

Minutes of online information meeting of Leitrim County Council held on Tuesday, 5 May 2020 via Zoom online platform

Members Present: Councillor Enda McGloin (Cathaoirleach)
Councillor Sean McGowan
Councillor Brendan Barry
Councillor Frank Dolan
Councillor Gerry Dolan
Councillor Caillian Ellis
Councillor Pdraig Fallon
Councillor Paddy Farrell
Councillor Des Guckian
Councillor Felim Gurn
Councillor Sean McDermott
Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire
Councillor Thomas Mulligan
Councillor Paddy O'Rourke
Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn
Councillor Enda Stenson
Councillor Mary Bohan

Apologies: Councillor Justin Warnock

Officials Present: Lar Power, Chief Executive
Joseph Gilhooly, Director of Services, Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructural Services
Vincent Dwyer, Head of Finance, Finance, Water, Environment, Climate Action and Cultural Services
Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services, Community and Cultural Services
Kieran Brett, Meetings Administrator
Kathleen Ellis, Assistant Staff Officer

At the outset of the meeting Cllr Enda McGloin, Cathaoirleach welcomed the Members, Executive and the Media to the online information meeting and he went through the guidelines in relation to the online information meeting.

MM.57.20 To receive update from Mr Lar Power, Chief Executive in relation to the current situation regarding the COVID 19 National Emergency

Mr Lar Power, Chief Executive presented an update to the Members on the current situation regarding the COVID 19 National Emergency and the measures introduced by Leitrim County Council in response to the National Emergency.

Mr Power outlined that the Corporate Policy Group had met on the 24th April 2020 to

consider arrangements for convening Council Meetings and Municipal District Meetings during the Covid 19 Pandemic

Mr Power outlined that the Corporate Policy Group took on board the Departments advice that in making arrangements for Council meetings, Councils should take account of the public health measures introduced by Government, on the advice of the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE), to stem the spread of the COVID-19 virus and the CPG noted the Departments view that meetings convened for a statutory purpose under the Act should be held in a physical place, in so far as practicable, the principal Council Offices. Mr Power said it is not possible to facilitate a full meeting of Council in our Council Chamber at this time due to social distancing requirements.

Mr Power advised that formal decisions which are required under statute at either plenary or municipal level will not be included on agenda for meetings which are held incorporeally on online platforms. In this context and having reviewed statutory business required to be dealt with at this time, the only item arising relates to the setting of dates and venue for the annual meeting of the Council and the Municipal Districts and the rescheduling of the July plenary meeting. In this regard it has been agreed that 4 short meetings will be held on Tuesday 2nd June 2020 at 10 a.m. in the Council Chamber for the purpose of agreeing dates and venue for the Annual Council Meeting, Annual Municipal District meetings and July ordinary Council Meeting and any Municipal District meeting if necessary. These meetings will only be for a duration of 15 minutes. The attendance at the meeting will be restricted to 9 members including the Cathaoirleach and the 3 Municipal District Chairs and ensuring equal representation from the 3 Municipal Districts and cross party/grouping representation.

Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services, Community and Cultural Services gave an overview of the options considered by the CPG in relation to the restricted attendance of 9 members at the meeting on the 2nd June 2020.

Ms Quinn said in line with the normal practice of holding the annual meeting on the last Friday of June, it is anticipated that all 4 annual meetings will be held on Friday 26th June 2020 subject to formal resolution at meetings 2nd June 2020.

Mr Power outlined it has also been proposed by the CPG and subject to resolution at meeting on 2nd June that the ordinary meeting of the Council scheduled for 6th July will be held on the same day as the annual meeting i.e. 26th June to deal with statutory matters arising at that time.

Mr Power said this year is going to be a challenging year from a financial perspective and the current restrictions have resulted in increased expenditure in certain areas and in other functional areas costs have not arisen due to restricted activity.

Mr Power advised the members that it is not possible or feasible for a local authority to implement any measure in relation to Commercial Rates. The rates each year in Leitrim are worth approximately €6 million and Leitrim County Council are already short a sizable amount of that total. Measures to help rate payers can only be introduced by the

Government. The shortfall in rates is going to have significant repercussions for Leitrim which is likely to result in cuts in services such as roads, housing maintenance and tourism promotion, if the Government isn't prepared to make up the shortfall. Mr Power acknowledged the real difficulties that businesses are going through and acknowledged that even though some businesses are open there is a significant reduction in their turnover. Mr Power outlined that the Government needs to lead the way on assisting ratepayers and called on the Members to contact their respective party TD's to ensure the issue of rates is dealt with in a fair manner.

Mr Power paid tribute to Leitrim Community Response Forum established to assist citizens during Covid 19 representing the excellent community spirit in the county.

Mr Power informed the meeting that staff are consulting with contractors in relation to contracts and it is hoped that Leitrim County Council's roadworks programme would be able to restart on the 18th of May, when phase 1 of the easing of Covid restrictions is scheduled. Once the restrictions are lifted nationally Leitrim County Council will be implementing induction training for staff.

Mr Power paid tribute to the Government on the good job they are doing in containing this Pandemic and to the Cathaoirleach and Elected Members of Leitrim County Council for all their help and assistance during this pandemic

Proposed by Councillor Mary Bohan seconded by Councillor Sean McDermott AND UNANIMOUSLY AGREED;

"That a Meeting of Leitrim County Council be held on Tuesday, 2nd June 2020 at 11.00 am in the Council Chamber, Aras an Chontae, Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim for the purpose of agreeing a date and venue for the Annual Council Meeting, Annual Municipal District meetings and July ordinary Council Meeting attendance is restricted to 9 members including the Cathaoirleach and the 3 Municipal District Chairs and ensuring equal representation from the 3 Municipal Districts and cross party/grouping representation due to social distancing requirements. The attendance of the following Members was agreed.

Carrick-on-Shannon Municipal District

Cllr Finola Armstrong McGuire, FG (Cathaoirleach Carrick-on-Shannon MD)

Cllr Sean McGowan, FF

Cllr. Des Guckian, Non-Party

Ballinamore Municipal District

Cllr. Paddy O'Rourke, FF (Cathaoirleach, Ballinamore MD)

Cllr. Enda McGloin, FG (Cathaoirleach Leitrim County Council)

Cllr. Gerry Dolan, Non-Party

Manorhamilton Municipal District

Cllr. Mary Bohan, FF (Cathaoirleach, Manorhamilton MD)

Cllr Frank Dolan, FG

Cllr. Pdraig Fallon, SF"

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Enda McGloin thanked Mr Lar Power for his presentation and invited any questions/comments from the Members.

The following items were raised:-

The Members paid tribute to Mr Lar Power, Chief Executive, the Management Team, Staff of Leitrim County Council, frontline staff, Government, HSE, CMO and Community groups for their efforts during the current Pandemic.

Cllr Caillian Ellis proposed that Leitrim County Council call on Bank of Ireland to reinstate the Lodgement service in their local branches in Drumshanbo and Mohill and to seek clarification that the Bank of Ireland will reopen their branches when the pandemic is over. This was supported by Cllr Thomas Mulligan who called for a staffing presence of at least one day a week in these banks.

Cllr Felim Gurn queried as to when the outdoor crews will be back at work and he referred to the potholes on the N16 which were brought to his attention by HSE Staff.

Councillor Des Guckian paid tribute to frontline staff and to good neighbours. Councillor Des Guckian said loans for businesses at 4.5% is totally excessive and faster broadband is needed throughout Leitrim right now. Councillor Des Guckian proposed that interest rates on loans for businesses should be 1%. Members supported this.

Councillor Sean McGowan said the Government will have to address issues in relation to rates as many businesses will not reopen and it is important to lobby our TD's and our new Government as we have to adopt to a new reality and way of living.

Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn paid tribute to the frontline workers, neighbours and highlighted the importance of the strong community spirit that exists.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke sought clarification on the roadworks programme for 2020; if funds are not expended this year will the funds be carried over to next year and the works completed then. Cllr O'Rourke commended voluntary bodies and also our local food producers.

Councillor Enda Stenson referred to the issue of poor broadband and sought clarification on contract deadlines for contractors.

Councillor Padraig Fallon proposed that a letter issue to the Minister for Finance and An Taoiseach in relation to lending rates offered by financial institutions to small medium enterprises in these exceptional times. Councillor Fallon acknowledged the micro finance loans available and he stated that an anomaly exists in the scheme. Councillor Padraig Fallon said when pubs and restaurants open up again it will be very hard to implement social distancing guidelines and significant costs will be involved in doing, Cllr Fallon said central funding will be needed to bail out Local Authorities.

Cllr Padraig Fallon stressed that Leitrim County Council cannot go over on expenditure and paid tribute to the prudent management of the Local Authorities finances. He stated that

exceptional measures should not be ruled out at this time and that the financial position should be kept under review. Cllr Fallon said he would like to see members back meeting in the forum that they are used to and this could be easily done at the Municipal District level.

Councillor Sean McDermott sought an update on the waste collection charges issue that was raised at the 2nd March 2020 Council meeting.

Councillor Thomas Mulligan called for the meeting on the 2nd June 2020 to be set up online like this meeting and he acknowledged that Members would not be able to vote but could observe.

Councillor Gerry Dolan paid tribute to the Chief Executive, staff of Leitrim County Council, HSE and frontline staff.

Councillor Paddy Farrell queried as to when the public realm works in Carrick-on-Shannon will be carried out. Cllr Farrell called for the Carbon Tax increases to be waived at this time when there is a lot of expenses and hardship on elderly people at this time.

Councillor Brendan Barry paid tribute to Mr Lar Power, Staff of Leitrim County Council, Frontline staff, emergency staff and all who are complying with the restrictions. Councillor Brendan Barry expressed his concern about Commercial Rates for the Local Authority and the uncertainty for all. Cllr Barry proposed that a letter issue to the Government to seek funding and financial certainty to Leitrim County Council that the Local Authority will be sure of its income and give certainty to businesses opening up as soon as possible.

Mr Lar Power, Chief Executive responded to the above as follows

- A letter will issue to the Bank of Ireland as agreed by members
- Roadworkers will be back on the 18th May for induction training assuming phase 1 of lifting of restrictions comes into effect then.
- 4.5% interest Rate on business loans is a decision made by the Government.
- Carryover of the road works programme - the funding of this work will need to be considered in the context of overall funding of the Local Authority.
- Deadlines in relation to existing contracts between that Leitrim County Council and contractors will be extended.
- Government published details on website on Saturday last in relation to announcement of support for businesses. A letter, as agreed by members, will issue to the government seeking advice on how this is to be administrated and outlining that an anomaly exists.
- Leitrim County Council would be stepping out of sync with the Government guidelines if meetings were to revert back to before the pandemic restrictions are lifted and would advise against this.
- The meeting on the 2nd June 2020 is to have a quorum of 3 members to set the date, time and venue for the Annual Meeting. It can be facilitated that Members can attend through an online platform as an observer only but members doing so will not have a voting right.
- Meetings will be kept under review. Putting social distancing measures in place will incur additional expenditure.

- Leitrim County Council will manage the financial situation without borrowing, expenditure will be carefully managed so as not to worsen the situation, as this may affect the county for many years.
- Contractors must comply with Government restrictions currently and must also comply with guidelines issued for the 18th May 2020 re-opening, if the Department of Health is happy to lift the restrictions.
- A letter will issue to the Government in regard to Carbon tax on the agreement by the members.

Mr Vincent Dwyer responded to Cllr Sean McDermott and said the issue was highlighted with Barna Waste and he intended to meet with them and revert back to Members with an update in this regard.

MM.58.20 Motion from Councillor Des Guckian:

"A government initiative called Public Service Temporary Assignment Scheme : Covid 19 Crisis

At the 5th May 2020 Skype Meeting, I will ask Mr Power CEO to explain, in full, how he implemented the above Government directive, on the staff at Leitrim Council. Particularly, what criteria were used in deciding which staff members would be nominated for transfer to other branches of the Public Service."

Report by Director of Services, Housing and Community, Corporate Services, Cultural and Emergency Services

"While staffing matters are a matter for the Chief Executive and do not come within the Reserved Functions of the Elected Members, the following is the position in relation to the Temporary Assignment Scheme.

As part of the Government's response to the COVID-19 crisis, a Temporary Assignment Scheme was developed to facilitate the temporary transfer of staff from all Departments and sectors, including the Local Government sector, to ensure the continuity of essential services to the public over the coming weeks and months. The primary focus in the Civil and Public Service is to support the health and wellbeing of all our citizens and to achieve this, and to keep delivering essential services to society, the Government has determined that we need to come together and work as a unified public service.

All Civil and Public Service bodies are required to identify employees who are deemed to be releasable in the context of their business continuity plan. All Civil and Public Service organisations are included in the scheme and may offer or request temporary assignees. Employees at all grades and work patterns/arrangements across the Public Service are included in the scheme.

The process nationally requires that each organisation's senior management team determine which services are currently essential to critical business continuity in the context of its organisational Business Continuity Plan, and to identify employees (including contingency for COVID-19 illness/back up) required to manage the delivery of these

services. The HR Department works with the senior leadership team to identify employees for release and will contact the employees in question to advise them of the process that should be followed. Support and assistance is provided by the HR Department.

The continuation of our own essential services in accordance with the nationally identified list for the sector and our Business Continuity Plan obviously remains our priority. We are required however to identify staff working in roles that have not been deemed essential at this particular time or where there are limited opportunities for remote working in an employee's current role and are releasable for temporary assignment to other critical public services. Being identified as releasable simply means that during the present crisis, and the impact that this has had on the delivery of some of our normal services, we are in a position to temporarily release those staff to critical areas across the wider public service which are urgently needed to support the health and wellbeing of all our citizens.

Staff identified as releasable receive a notification from the HR Department which includes guidance and a link to the online Public Appointments Service (PAS) questionnaire for completion. Staff in the HR Department are available to provide support and will complete the questionnaire on behalf of a staff member as required. The questionnaire includes questions about location choice, current job category, experience and skills. On completion of the questionnaire, the staff member's details are uploaded to the scheme database held by PAS. Public bodies who are seeking resources to support the delivery of essential services will also provide PAS with a list of roles and skills they require. The automated system will match the temporary assignee with the required role identified by location preference(s), job category, experience and skills. When a match is established, the staff member will receive an email outlining details of the temporary manager, organisation and location they are being assigned to. The temporary manager will contact the staff member directly regarding the details of the assignment.

Staff who have registered for the temporary assignment scheme may not be called immediately or, potentially, at all. In this regard all staff are required to continue to undertake any work assigned as normal and/or continue to work remotely and they must remain actively available for work, which may also include assignment to another role within Leitrim County Council as necessary. In this context Line Managers maintain ongoing contact with staff members pending any assignment being allocated to them under this scheme.

Assigned staff will remain employees of Leitrim County Council and will continue to be paid directly by us – direct management and supervision will be provided by the temporary Line Manager in the new organisation for the duration of any temporary assignment. Appropriate training and support will also be provided by the new organisation.

We fully appreciate that it may be daunting for a staff member to be temporarily assigned to another organisation. This however is an exceptional response to an exceptional situation which requires that we would work as a unified public service for the greater public good. Support throughout the process is available through Line Managers and the HR department and the ongoing cooperation and flexibility of staff in responding to this situation is acknowledged and very much appreciated."

Councillor Des Guckian expressed his satisfaction with this meeting taking place.

He expressed concern that some local authority employees may be temporarily transferred to other duties which may hamper other services in the county and said the proposal was open ended and he can't see much of an option available to Chief Executives in this regard but to enforce it and he didn't believe this measure would be temporary. Cllr Guckian said that this is an excuse to close down Leitrim County Council and he called on the support of all Local Authorities to stand with Leitrim County Council on this issue.

Mr Lar Power, Chief Executive said we are currently in a National Crisis and the continuation of our own essential services in accordance with the nationally identified list for the sector and our Business Continuity Plan remains our priority. The HSE and the Department of Social Protection have some capacity issues and wrote to the Chief Executive, as this is an executive function, to identify staff working in roles that have not been deemed essential at this particular time or where there are limited opportunities for remote working in an employee's current role and are releasable for temporary assignment to other critical public services. Being identified as releasable means that during the present crisis, and noting the impact that this has had on the delivery of some of our normal services, we are in a position to temporarily release those staff to critical areas across the wider public service which are urgently needed to support the health and wellbeing of all our citizens.

Cllr Des Guckian said he did not trust this Government or a new Government on this issue and feared that if staff are redeployed to other government services, the staff may not be returned very quickly to the local authority.

MM.59.20 Motion from Councillor Pdraig Fallon:

"I ask Leitrim County Council what specific measures are in place to ensure that there are adequate facilities for the disposal of PPE such as gowns, gloves, masks, wipes, googles etc where a case or suspected case of Coronavirus may arise in the home"

Report by Head of Finance & Water Services

"Disposal of such waste should be managed in accordance with HSE guidelines, which are contained in the Covid-19 public information booklet which was sent to every household. The simple guidelines to follow are as follows:

- Put all your rubbish (waste), including an items which would normally be placed in the recycle bin or food waste bin, in a bin bag & tie when about two thirds full
- Put this bin bag into a second bin bag & a tie a knot
- Store the bag somewhere safe for 3 days & then put the bag into your wheelie bin for collection

Also follow the guidelines in leaving out bins for Waste Collection Contractor which are as follows:

- Bins to be presented on the evening before scheduled collection date
- Handles of bins to be cleaned with disinfectant where possible before and after presentation.
- Wipes, Cloths, gloves etc used for cleaning can be placed in your general waste bin.

For further information, Please view website for guideline details. www.mywaste.ie and www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus"

Councillor Pádraig Fallon said he was aware of the guidelines online from HSE and he spoke with the Environment Section in HSE and the Local Authority. Cllr Fallon outlined he had received calls from 2 individuals where Refuse Contractors said they could not take waste if there was a case or suspected case of Coronavirus at home.

Councillor Fallon proposed that the guidelines as set out in the reply be published on the Leitrim County Council website and in the local media.

Mr Vincent Dwyer, Head of Finance, Water, Environment, Climate Action and Emergency Services advised the disposal of such waste should be managed in accordance with HSE guidelines, which are contained in the Covid-19 public information booklet which was sent to every household. He has contacted Barna Waste and accepts such waste will be taken by Barna Waste as set out in the HSE guidelines. He will get same published by Barna Waste and Leitrim County Council.

Councillor Pádraig Fallon acknowledged that there was confusion about this at the beginning of the pandemic.

MM.60.20 Motion from Councillor Felim Gurn:

"When the restrictions are lifted the tourism sector in Ireland is going to need more financial help from the Government. I see that one out of 10 restaurants may survive from restrictions arising from Coronavirus as there is not enough financial support for businesses. If we look at our main streets over the years with the closing of banks, post offices, shops and now pubs and restaurants, we are going to have a tough time reviving our main streets and that this issue should be prioritised at Government levels and to see what financial help there is for rural towns and villages."

Report by Director of Services for Economic Development, Planning, Environment and Transportation.

"While COVID19 has impacted on all sectors of the economy, Tourism in particular has been significantly impacted. In a County such as Leitrim this is significant, as our towns have a high percentage of hospitality type businesses. The Government have launched a number of measures to support all industries, including Tourism, from wage subsidies through to Business Continuity Vouchers which are available through the Local Enterprise Office. To

date the Local Enterprise Office has experienced much demand from the Tourism sector for these supports, but would expect that further support measures will be launched, when a recovery roadmap has been agreed. The Tourism trade have highlighted potential measures such as staycation vouchers, reduction in VAT rates and access to further grants, all of which would be welcome."

Councillor Felim Gurn welcomed the announcement of €6 billion support to businesses and acknowledged when the restrictions are lifted the tourism sector in Ireland is going to need more financial help from the Government Our towns and villages are now ghost towns and it will be hard to bring them back to life.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Services, Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructural Services said Leitrim is very dependent on the tourism sector. The Government have launched a number of measures to support all industries, including Tourism, from wage subsidies through to Business Continuity Vouchers which are available through the Local Enterprise Office. To date the Local Enterprise Office has experienced much demand from the Tourism sector for these supports, but would expect that further support measures will be launched, when a recovery roadmap has been agreed.

MM.61.20 Motion from Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire & Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn:

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Enda McGloin proposed that Motion No 5 in the name of Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire and Motion No 8 in the name of Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn be taken concurrently as they all relate to commercial rates. This was agreed by the Members.

Motion from Councillor Finola Armstrong-McGuire;

"I ask what measures will Leitrim County Council Finance Dept be putting in place for the businesses of Leitrim now closed or trading with a much reduced income due to guidelines being adhered to during the Covid19 pandemic. Business income has been decimated for 2020. What calculations have been made by the Finance Department regarding this income. What percentage of businesses in the county have closed since mid March? What percentage have remained trading? What types of response has the recent letter inviting conversations with staff in Finance re outstanding Rates moiety due received?"

Report by Head of Finance & Water Services

"Leitrim County Council in tandem with all other Local Authorities are engaging with Central Government to highlight the concerns of local Commercial Ratepayers arising from the crisis, coupled with the projected financial impact on the provision of local services. There have been a relatively small flow of queries from Commercial Ratepayers, however it is understood by all that a national response will be necessary and expected to address the concerns of Ratepayers and the Local Authority. As you can appreciate it is difficult to quantify the current level of business activity due to the lockdown requirements on our own staff, where such inspections would not be considered an essential service. However, evidence to date would indicate that the situation is significantly more complex than simply

open versus closed as some businesses, while open, are trading within the range of 5% to well beyond 100% where demand has changed. Leitrim County Council are currently preparing financial estimates of the impact which will form part of a broader sectoral submission to Central Government in the coming days. However such projections are premature and can only become useful when based upon a Central Government framework and methodology for addressing the concerns of Ratepayers and the Local Government Sector."

Motion from Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn;

"I ask the Chief Executive if he could give myself and members here, any information he and his fellow Chief Executives may have received from Department of Housing and Local Government on any proposals or schemes to allow businesses that are currently closed due to Covid 19 to request a "rates write off" for the period they are closed or non operational? Government must ensure that none of the financial losses are carried by this or any local authority."

Report by Head of Finance & Water Services

"To date no further information or correspondence has been received from the Department, other than the initial deferral of rates until after 31st May. The situation will require a national response and the Local Government Sector continue to highlight the concerns of Ratepayers and Local Authorities in this regard to Central Government. Leitrim County Council are currently preparing financial estimates of the impact which will form part of a broader sectoral submission to Central Government in the coming days. However such projections are premature and can only become useful when based upon a Central Government framework and methodology for addressing the concerns of Ratepayers and the Local Government Sector."

Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire paid tribute to the staff of Leitrim County Council, the public for their adherence to the restrictions and she expressed her empathy for all staff who are working remotely from home and students who are studying for their leaving Certificate. Cllr Finola Armstrong McGuire outlined that when you walk down your nearest town businesses are now closed or trading with a much reduced income due to guidelines being adhered to during the Covid19 pandemic. Their income has been decimated for 2020.

Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire highlighted that there are several people in Carrick on Shannon who will make cotton face masks for a contribution and not for a profit if they are needed.

Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn sought clarification on the announcement by the Government in relation to the measures to support businesses impacted by COVID-19 and on the number of employees a small business employs in order to qualify for a grant.

Mr Vincent Dwyer, Head of Finance, Water, Environment, Climate Action and Emergency Services advised there is limited information available in relation to the measures to support businesses impacted by COVID-19. as it was only announced over the weekend. Mr Dwyer stated evidence to date would indicate that the situation is significantly more complex than

simply 'open versus closed' as some businesses, while open, are trading within the range of 5% to well beyond 100% where demand has changed. Leitrim County Council are currently preparing financial estimates of the impact which will form part of a broader sectoral submission to Central Government in the coming days. However such projections are premature and can only become useful when based upon a Central Government framework and methodology for addressing the concerns of Ratepayers and the Local Government Sector.

Mr Vincent Dwyer said if the issue of rates is not addressed nationally each local authority will have to pursue these rates and this will be very difficult. The CCMA are currently working on this issue.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly said financial supports are available for businesses who are employing up to 10 people or less.

MM.62.20 Motion from Councillor Frank Dolan:

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Frank Dolan;

"I will ask the CEO of Leitrim County Council has any indication come from the Department in relation to the funding announced last year for Manorhamilton and Ballinamore or does he think there could be a danger of it being withdrawn in the present circumstances."

Report by Director of Services for Economic Development, Planning, Environment and Transportation.

"The projects relates to approved schemes for both towns under the Rural Regeneration and Development Funds. Funding for both projects is fully committed by the Department and the Council has already commenced the implementation of both. In regard to Manorhamilton the design team is in place with topographical surveys due to commence once it is allowable in accordance with revised work restrictions while the design team has been recently selected in regard to Ballinamore."

Councillor Frank Dolan said that these schemes are very valuable to villages and small towns and he welcomed that the money is still available for these projects.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly, noted that both schemes are in a strong position and the smaller schemes are being worked on by the Department.

MM.63.20 Motion from Councillor Sean McGowan & Councillor Mary Bohan:

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Enda McGloin proposed that Motion No 7 in the name of Councillor Sean McGowan and Motion No16 in the name of Councillor Mary Bohan be taken concurrently as they relate to the road works programme. This was agreed by the Members.

Motion from Councillor Sean McGowan;

"I ask the Director of Services, Economic Development, Planning & Infrastructure Mr Joseph Gilhooly, to outline what his plans are or what steps can be put in place to start the roadworks programme in the event of an extension to the restrictions currently in place as a result of the coronavirus? We are already seven weeks behind as a result of the shutdown."

Report by Director of Services for Economic Development, Planning, Environment and Transportation.

"The Council work programmes must be aligned with and carried out in accordance with the Government imposed restrictions. The current restrictions means that only works that are essential can be carried out. Therefore the roads programme cannot be undertaken until the restrictions are revised to facilitate such works. In the meantime the Council has completed a full assessment and action plan in regard to the adjustments required to work practices in order to facilitate a resumption of construction activity. As this process is about complete the Council is well positioned to be able to commence the roads programme very soon after it is allowable in accordance with Government restriction amendments."

Motion from Councillor Mary Bohan;

"What is the position regarding funding for projects that cannot be completed on time due to the current restrictions? Will it be possible to carry over this funding perhaps even until next year? Projects such as regeneration, bridge repairs and the various road projects."

Report by Director of Services for Economic Development, Planning, Environment and Transportation.

"Leitrim County Council is party to numerous funding streams all of which have associated spend deadlines. The delivery of the vast majority of these projects have now been disrupted due to the current crisis and work restrictions. The Council is actively monitoring the deadlines and maintaining communications with the lead funders in regard to the position that relates to the individual projects. In a small number of cases extensions have been given while in most cases we are dependent on greater knowledge of the pace of adjustment to restrictions to be in a position to determine definite timescales. The Council will continue to liaise with the funding departments in order to secure as far as possible delivery of all projects on hand."

Councillor Sean McGowan acknowledged that safeguards have to be put in place for staff. He acknowledged that a lot of work has to be done on the road works programme, Public Realm works in Carrick-on-Shannon and work on the N4.

Councillor Mary Bohan paid tribute to the staff of Leitrim County Council, Chief Executive and Voluntary organisations in light of the work done during the current pandemic. Councillor Mary Bohan called on the Chief Executive to continue to liaise with the Government in order to secure, as far as possible, delivery of all projects on hand.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly said the delivery of the vast majority of these projects have now been disrupted due to the current crisis and work restrictions. The Council is actively monitoring

the deadlines and maintaining communications with the lead funders in regard to the position that relates to the individual projects and is in contact with the Department weekly.

Councillor Mary Bohan thanked the Director for the reply in this regard.

Councillor Sean McGowan sought an update on the Local Improvement Scheme.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Services, Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructural Services confirmed €250,000 funding has been approved for the Local Improvement Scheme which is the same as last year. As soon as restrictions are lifted staff will progress the scheme.

Mr Gilhooly outlined that a lot of work is going on behind the scenes in relation to 3 contracts in the Carrick-on-Shannon area and he reported that Contractors are being very co-operative.

MM.64.20 Motion from Councillor Thomas Mulligan:

"As a result of the cancellation of the national tidy towns competition, I propose that we introduce on a one off basis a county tidy towns competition. The purpose of this would be to invigorate the tidy towns groups to continue with their efforts over a shorter period. If there is an easing of the restrictions regarding Covid 19 there may well be an opportunity for groups to become active again even later in the summer. It would be important to urge and assist these voluntary groups to stay together and continue with their efforts even on a limited basis at this particularly difficult time."

Report by Director of Services for Economic Development, Planning, Environment and Transportation.

"The Council will continue to be fully supportive to the work of the tidy towns, once it is in accordance with Government restrictions. The financial support through the GMA will be made available this year and other supports will continue through our District Engineers Office as heretofore. However, the Council would be of the view that the integrity of national decisions in the current crisis must be respected and as a consequence would not be in a position to replicate the cancelled town towns competition at local level."

Councillor Thomas Mulligan acknowledged Members are aware the National Tidy Towns Competition has been cancelled due to COVID-19 and it is important Leitrim County Council do everything that can be done to encourage community groups to stay together and continue with their efforts even on a limited basis either financially or otherwise.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke supported the motion and said that there should be some internal county arrangement on a small scale put in place.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly shared the sentiment of the Elected Members of the great work carried out by community groups. The General Municipal Allocation for Tidy Towns Groups is expected to be approved in June and he expects to see good work continuing.

Cllr Thomas Mulligan sought clarification on whether projects signed up to Leader will still continue.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly, confirmed that it is expected to continue these projects.

MM.65.20 Motion from Councillor Sean McDermott & Councillor Enda Stenson:

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Enda McGloin proposed that Motion No 10 in the name of Councillor Sean McDermott and Motion No14 in the name of Councillor Enda Stenson be taken concurrently as they relate to Code of Practice for one off Waste Water Treatment Systems. This was agreed by the Members.

Motion from Councillor Sean McDermott;

"I ask is there any update on the Code of Practice for one off Waste Water Treatment systems. We are aware of meetings that were taking place with the stakeholders last year. The issue is very relevant at the moment with more people working from home because of Covid-19. As people adapt to living and working away from cities, companies realize that people can work effectively remotely. I believe this can give us an opportunity to stabilize our population and save communities and parishes in rural Leitrim."

Report by Director of Services for Economic Development, Planning, Environment and Transportation.

"Firstly as the Members are aware the EPA has completed the public consultation and consideration of the submissions received on the revision of the Code of Practice. Under Section 76 of the Environmental Protection Agency Act, 1992 (as amended), the EPA shall consult with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment and any other Minister of the Government or other person or body that appears to the Agency to be appropriate before publishing or revising a Code of Practice. The EPA issued the Code to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government on 17/04/2020 seeking their views. The EPA awaits their response before finalising the document.

In regard to the Council's efforts to secure a source of funding nationally towards the cost of the pilot scheme the route identified through the EPA research programme is being delayed due to a review being undertaken of this programme. It is therefore unlikely that this programme will be doing a call for or funding any projects this year.

However, the Council is maintaining its discussions with Department Officials with a view to continuing to pursue the identification of options in regard to the situation the County finds itself in."

Motion from Councillor Enda Stenson;

"I ask is there any progress being made, in Leitrim or nationally on the issue of zero discharge. We are entering a critical period, with the formation of a new Government imminent."

Report by Director of Services for Economic Development, Planning, Environment and Transportation.

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In regard to the Council's efforts to secure a source of funding nationally towards the cost of the pilot scheme the route identified through the EPA research programme is being delayed due to a review being undertaken of this programme. It is therefore unlikely that this programme will be doing a call for or funding any projects this year.

However, the Council is maintaining its discussions with Department Officials with a view to continuing to pursue the identification of options in regard to the situation the County finds itself in. Central to any outcomes being achieved that assist the County will indeed depend on Government policy and Ministerial support going forward."

Councillor Sean McDermott said this issue is very relevant at the moment with more people working from home because of Covid-19 and he called for a system to be put in place by the new Government. He acknowledged that Leitrim County Council has been working on this over the last 10 years. Cllr McDermott said that in his own area the population has stabilised in the last 10 years and it is important that a core population be maintained to keep schools and communities alive. Cllr McDermott stated that this issue has come up so many times and something has to be done.

Councillor Enda Stenson said that this is one of the biggest issues that the new Government will have to deal with after the pandemic.

Councillor Pádraig Fallon, Councillor Des Guckian, Councillor Felim Gurn and Councillor Gerry Dolan supported the motions.

Cathaoirleach, Cllr Enda McGloin said we will have to see what the formation of the new Government involves and the Green Party will have to form some part of it. He acknowledged people who live on a farm want to live in the area.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Services, outlined that Leitrim County Council is maintaining its discussions with Department officials to find a solution to the current problem. Government policy and ministerial support will be central to any outcomes that may be achieved that will assist the County with this issue. He encouraged people to engage with the Planning Department in this regard.

MM.66.20 Motion from Councillor Paddy O'Rourke:

"I ask the Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services, Community and Cultural Services what plans are in place regarding home repair inspections in order that some works can proceed rather than have a severe backlog later in the year."

Report by Director of Services, Housing and Community, Corporate Services, Cultural and Emergency Services

"The sudden onset of the COVID 19 pandemic resulted in restrictions having had to be imposed in relation to the repair and maintenance of the council housing stock. The original restrictions imposed were for the protection of both Leitrim County Council Housing staff and local authority tenants alike with only emergency maintenance and repair works being undertaken over the last number of weeks. In preparation for the easing of restrictions over the coming weeks, Leitrim County Council Housing section has revised and extended its Standard Operating Procedures to allow regular maintenance and repair works to recommence. The revisions undertaken recognize the risks associated with COVID 19 and will ensure the safety of both staff and tenants primarily through social distancing, more detailed risk assessment and enhanced PPE. As this process is almost complete the Council is well positioned to be able to commence routine maintenance and repairs very soon after it is allowable in accordance with Government restriction adjustments."

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke sought an update on what plans have Leitrim County Council going forward in regard to home repair inspections so that some works can proceed and is there going to be flexibility in relation to completion deadlines in light of the current restrictions in place due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Ms Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services, Community and Cultural Services confirmed having reviewed the Council safety procedures Leitrim County Council will be looking at prioritising urgent works and will have to put in place necessary work arrangements post 18th May 2020 while adhering to the Government guidelines.

MM.67.20 Motion from Councillor Brendan Barry:

"I request that the Planning Department of Leitrim County Council facilitate pre planning meetings to be done on the site of proposed development. By having the Planner, Architect and proposer onsite everyone should have a clearer understanding of outcome each person wants to achieve at the end of the meeting. This I feel could help streamline planning applications and make the process less costly on the applicant."

Report by Director of Services for Economic Development, Planning, Environment and Transportation.

"The purpose of pre planning consultations is to afford the opportunity to an applicant for planning permission, to seek advice from the Planning Authority on the proposed development. Pre planning consultations are provided for under the Planning legislation, specifically Section 247 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. For certain larger developments, pre planning consultations are mandatory before an application for planning permission can be made.

In any consultations, the Planning Authority is obliged to only advise the potential applicant concerned of the procedures involved in considering a planning application, including any requirements of the permission regulations, and shall, as far as possible, indicate the relevant objectives of the development plan which may have a bearing on the decision of the Planning Authority.

The planners in Leitrim County Council who deal with the assessment of planning applications extend this general advice by visiting the proposed site in advance of any such meeting (where possible) co-ordinated with other required site inspections, to advise on the general suitability of the site, submitted design, etc. However, it is not a requirement of the legislation to do so cognizant of the fact that any advices given are given in good faith and cannot prejudice the Planning Authority in their assessment and determination of the resultant application. When the advice that is given is acted upon, this results in better success through the planning application process. However, on many occasions, the advice is ignored which then requires issues raised at pre planning becoming the subject of a Further Information request.

The holding of such suggested meetings would therefore be outside the normal provisions of the Planning Acts in regard to preplanning and as such would undermine the fact that project design is a matter for the applicant not the Planning Authority. In addition on site matters also involve areas relevant to the District Engineers Office and Environment Department for example. Finally there is also a requirement that a record of the pre planning consultation is signed by both parties at the meeting held in the offices of the Planning Authority and the applicant leaves with a copy of the record of the meeting. This would not be possible if the meetings were held on site and as a consequence such adjustment to the pre planning process cannot be implemented."

Councillor Pádraig Fallon moved this motion as on behalf of Councillor Brendan Barry

Councillor Pádraig Fallon and Councillor Des Guckian supported the motion.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly advised members that pre planning consultations affords the planning permission applicant an opportunity, to seek advice from the Planning Authority on the proposed development. Pre planning consultations are provided for under the Planning legislation, specifically Section 247 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. All agents are very familiar with this.

MM.68.20 Motion from Councillor Justin Warnock

"Has Leitrim County Council received notification of any funding streams to deal with stress and mental health issues in the community as a result of the uncontrollable circumstances and uncertain future which the new unemployed find themselves in."

Report by Director of Services, Housing and Community, Corporate Services, Cultural and Emergency Services

"Leitrim County Council are leading the Leitrim Covid 19 Community Response Forum which involves all agencies including HSE, Health Service Executive, An Garda Síochána, Leitrim

Development Company, Leitrim GAA, An Post, Leitrim PPN, Citizens Information , Alone, Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim, Leitrim Age Friendly Alliance, Leitrim Civil Defence, Leitrim Volunteer Centre and Leitrim International Community Group. Although there is no funding specifically for the unemployed, the Forum is running a series of Wellbeing Initiatives listed below. Funding is currently available to groups who are dealing with the frontline issues in relation to Covid 19.

LEITRIM COMMUNITY WELLBEING INITIATIVES – April 2020

- Through our Community Forum it has been identified that older or vulnerable persons are anxious about, or reluctant to attend, their GP for non COVID-19 medical issues. We have engaged with local radio media – Ocean FM and Shannonside FM - and both stations have agreed to cover this topic as a news item today (Monday 20th) or tomorrow in their mid morning news shows. Both radio stations have both recorded interviews GPs’ locally here in Leitrim on the topic. The aim of the news item is to assure people that it safe to attend their GO and to advise what practises and procedures are being put in place by GP’s to keep people safe when they attend their local GP clinic.
- The local newspaper – The Leitrim Observer – has also agreed to feature this as a news story this week in their edition.
- The Community Forum are developing a well being pack for older persons in the county including information under three themes;
 - Stay Fit and Active
 - Stay Connected
 - Look after your Mental Health
- Leitrim Sports Partnership have developed a series of exercise programmes for all and are running these on social media as well as programming around mental health.
- Leitrim GAA plan to run a Stay Connected Programme around ‘Its Good to Talk GAA’
- Leitrim County Library staff has initiated online Story Telling events on social media as part of the Spring into StoryTime programme.
- The Library service are promoting the use of the Library online services such as Borrowbox for ebooks and audiobooks, RBdigital for comics and magazines, PressReader for newspapers.
- The Library Service are also working on a mini oral history project in conjunction with Leitrim County Council’s Heritage Office which involves children engaging with their grandparents.
- The Library Service are working in partnership with the Leitrim County Council’s Arts office in terms of a series of book discussions via Zoom which will engage reading groups/book clubs and other groups in the community e.g. Men’s Sheds etc around the county.
- In conjunction with the Leitrim Observer newspaper Leitrim County Council are holding a “2km picture challenge”. People are asked to take a photo of their locality or capture a scene they see from their garden or while taking some exercise. Photos will be printed in the local media and a exhibition of all photos will be held at a later date. A prize has been sponsored for the winning entry.

- Our Library services are actively promoting the services and are targeting new members to join online.
- Through contact with Bird Watch Ireland, we have prepared social media posts, asking people to engage with Bird Watch Ireland and report sightings of migratory birds in their locality. To further engage people with this we have posted posters of common garden birds and have challenged people to see how many common birds they can identify in their garden.
- The Library Service are working on the Creative Ireland project we are also working on in partnership with the Arts Office which involves working with Solas Art Gallery in Ballinamore.
- Leitrim County Council has developed a number of projects as part of its Creative Ireland programme following a call to artists entitled “Be Creative Be Healthy Be Connected”.
- Our Arts Office have facilitated a Creative Ireland project -Magnetise, lead by the artist Kate Wilson, based in Leitrim using the power of positivity and an online creative approach, It is a collaboration between six internationally based professional dance artists and two local community groups, WILL (Women Living Independently in Leitrim) and Creative Current Youth Dance.
- With Airc Damhsha Dance Club, director Edwina Guckian has produced a film featuring 41 young dancers from Leitrim, the surrounding counties and from New York dancing within 2km of their homes to The Bothy Band’s Farewell to Erin.
- Working with Active Age Groups, Mens Sheds and other isolated groups, the Leitrim County Council is coordinating readings and workshops with leading authors as a means of stimulating creativity and maintaining group contact and cohesion.
- Rabbits Riot Theatre Company are developing a virtual Sustainable Fashion Show with young people which will follow on from a series of online upcycling workshops led by designer Sonia Norris, theatre producer Treasa Nealon make-up artist Maresa McGovern.
- Artist Crona Gallagher is inviting children in Manorhamilton to ‘build their own wings’ via online workshops so they can virtually soar above todays challenging issues and gain a new and different perspective on them.
- Young members of Leitrim Down Syndrome Ireland group will be working with the artist Anna Leask to deliver a digital/photographic project that acknowledges the artistic capacity of children and young people with an intellectual disability, specifically Down Syndrome, and their family unit.
- The Dock has issued an open call to all young people in Leitrim and the surrounding areas to participate in a themed exhibition titled, NATURE NURTURE, working with established artists and curators on the work which will be exhibited in a virtual gallery of The Dock
- Also at The Dock ‘2Km, 3 Locations’ is an Art Project led by artists David Smith, Anna Leask, Wayne O Connor and Visual Arts & Education manager Laura Mahon for young people aged 14-19 involving the investigation of our 2km radii of our home settings and how we engage together at this time.
- At Leitrim Organic Centre artist Sarah Lundy is working with the Green shoots Playgroup via online workshops. The nature champion’s workshops will be made up of easy to access activities that will support children and families to create natural living art pieces focusing on what is available to them in their own garden.

- Artist Kate Wilson is working with Rossinver Community Centre through a series of online meet ups, workshops and video tutorials for 10-12yr olds in the Rossinver area taking participants on an exciting journey exploring their surrounding environment close up, as well as guiding them through practical techniques in drawing and art making."

MM.69.20 Motion from Councillor Gerry Dolan:

"I call on Leitrim County Council to have a moratorium against the proposed spraying of Insecticide Gypermethrin in any forestry in Cloone or any forestry in any of the county of Leitrim, as the companies involved admits the danger involved to people, livestock and wildlife's health."

Report by Head of Finance & Water Services

"Leitrim County Council are not the statutory Competent Authority with regards authorisation of Plant Protection Products (PPPs) and therefore have no authority to impose a moratorium against the proposed spraying of Cypermethrin in any forest within the County of Leitrim.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is the Competent Authority in Ireland with responsibility for the authorisation of plant protection products (PPPs) and regulations on their use. PPPs are assessed prior to authorisation on the basis of detailed scientific evaluations conducted in accordance with agreed EU standards and taking account of local agronomic and environmental conditions. DAFM will only authorise PPPs on the basis of robust scientific evidence indicating high levels of protection for human and animal health and the environment.

There is one cypermethrin based product authorised for use in forestry plantations. This authorisation is for the control of pine weevil (*Hylobius abietis*) in replanted forest sites, where the control of this pest is necessary to keep young tree saplings alive and to keep the forest stand viable.

The application is done by handheld or knapsack sprayers, where a small quantity of product is applied directly onto each sapling. It is carried out by hand in a very targeted manner that minimises exposure of the environment and there is no drift to adjacent properties.

Regulations require users of this product to be professionally trained and they are required to refrain from application within 20 m of watercourses."

Councillor Gerry Dolan said he had received calls from people in Leitrim regarding the spraying of Insecticide Gypermethrin and people who are using this are aware of the dangers of it and he called for a moratorium against the proposed spraying in any forestry in Cloone or any forestry in any of County Leitrim.

Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn and Councillor Des Guckian supported the motion.

Councillor Des Guckian said a lot is unknown about the spray and a scientific body should look at this and make sure it is safe and if not get rid of it.

Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn said she received calls that signage was not put in place to advise people this spraying was taking place and to warn people in this regard.

Mr Vincent Dwyer, Head of Finance, Water, Environment, Climate Action and Emergency Services advised that Leitrim County Council are not the statutory Competent Authority with regards authorisation of Plant Protection Products (and therefore have no authority to impose a moratorium against the proposed spraying of Cypermethrin in any forest within the County of Leitrim.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine) is the Competent Authority in Ireland with responsibility for the authorisation of plant protection products and regulations on their use. The Irish Forestry Trust have a derogation from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine for one Cypermethrin based product authorised for use in forestry plantations until 2021. The application is done by handheld or knapsack sprayers, where a small quantity of product is applied directly onto each sapling which minimises exposure of the environment and there is no drift to adjacent properties. Users of this product are professionally trained and they are required to refrain from application within 20 m of watercourses.

Councillor Gerry Dolan proposed a letter issue to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine seeking what regulation has prescribed on them to put out this spray and the name of the particular application applied in this forestry in Cloone.

Cathaoirleach, Cllr Enda McGloin said that this was his last official meeting as Cathaoirleach of Leitrim County Council and he hoped to hold the traditional Cathaoirleach's dinner before Christmas in Drumshanbo and a visit to the new Distillery with the permission of the new Cathaoirleach. He paid tribute and thanked all Members for all their support and co-operation since he has been elected as Cathaoirleach of Leitrim for the term 2019/2020. He thanked Lar Power, Chief Executive, Management team and all the staff of Leitrim County Council.

Mr Lar Power, Chief Executive thanked the Cathaoirleach, the Elected Members and expressed his satisfaction with the 1st virtual meeting and acknowledged it was very valuable.

Signed:

Councillor Enda McGloin
Cathaoirleach

Kieran Brett
Meetings Administrator

Dated: 26th June 2020