

Miontuaircí / Meeting Minutes

Ordinary Meeting

4th September 2023 @ 1.30p.m.

Buvinda House, Navan (and online via zoom)

Presiding

An Cathaoirleach, Councillor Tommy Reilly

Councillors Present:

Councillors Joseph Bonner, Mike Bray, Francis Deane, Eddie Fennessy, Brian Fitzgerald, Pdraig Fitzsimons, Joe Fox, Michael Gallagher, David Gilroy, Wayne Harding, Nick Killian, Paul McCabe, Elaine McGinty, Paddy Meade, Helen Meyer, Ronan Moore, Maria Murphy, Gerry O'Connor, Sarah Reilly, Gillian Toole.

Councillors Present via Zoom:

Councillors Yemi Adenuga, Tom Behan, Eugene Cassidy, Aisling Dempsey, Sean Drew, Noel French, Deirdre Geraghty-Smith, Trevor Golden, Suzanne Jamal, Geraldine Keogan, Alan Lawes, Stephen McKee, Damien O'Reilly, Niamh Souhan, Alan Tobin, Emer Tóibín, Sharon Tolan, Conor Tormey.

Apologies:

Councillor Amanda Smith

Officials in attendance:

Chief Executive: Fiona Lawless

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

A/Head of Finance: Sheila Harkin

Meetings Administrator: Elaine Daly

An Cathaoirleach Councillor Tommy Reilly was delayed and the Leas-Chathaoirleach, Councillor Paul McCabe presided in his absence.

1 Confirmation of Minutes

1.1 Confirmation of minutes of Ordinary meeting held on 3rd July 2023.

The minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on 3rd July 2023 were confirmed on the proposal of Councillor Joe Fox and seconded by Councillor David Gilroy.

2 Matters arising from the Minutes

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Councillor Gillian Toole requested an update on school wardens at Ratoath and Rathbeggan schools and a response was provided by Martin Murray. It was agreed that the Road Safety Reports would be forwarded to Councillor Toole.

3 Expressions of Sympathy and Congratulations

3.1 Expressions of Sympathy were extended to:

Jennifer Lawlor, Housing on the death of her sister, Edel Lawlor.

Sean Reynolds, Water Services on the death of his father, Francis (Francie) Reynolds.

Sharon Flanagan, Navan Library on the death of her mother, Ann Flanagan.

Kevin Stewart, former employee and Shauna Stewart, Housing on the death of their mother/grandmother, Bernie Stewart.

Shane Quinn, Civil Defence on the death of his father, Michael Quinn.

Eimear Curtis, Customer Service on the death of her father, Sean Curtis.

Kitty Foyle, Transportation on the death of her father, Jim Foyle.

Councillor Sean Drew on the death of his sister in law Maria Drew.

Family and friends of the late Matt Lumney, Belfast.

3.2 In accordance with Standing Order 11.5 Congratulations were extended to:

Fr. Murphy AC Paralympian Jack O'Connor (15) from Athboy on his three gold medals at the Czech Open Championships in the fields of Shot Putt, discus and javelin in the Junior Championships. Jack also came third in the senior discus competition.

Councillor Damien O'Reilly on receiving a Masters in Engineering from University of Limerick

Meath County Council on organising an excellent Rose Tour.

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

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- 4.1 Disposal of 10.1852 Ha of land at Liscartan, Navan, Co Meath, in accordance with Section 211 of Planning & Development Act 2000 and subject to the provisions of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001. The lands are not affected by the provisions of the Land Development Agency Act 2021.**

The disposal, in accordance with the statutory notice issued on July 6, 2023, under Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001, was approved on the proposal of **Councillor Edward Fennessy** and seconded by **Councillor Pdraig Fitzsimons**.

- 4.2 Disposal of 0.0008 Ha of land at Mill Race, Castle Street, Ashbourne, Co Meath, in accordance with Section 211 of Planning & Development Act 2000 and subject to the provisions of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001. The lands in question are subject to No Objection from the LDA.**

The disposal, in accordance with the statutory notice issued on June 21, 2023, under Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001, was approved on the proposal of **Councillor Nick Killian** and seconded by **Councillor Michael Gallagher**.

- 4.3 Disposal of 0.2095 Ha of land at Macetown, Navan, Co Meath, in accordance with Section 211 of Planning & Development Act 2000 and subject to the provisions of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001. The lands are not affected by the provisions of the Land Development Agency Act 2021.**

The disposal, in accordance with the statutory notice issued on June 27, 2023, under Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001, was approved on the proposal of **Councillor Francis Deane** and seconded by **Councillor Edward Fennessy**.

5 Statutory Business

5.1.1 Corporate Affairs and Governance

To agree revised dates for General Municipal Allocation Meetings and Preliminary and Statutory Budget meetings.

Budget Meeting	Date	Time	Location
Ashbourne MD - GMA	Tuesday 7 th November 2023	9.30am	Area meeting - first item on agenda
Ratoath MD - GMA	Wednesday 8th November 2023	9.00am	Area meeting - first item on agenda

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Navan MD - GMA	Wednesday 8th November 2023	2.00pm	Swift room Buvinda House / Hybrid
Trim MD - GMA	Wednesday 8th November 2023	4.00pm	Swift room Buvinda House / Hybrid
Laytown/Bettystown MD -GMA	Thursday 9th November 2023	9.30am	Area meeting - first item on agenda
Kells MD - GMA	Thursday 9th November 2023	2.00pm	Swift room Buvinda House / Hybrid
Preliminary Budget Meeting	Monday November 27th 2023	10.00a.m.	Buvinda House
Statutory Budget Meeting	Monday November 27th 2023	1.30p.m.	Buvinda House (in person)

On the proposal of **Councillor Edward Fennessy** and seconded by **Councillor Gerry O'Connor** the revised dates for the General Municipal Allocation Meetings and Preliminary and Statutory Budget meetings were agreed.

5.1.2 To receive an update from the Chair of Meath Women's Caucus.

Councillor Maria Murphy, Chair of Meath Women's Caucus gave a verbal update on the activities of the Caucus to date.

It was noted that the Meath Women's Caucus AGM was held on Monday 3rd July in Buvinda House and a workplan for the year had been agreed including plans to host an event which will encourage women with an interest in politics to consider getting involved. A funding application has been made to fund the event and other activities of the Caucus. In addition, the following officers were elected: Chairperson Councillor Maria Murphy, Vice Chairperson Councillor Aisling Dempsey, Secretary Councillor Sarah Reilly, PRO Councillor Yemi Adenuga.

The Caucus welcomed Ms. Jenny Rispin, Interim Manager of the Meath Ladies Football Team to Buvinda on Monday July 10, where she shared her experience and future plans to develop women's participation in sport in Meath and beyond.

5.2 Finance

5.2.1 To consider the report of the Chief Executive prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Local Property Tax (Local Adjustment Factor) Regulations 2022

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For the purpose of resolving as follows:

- a) Vary the basic rate and set a local adjustment factor that will apply for a period as specified by the resolution, or
- b) Not vary the basic rate

Ms. Sheila Harkin, Acting Head of Finance provided details of the four reports that were to be considered in accordance with the Local Property Tax (Local Adjustment Factor) Regulations 2022. It was noted that the public consultation period took place from July 5, 2023 to August 7, 2023 and 23 submissions were received. It was further noted that every 1% of variation would impact the budget in the sum of €186,512 and that there was a preliminary gap of €2,157,421 in the estimate of income and expenditure for next year.

There were interventions not to vary the basic rate from **Councillors Gerry O'Connor; Brian Fitzgerald; Damien O'Reilly; Ronan Moore; Mike Bray; Gillian Toole; Elaine McGinty; David Gilroy; Pdraig Fitzsimons** and **Alan Tobin**. There were interventions to decrease the basic rate from **Councillors Michael Gallagher; Alan Lawes** and **Emer Tóibín**. **Councillor Paddy Meade** indicated that he would support an increase in the basic rate if the additional funds were ringfenced for the winter gritting programme.

An Cathaoirleach, Councillor Tommy Reilly attended at 2.30pm and presided over the meeting.

The following proposals were put forward:

Councillor Michael Gallagher proposed to decrease the basic rate by 10%, this was seconded by **Councillor Alan Lawes**.

Councillor Damien O'Reilly proposed not to vary the basic rate, this was seconded by **Councillor Gerry O'Connor**.

Councillor Paddy Meade proposed to increase the rate by 5%.

Councillor Emer Tóibín proposed to decrease the basic rate by 5%.

In accordance with Item 18.7 of the Standing Orders the motion proposed not to vary the basic rate was put to a roll call vote.

	For	Against	Abstain	Absent
ADENUGA, Yemi	✓			
BEHAN, Tom	✓			
BONNER, Joseph	✓			
BRAY, Mike	✓			
CASSIDY, Eugene	✓			
DEANE, Francis				✓

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DEMPSEY, Aisling	√			
DREW, Sean	√			
FENNESSY, Edward		√		
FITZGERALD, Brian	√			
FITZSIMONS, Padraig	√			
FOX, Joe	√			
FRENCH, Noel	√			
GALLAGHER, Michael		√		
GERAGHTY-SMITH, Deirdre				√
GILROY, David	√			
GOLDEN, Trevor	√			
HARDING, Wayne	√			
JAMAL, Suzanne	√			
KEOGAN, Geraldine	√			
KILLIAN, Nick	√			
LAWES, Alan		√		
MC CABE, Paul	√			
MC GINTY, Elaine	√			
MC KEE, Stephen				√
MEADE, Paddy	√			
Meyer, Helen		√		
MOORE, Ronan	√			
MURPHY, Maria	√			
O'CONNOR, Gerry	√			
O'REILLY, Damien	√			
REILLY, Sarah	√			
REILLY, Tommy	√			
SMITH, Amanda				√
SOUHAN, Niamh				√
TOBIN, Alan	√			
TÓIBÍN, Emer		√		
TOLAN, Sharon	√			
TOOLE, Gillian	√			
TORMEY, Conor	√			

Result: For = 30 votes; Against = 5 votes; Abstain = 0; Not Present = 5

The Elected Members therefore resolved to not vary the basic rate, for a period of one year from the next Local Property Tax liability date.

5.2.2 To note the Half Year Financial Statement as at 30th June 2023.

There was a query from **Councillor Gillian Toole**, with response provided by Ms. Sheila Harkin. The quarterly financial statement at June 30, 2023 was noted by the Elected Members.

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5.3 Transportation

5.3.1 To approve Road Traffic (Special Speed Limit) (Housing Estates) County of Meath Bye-laws (No 1) 2023.

Mr. Martin Murray noted that the proposed Bye-Laws would introduce a 30 km/h speed limit into 340 housing estates in 4 municipal districts.

There were queries from **Councillors Nick Killian; Edward Fennessy; Elaine McGinty; Gillian Toole; Alan Tobin** and **Emer Tóibín**. Responses to queries raised were provided by Mr. Martin Murray.

On the proposal of **Councillor Maria Murphy** and seconded by **Councillor Paddy Meade** the Road Traffic (Special Speed Limit) (Housing Estates) County of Meath Bye-laws (No 1) 2023 were approved.

6 Reports

6.1 Chief Executive's Report

There were interventions from the following: **Councillors Edward Fennessy; Nick Killian; Aisling Dempsey; Alan Tobin; Damien O'Reilly; Sharon Tolan; Mike Bray; Emer Tóibín; Elaine McGinty; Alan Lawes; Maria Murphy; Gerry O'Connor; Ronan Moore; Sean Drew; Helen Meyer; David Gilroy; Gillian Toole** and **Joe Fox**. The issues raised included:

Housing: Housing Capital Schemes, Cost Rental Scheme, Age-Friendly Parking, Bedroom Allocations, Choice Based Lettings, anti-social behaviour, JPC Public Meeting, Rental Accommodation Standards, Affordable Housing, Homelessness Figures.

Transport: Ashbourne Skate Park, LIS Scheme.

Finance: Local Authority Home Loan, Rent Arrears.

Environment: Buvinda Solar Panels.

Planning: Variations to County Development Plan.

Responses to queries raised were provided by Ms. Sheila Harkin, Mr. Barry Lynch, Mr. Martin Murray, Mr. Dara McGowan and Mr. Des Foley.

Mr. Des Foley noted that the Dept. of Housing, Local Government and Heritage had very recently responded to correspondence from the Council and that a copy of same would be made available to the Elected Members, furthermore, a report on variations to the County Development Plan would be brought before the Elected Members at the October Council Meeting.

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6.2 Report from the Corporate Policy Group

The Meetings Administrator reported that the CPG met on Friday September 1, 2023 and reviewed the agenda for the September Council Meeting. The members were provided with an overview of the LPT and budget arrangements.

It was noted that the Terms of Reference for the Meath Economic Development Forum were agreed. In addition, proposed amendments to the Draft Standing Orders were discussed with further amendments proposed which will be brought to the Plenary Council in October.

The minutes of the Planning, Economic Development, Enterprise and European Affairs SPC meeting of July 6, 2023 were noted and the recommendations approved. In addition, the minutes of the Climate Action, Environment and Emergency Services SPC meeting of July 7, 2023 were noted.

6.3 Report from the Protocol Committee

The Meetings Administrator reported that the Protocol Committee met on Friday, September 1, 2023. The Terms of Reference for the Protocol Committee were reviewed and agreed.

The Elected Members Training Programme was approved, which will be brought to the October Council Meeting for ratification. Training arrangements for the Elected Members CRM portal were agreed. The conference and training schedule was approved.

7 Correspondence

- 7.1 Correspondence from Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage in response to Notices of Motion 10.2 and 10.3 adopted at the June 2023 meeting of the full Council re. Retained Fire Service.

Mr. Dara McGowan updated the Elected Members on the matter.

The correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.2 Correspondence from Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage in response to Notices of Motion 9.7 and 9.8 adopted at the February 2023 meeting of the full Council re. Domestic Waste Water Treatment System grant schemes.

Mr. Dara McGowan noted that a review of the Scheme was ongoing.

The correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

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- 7.3 Correspondence from Minister for Finance in response to Notice of Motion 10.2 adopted at the July 2023 meeting of the full Council re. reversing the pension levy.

Noted by the Elected Members

- 7.4 Correspondence from Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform in response to Notice of Motion 10.2 adopted at the July 2023 meeting of the full Council re. reversing the pension levy.

Noted by the Elected Members

- 7.5 Correspondence from Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment in response to Notice of Motion 10.9 adopted at the July 2023 meeting of the full Council re. Tara Mines.

Noted by the Elected Members

- 7.6 Correspondence from Minister for Transport in response to Notice of Motion 10.2 adopted at the March 2023 meeting of the full Council re. the Introduction/amendment of road traffic legislation to allow the requisite authority to deploy technologies to combat speeding and enforce speed limits within urban areas (Towns & Villages).

Noted by the Elected Members

- 7.7 Correspondence from Minister for Transport in response to Notice of Motion 10.4 adopted at the March 2023 meeting of the full Council re. amending legislation relating to Bus Lanes to allow the introduction of high-occupancy vehicle lanes - HOV Lanes (Bus and Carpooling lanes).

Noted by the Elected Members

- 7.8 Correspondence from Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment in response to Notice of Motion 10.3 adopted at the July 2023 meeting of the full Council re. call to ban the practice of dual/discriminatory pricing of goods, specifically by supermarkets by means of a membership system such as Rewards/Club cards.

Noted by the Elected Members

- 7.9 Correspondence from the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) in response to Notice of Motion 10.3 adopted at the July 2023 meeting of the full Council re. call to ban the practice of dual/discriminatory pricing of goods, specifically by supermarkets by means of a membership system such as Rewards/Club cards.

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Noted by the Elected Members

- 7.10 Correspondence from Minister for Health in response to Notice of Motion 10.7 adopted at the July 2023 meeting of the full Council re. establishment of first tobacco-free generation by 2030.

Noted by the Elected Members

- 7.11 Correspondence from Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform in response to Notice of Motion 10.1 adopted at the July 2023 meeting of the full Council re. implementation of a radical public procurement strategy for food.

Noted by the Elected Members

- 7.12 Correspondence from Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage re. Notification regarding candidate Special Protection Area – North-west Irish Sea cSPA 4236.

Concerns regarding the impact on a new port and on proposed windfarms were raised by **Councillors Sharon Tolan; Gerry O'Connor and Alan Tobin**. On the proposal of **Councillor Alan Tobin** and seconded by **Councillor Gerry O'Connor** it was agreed to invite representatives from the National Parks and Wildlife Service to the October Council Meeting.

- 7.13 Circular Fin 06/2023 – Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage re. 2024 Budget meeting and other budgetary matters.

Noted by the Elected Members

- 7.14 LG 04/2023 – Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage re. Maternity/Family Supports for Elected Members – Administrative Support Allowance. Local Government Act 2001 (Section 142) (Allowance for Maternity-Related Administrative Support) Regulations 2023 (S.I. No. 404 of 2023).

Councillor Helen Meyer noted that the new regulations had not made any provisions in relation to adoptive leave. It was agreed to revert to the Dept. to seek clarification in respect of same.

8 Notice of Question

- 8.1 Submitted by Councillor Damien O'Reilly

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“How much is owed to Meath County Council in rent arrears for its residential properties in tabular format per year, for the last three years?”

Response

The table below details the rent arrears as per the Annual Financial Statements for the years 2022, 2021 and 2020.

	2022	2021	2020
Rent arrears	2,289,753	1,666,052	1,609,582
% collected	86%	89%	88%

Although the value of arrears for 2022 has increased Meath’s percentage collection rate of 86% is in line with the national average. A programme of work has been implemented to address the housing rent arrears 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 Wayne Harding

“Can I ask for an up to date progress report on the Boyne Greenway?”

Response

Detailed work has been ongoing for a considerable time on finalising the preferred option for the Boyne Greenway and Navigation Scheme. The announcement of a preferred option has been delayed and further work and consultations with stakeholders are being undertaken to inform the decision-making process. This further work is principally concerned with more accurately defining the significance of flooding risk. This work is now largely completed, however, there are a number of other tasks remaining before the preferred option will be announced, which I anticipate will be in Q4 2023. Following this announcement there will be engagement with the public and then the preliminary design

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and environmental studies/reports for the preferred option will be developed with a view to bringing an application forward for statutory planning approval.

Noted by the Elected Members

8.3 Submitted by Councillor Alan Tobin

“In respect of the provisions of the Councils Parks Bye Laws 2014 relating to restricted breeds of dog and no dogs allowed, how many inspections have taken place in parks and playgrounds under the Councils control and how many enforcement proceedings have been initiated in 2023 under these bye-laws?”

Response

The Councils Parks Bye Laws 2014 regulating the use and enjoyment of Parks, Playgrounds, Playing Pitches and Multi Use Games Areas under its control provides:

“A person shall not cause or allow any dangerous dog, as defined in the Control of Dogs (Restriction of certain dogs) Regulations, 1991 and 1998 or any subsequent amending Regulations or Act, in their charge to enter or remain in the park unless such dog is kept on a strong lead (only up to 2 metres long) by a person over 16 years of age who is capable of controlling them. The dog/s must be securely muzzled and no person shall, in any portion of the park where a notice prohibiting the admission of dogs, (other than guide dogs or dogs used by members of An Garda Síochána in the course of their duties) is exhibited, cause or allow any dog in their charge to enter or remain there.”

The Council currently has one full time Dog Warden and three further Wardens, two of whom combine dog control and litter/waste management duties, and while their dog control related duties are primarily taken up with responding to complaints from members of the public including complaints about incidents in the parks and playgrounds, they also as time permits, carry out patrols and spots checks in these locations and generally in areas which are subject to the greatest footfall.

The Council has not initiated any enforcement proceedings to date in 2023 on foot of such patrols, but Wardens generally advise dog owners of their responsibilities and point to the provisions of the Bye Laws and find in the majority of cases that this approach works.

As previously advised in response to recent dog control notice of motions/questions, 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 dangerous breeds, fines, the provision of dog wardens, microchipping,

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promoting responsible dog ownership and licences and the Council await the outcomes from this process.

Councillor Alan Tobin expressed his disappointment with the response.

The response was noted by the Elected Members

8.4 Submitted by Councillor Alan Lawes

“How long does it take the Council to assess and then to accommodate homeless people after they first make contact?”

Response

The time taken to assess and then accommodate a person experiencing homelessness depends on the complexity of the individual case and the availability of suitable accommodation.

In the more complex cases the Council’s Homeless Settlement team is required to engage with other state agencies such as TUSLA, the HSE, the Probation Service or the Prison Service which will impact on the time required to achieve a placement. The availability of accommodation for the more complex cases is also a factor as not all providers will have the capability to handle such cases.

In conclusion the length of time from initial contact to placement in accommodation varies considerably depending on the individual circumstances of each case.

The response was noted by the Elected Members

8.5 Submitted by Councillor Trevor Golden

“Can we have an update on the HVO trial please?”

Response

In April 2024, Meath County Council commenced a trial with 10 vehicles of various sizes, ranging from a small van up to a large truck. During this trial there were no issues reported with any of the vehicles and the feedback from the drivers shows no difference to driving performance or fuel usage. By the start of August, 5,827 litres of HVO had been used, resulting in a reduction of CO₂ of 16,222kg which is the equivalent to an 88% reduction in CO₂ emissions.

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Odometer readings are being used for each vehicle on the trial to generate the MPG for each vehicle to assess the efficiency of each vehicle and compare against other similar vehicles.

As part of the trial, 9,000 litres of HVO was ordered and this is expected to be fully utilised by mid to late September. Following the completion of the trial, the costs and performance will be assessed.

Further clarification was sought by **Councillor Alan Lawes**, and response provided by Mr. Dara McGowan.

The response was noted by the Elected Members

9 Notice of Motion

An Cathaoirleach noted that Councillor Damien O'Reilly had requested that Item 10.2 of the Agenda be dealt with first. In accordance with Item 11.3 of the Standing Orders this was agreed unanimously by the Elected Members present and voting.

Councillor Damien O'Reilly introduced the motion noting that the self-build scheme was a good scheme and should be extended to those who opt to self-build. The motion proposed by **Councillor Damien O'Reilly** and seconded by **Councillor Tommy Reilly** was agreed.

9.1 Submitted by Councillor Edward Fennessy

"To call on Meath County Council to install the Tier Nextbike rental scheme on the Boyne to Lakelands Greenway without delay."

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

The recently launched Bike Rental Scheme for Navan is a 12-month pilot project which seeks to promote and encourage the uptake in active travel in and around the town of Navan. The scheme has been met with great enthusiasm to date, and uptake and usage levels have to date exceeded the operators' expectations for the initial period of its introduction.

The pilot scheme limits the extents of the bike hire operation to the town boundaries, as the logistics involved in the delivery and operation of a viable bike rental scheme extended further, to include a greenway, would require a significantly greater level of resources to efficiently operate and maintain. The current boundaries do not unfortunately encompass the new Boyne to Lakelands Greenway.

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Meath County Council intends to undertake a review of the operation and viability of the current scheme prior to the expiry of the 12-month pilot.

Councillor Edward Fennessy introduced the motion and noted the success of the Tierbike Scheme in Navan to date. There were interventions from **Councillors Paddy Meade; Alan Tobin; Pdraig Fitzsimons** and **Yemi Adenuga**. There were calls for a county-wide scheme and some concern was expressed that this could lead to calls for the scheme to be extended to other areas including parks. Responses to queries raised were provided by Mr. Martin Murray.

The motion proposed by **Councillor Edward Fennessy** and seconded by **Councillor Paddy Meade** was agreed.

9.2 Submitted by Councillor Michael Gallagher

“That Meath County Council, in conjunction with the Office of Public Works and any other relevant agencies, investigate and find solutions to areas that are at high risk to flooding within the County and that priority is given to areas where residents are at risk of flooding”.

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

The Office of Public Works (OPW) is the national authority for the implementation of the EU Floods Directive and are the lead agency for flood risk management in Ireland.

In 2018 the OPW completed the largest study of flood risk ever undertaken by the State to establish those communities that are at risk from significant flood events -this provided the roadmap for the delivery of Government investment in flood relief schemes and €1.3 billion has been committed over the lifetime of the National Development Plan to 2030 to protect approximately 23,000 properties in threatened communities from river and coastal flood risk.

This study known as the Catchment Flood Risk Management Programme (CFRAM) resulted in the production of indicative flood maps and catchment-based Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) and involved extensive public consultation and engagement with local authorities, the Environmental Protection Agency and other relevant departments and bodies in accordance with national flood policy and the EU Floods Directive.

Meath County Council work closely with the OPW when they are designing and delivering major flood relief schemes and examples being such schemes in Ashbourne and Northlands, Bettystown. In addition, the OPW also provide funding to Local Authorities under Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Schemes and Meath County

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Council has identified a number of projects and have ongoing discussions with the OPW about future projects that can be delivered from this funding stream.

Councillor Michael Gallagher introduced the motion noting the risks of flooding in some parts of the county.

Councillor Sharon Tolan proposed an amendment which was seconded by **Councillor Tom Behan** as follows:

“That Meath County Council, in conjunction with the Office of Public Works and any other relevant agencies, investigate and find solutions to areas that are at high risk to flooding within the County and that priority is given to Bettystown where residents continue to be at risk”

There were interventions on the proposed amendment from **Councillors Paddy Meade; Alan Tobin; Wayne Harding; Brian Fitzgerald; Tom Behan** and **Gillian Toole**. There were concerns raised that the motion should not become parochial and that any flood mitigation works should be undertaken on a county-wide risk basis.

The amended motion fell on a show of hands vote with 6 votes in favour and 15 against.

The motion proposed by **Councillor Michael Gallagher** and seconded by **Councillor Edward Fennessy** was agreed.

9.3 Submitted by Councillor Alan Lawes

“I am calling on Meath County Council to assess and accommodate homeless people within 48 hours of them first making contact.”

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

The time taken to assess and then accommodate a person experiencing homelessness depends on the complexity of the individual case and the availability of suitable accommodation.

In the more complex cases the Council’s Homeless Settlement team is required to engage with other state agencies such as TUSLA, the HSE, the Probation Service or the Prison Service which will impact on the time required to achieve a placement. The availability of accommodation for the more complex cases is also a factor as not all providers will have the capability to handle such cases.

While the Settlement Team works to provide accommodation solutions as quickly as possible for those households in need of assistance, it is not practicable, given the complexities involved, to impose an arbitrary 48-hour deadline on this process.

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Councillor Alan Lawes introduced the motion noting that a minimum standard for assessing and accommodating homeless people should be set at 48 hours. There were interventions from **Councillors Sarah Reilly; Alan Tobin** and **Emer Tóibín**. Concerns were raised on the feasibility of implementing the motion including the complexities of homeless cases and the difficulties in sourcing emergency accommodation.

Councillor Brian Fitzgerald proposed an amendment which was seconded by **Councillor Tommy Reilly** as follows:

“To call on Meath County Council to make every effort to assess and accommodate homeless people within 48 hours of them first making contact”

Councillors Gillian Toole and **Alan Lawes** supported the amended motion.

On the proposal of **Councillor Alan Lawes** and seconded by **Councillor Edward Fennessy** the motion, as amended, was agreed.

10 General Interest Motions

- 10.1 Submitted by Councillor Emer Tóibín and Councillor Gillian Toole (Deferred from June and July Council Meetings)

“That Meath County Council calls on the government to create a fair, just and humane asylum application process that helps those in need and identifies those who falsely apply for asylum.”

The motion was introduced by **Councillor Gillian Toole**. **Councillor Emer Tóibín** supported the motion.

Councillor Yemi Adenuga proposed an amendment which was seconded by **Councillor Maria Murphy** as follows:

“The Meath County Council calls on the Government to review, with a view to improving, the current asylum application process in order to better deal with asylum applicants in Ireland.”

There were interventions on the amended motion from **Councillors Aisling Dempsey; Noel French; Alan Lawes; Alan Tobin; Emer Tóibín** and **Gillian Toole**.

On the proposal of **Councillor Gillian Toole** and seconded by **Councillor Emer Tóibín**, the motion, as amended, was agreed.

- 10.2 Submitted by Councillor Damien O'Reilly

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“I call on Meath County Council to write to Darragh O'Brien TD - Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to request his department to extend the First Home Scheme for self-build one off rural homes.”

See Section 9 above.

10.3 Submitted by Councillor Tom Behan

“That Meath County Council support the reintroduction of the 9% Vat rate for food related businesses and that they write to the Minister for Finance calling on him to extend the 9% vat rate to the end of 2024.”

It was agreed that Motions 10.3 and 10.4 would be considered together.

An Cathaoirleach Councillor Tommy Reilly left the meeting at 5.08pm and the **Leas-Chathaoirleach, Councillor Paul McCabe** presided in his absence.

Councillor Tom Behan introduced the motion. He outlined the average duration of a tourist visit and noted that the majority of spending was on accommodation and dining expenses. He noted that any savings in VAT would be passed onto the consumer.

There were interventions from **Councillors Noel French; Alan Tobin; Wayne Harding; Gerry O'Connor; Nick Killian; Alan Lawes; Padraig Fitzsimons** and **Maria Murphy**. The current difficulties for the hospitality sector were noted.

The motion proposed by **Councillor Tom Behan** and seconded by **Councillor Wayne Harding** was agreed on a show of hands vote with 19 in favour and one against.

10.4 Submitted by Councillor Noel French

“That Meath County Council call on the Minister for Finance to reintroduce the 9% vat rate for food related hospitality businesses.”

The motion proposed by **Councillor Noel French** and seconded by **Councillor Alan Tobin** was agreed in accordance with Item 10.3 above.

10.5 Submitted by Councillor Helen Meyer

“That Meath County Council write to Darragh O'Brien TD, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to request that he increase the maximum grant payable for homes older than 12 months, under the Housing Adaptation Grant for people with

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disabilities from €30,000 to €40,000 and to increase the central funding of €83 million for Housing Adaptation Grants for people with a disability to €150 million in 2024.”

An Cathaoirleach, Councillor Tommy Reilly returned at 5.18pm and presided over the meeting.

Councillor Helen Meyer introduced the motion and noted that due to increased construction costs the current maximum grant was insufficient. There were interventions from **Councillors Sarah Reilly** and **Nick Killian**. The benefits of the scheme and its administration locally were commended.

The motion proposed by **Councillor Helen Meyer** and seconded by **Councillor Edward Fennessy** was agreed.

10.6 Submitted by Councillor Sharon Tolan

“To call on the Minister for Higher and Further Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD to reform the method by which SOLAS currently allocate college placements to apprentices, and to introduce a system that will ensure greater flexibility for apprentices when offered a placement that may not suit their needs.”

Councillor Sharon Tolan introduced the motion and noted the increased numbers availing of apprenticeship schemes across a myriad of trades. She further noted that the scheme should take cognisance of personal costs, as well as accommodation costs when allocating college placements. **Councillor Alan Tobin** acknowledged the success of the apprenticeship model.

The motion proposed by **Councillor Sharon Tolan** and seconded by **Councillor Gerry O’Connor** was agreed.

10.7 Submitted by Councillor Maria Murphy

“That Meath County Council calls on the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage Darragh O’Brien to resolve the issue caused whereby some financial institutions are refusing to approve mortgages to applicants for properties where there is a 2nd charge on the property.

Councillor Maria Murphy introduced the motion and noted that some financial institutions were refusing mortgage applicants on the basis that there was a second charge on the property. There were interventions from **Councillors Gerry O’Connor; Mike Bray** and **Gillian Toole**. Clarifications were provided by Mr. Barry Lynch.

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Councillor Maria Murphy proposed an amendment which was seconded by **Councillor Gerry O'Connor** as follows:

“We call on Meath County Council to resolve the issue caused whereby some financial institutions are refusing to approve mortgages to applicants for properties where there is a 2nd charge on the property.”

The motion proposed by **Councillor Maria Murphy**, seconded by **Councillor Gerry O'Connor**, as amended, was agreed.

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 Maria Murphy proposed that the Council write to the toll operators on the M1 and N3 to review the basket sizes at the toll booths. The proposal was seconded by **Councillor Gerry O'Connor**.

The meeting concluded at 5.40pm