

#### 9.2 Submitted by Councillor Noel French

*“That Meath County Council ban TikTok from all council owned mobile phones and devices.”*

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

In accordance with recent advice received from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), Meath County Council is reviewing its procedures in relation to the use of TikTok on Council owned devices.

Aligned with the findings of the NCSC, we recognise that there are a relatively small number of staff in the Council that require access to TikTok to carry out their duties (for example the communications team) and the IT department will liaise with these staff as part of the review.

Notification and advice on the updated procedures will issue to the elected members and staff of the Council in due course.

The motion was proposed by **Councillor Noel French** and seconded by **Councillor Paddy Meade**. Councillor French introduced the motion, and he noted that several EU countries had banned tiktok from government electronic devices. **Councillor Meade** also spoke in its favour. There were reservations from **Councillors Joe Bonner; Gillian Toole; David Gilroy; Trevor Golden; Alan Tobin; Michael Gallagher** and **Gerry O'Connor** with particular concern regarding the impacts of such a statement on potential investors to the County.

Councillor French acknowledged the misgivings in the Council Chamber and withdrew the motion.

### **9.3 Submitted by Councillor Wayne Harding**

*"I call on Meath County Council to provide portaloos at amenities and beauty spots on a case by case basis until September."*

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

The provision of public toilets in these amenities requires careful consideration. Toilets need to be in convenient locations while not detracting from the amenities and they require an amount of active frontage to prevent issues such as vandalism, anti-social behaviour and environmental issues. The provision of public toilets as a stand-alone service can be expensive to supervise and manage, to provide an appropriate level of service that will not detract from the overall public experience. It would therefore be preferable to provide public toilets within public building locations where their operation could be more easily managed and supervised and would provide a more sustainable and cost-effective service. Currently there is no fund available for the provision of portaloos elsewhere in the county.

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Meath County Council currently provide additional toilet facilities for 12 weeks during the peak summer months for Bettystown beach to cater for the crowds in attendance outside the core open hours of the permanent toilet facilities. These are placed in a visible, well-lit, secure area and maintained by the service provider. This will be reviewed following the completion of the works on the new Council Civic building.

**Councillor Wayne Harding** introduced the motion. He noted that other counties had introduced “Summer Season Amenities” and that a similar scheme would benefit many areas across the County. There were interventions of support from **Councillors Pdraig Fitzsimons; Ronan Moore; Tom Behan; Sharon Tolan; Joe Bonner; Michael Gallagher and Gerry O’Connor**. Mr. Martin Murray noted that there was a significant assessment procedure to be undertaken, as well as the financial resources to be considered. **Councillor Brian Fitzgerald** suggested that each MD should identify one area for consideration in the scheme, which would then be referred to the SPC for further consideration. This was acceptable to the proposer of the motion.

The motion, as amended, was proposed by **Councillor Wayne Harding**, seconded by **Councillor Pdraig Fitzsimons** and agreed.

### **10 General Interest Motions**

#### **10.1 Submitted by Councillor Michael Gallagher**

*“That Meath County Council rejects the findings of the independent review of the North South Interconnector, which was recently published, on the basis that the review was a desktop study of previous reports and studies and also on the basis that the terms of reference for the review did not allow for a comprehensive cost benefit analysis on a site-specific route which would have taken all of the relevant issues into account.”*

**Councillor Michael Gallagher** introduced the motion and he noted that there was considerable public opposition to the proposal. There were interventions from **Councillors Paddy Meade; Eugene Cassidy; Emer Tóibín and Brian Fitzgerald**.

The motion proposed by **Councillor Michael Gallagher** and seconded by **Councillor Paddy Meade** was agreed on a show of hands vote of 16 members in agreement, no member not in agreement and 2 members abstained.

#### **10.2 Submitted by Councillor Elaine McGinty**

*“To write the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and the Minister for the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications to jointly consider the implementation of a radical public procurement strategy for food, whereby the immense*

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*buying power of the government is directed towards ecology, friendly farming methods and local production. This will not only support our local economy here in Meath, but also promote and create a greater connection between farmers and the Irish public as we move towards a more sustainable and greener economy.”*

This matter was deferred to the June Council meeting.

### **11 Schedule of Chief Executive & Approved Orders (For Information Only)**

#### 11.1 Schedule of Chief Executive’s Orders – Transportation

Noted by the Elected Members

#### 11.2 Schedule of Chief Executive’s Orders – Environment

Noted by the Elected Members

#### 11.3 Schedule of Chief Executive’s Orders – Housing

Noted by the Elected Members

#### 11.4 Schedule of Chief Executive’s Orders – Community & Enterprise

Noted by the Elected Members

### **12 Any Other Business**

**Councillor Michael Gallagher** queried the details of a recent article in the Village Magazine. It was noted that the matter had been addressed by the Executive of the Council and that it would not be appropriate to comment further on the matter.

**Councillor Gillian Toole** queried details regarding the sub-letting of social houses and the provisions for hostel accommodation within the County. Mr. Barry Lynch provided a response to the queries raised.

**Councillor Yemi Adenuga** noted that diversity training had been arranged for the elected members and she encouraged all of them to attend if possible.

**An Cathaoirleach** noted that an Age Friendly event was scheduled in Fairyhouse Racecourse for 16<sup>th</sup> June and he encouraged the elected members to attend if possible.

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**An Cathaoirleach** noted that this was the last meeting that he would be presiding over, and he expressed his privilege and honour to have served as Cathaoirleach of Meath County Council. He further noted that it was the final meeting for the current Chief Executive, and that we were saying goodbye to a good friend and a good public servant to County Meath. Ms. Jackie Maguire noted that it was a momentous occasion having served in public office for over 42 years. She acknowledged the support of the Elected Members and past and present Cathaoirligh of the Council. She further acknowledged the commitment of the management team and the work force in implementing policies and delivering essential services to the people of County Meath.

The meeting concluded at 6.00pm