

Minutes of Leitrim County Council meeting held Via Ms Teams on Tuesday, 4 May 2021

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

Councillor Mary Bohan (Cathaoirleach) presiding

Apologies: Councillor Gerry Dolan

Officials Present: Lar Power, Chief Executive
Joseph Gilhooly, Director of Services, Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructural Services
Vincent Dwyer, Head of Finance, Water, Environment, Climate Action and Emergency Services
Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services, Community and Cultural Services
Samantha Healy, Senior Executive Officer Corporate Services and Housing
James Madden, Veterinary Officer
Kieran Brett, Meetings Administrator
Kathleen Ellis, Assistant Staff Officer
Shay O'Connor, Senior Engineer
Terry McGovern, Senior Engineer
Bernard Greene, Senior Planner
Johanna Daly, Senior Executive Officer Economic Development
Suzanne Duffy, Administrative Officer
Justin Fannon, Senior Executive Officer Housing Capital
Francis Gaffney, A/Senior Engineer
Marie Mulligan, Senior Executive Engineer
Sinead NiThiarnain, Staff Officer
Ursula Corcoran, Executive Engineer
Deirdre Lardner, Executive Planner
Richard Molloy, Broadband Officer

MM.64.21 Votes of Sympathy

At the outset of the meeting, Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan paid tribute to the late Pauline McKeon former Elected Member of Leitrim County Council. Councillor Enda Stenson and the Members commended the late Pauline McKeon for her contribution to public office as an Elected Member of Leitrim County Council from 1991 to 1999 and extended their sympathy to her family.

The Chief Executive on his own behalf, and on behalf of the staff, also extended his sympathy to the McKeon family.

On the **Proposal** of Councillor Mary Bohan
Seconded by Councillor Thomas Mulligan

It was **AGREED** Leitrim County Council adjourn the meeting for 15 minutes as a mark of respect to the late Pauline McKeon, recently deceased, former Elected Member of Leitrim County Council.

The Members extended a vote of sympathy to the following:

- The family of the Late Timmie Shanley R.I.P.
- Ellen McGarty & Family on the death of Packie McGarty R.I.P.

MM.65.21 Adoption of Minutes 1st March 2021

Councillor Des Guckian outlined his view that the minutes as presented were not accurate and he requested Members to review them. He stated that the minutes did not reflect the discussion that took place around his motion.

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan outlined that the minutes record decisions taken at the meeting and asked Cllr Guckian if he wished to propose an amendment to the minutes.

No proposal to amend the minutes was put forward by Cllr Guckian and he advised the Chair his comments were for noting.

Ms Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services, Community and Cultural Services clarified that the minutes are a record of decisions taken at the meeting and the drafting of minutes is the responsibility of the Meetings Administrator.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Justin Warnock
SECONDED by Cllr. Sean McDermott

It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of 1st March 2021.

MM.66.21 Disposals under Section 183(1) of the Local Government Act

MM.66.21a Consider for approval disposal of Freehold Interest in Property in the townland of Wardhouse, Tullaghan, Co. Leitrim F91 Y935

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Justin Warnock
SECONDED by Cllr Sean McDermott

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council consent to the disposal of plot of land pursuant to the provisions of Article 206 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001, Section 211 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001. Particulars of the property to which County Council proposes to dispose:

The Property: Disposal of house and adjoining site comprising circa 0.6 Acres (0.24 Hectares) in the townland of Wardhouse, Tullaghan, Co. Leitrim (Freehold Interest Registered in name of Leitrim County Council - Folio No. LM1870F (consisting of LM69L 1A and 1B).

The Person(s) to whom the property is to be disposed of: Mr. Matthew Doudican Jnr.

The Consideration proposed in respect of the disposal:

1. The Purchase Fee for the Conversion of Leasehold Interest to Freehold Interest is a nominal fee of €30.00
2. All Legal Fees associated with the Conversion of the Leasehold Interest to the Freehold Interest in this Property will be the responsibility of the applicant, Mr. Matthew Doudican Jnr.
3. The applicant, Mr. Matthew Doudican Jnr, will be responsible for the payment of any other fees which apply, namely, Transfer Order Fee, Land Registry Fees, Stamp Duty Fees and any other relevant fees.
4. The Property being disposed of is being disposed in its present condition and the disposal is not subject to Planning Permission.

MM.67.21 Approve additional expenditure incurred by Leitrim County Council in the performance of its functions during 2020

Mr Vincent Dwyer informed the members that, with their consent, items 3 and 4 on the agenda would be taken concurrently.

Mr. Vincent Dwyer, Head of Finance, Water, Environment, Climate Action and Emergency Services provided an overview of the report on additional expenditure incurred by Leitrim County Council in 2020.

Mr. Vincent Dwyer advised members that Leitrim County Council has continued to

implement a programme of monitoring and reviewing expenditure to ensure that budgetary limits are not exceeded and he advised Members as follows:-

- The effect of such tight budgetary management and control has resulted in a surplus of €2,994 in 2020 thereby reducing the cumulative revenue deficit of €256,122. Total revenue expenditure by Leitrim County Council in 2020 was €53,934,075 while the total capital expenditure by Leitrim County Council in 2020 was €22,568,982.
- The Covid 19 pandemic created significant uncertainty regarding financial management of all Local Authorities particularly in the context of loss on income from Commercial Rates, goods and services and increased Covid-19 associated costs.
- In mid-2020 the Government announced a commercial rates waiver for 6 months which was further extended to 9 months with the Government reimbursing the commercial rates applicable to occupied properties subject to certain exclusions.
- In 2020, 793 rates payers availed of the rates waiver for 9 months which amounted to €1.7 million. Through the Restart Grant, including various top ups grants, 800 payments were made to the value of €4.2 million, to businesses in the county between May and December.
- At the time of the adoption of the Budget 2020 the roads allocation for 2021 was not known, and as is the practice over many years Leitrim County Council applied the 2020 Roads Allocation as part of the budgetary process. In 2020 over expenditure of €396,601 occurred under the Roads Transportation & Safety budget heading attributable to additional overheads arising from the increased roadworks programme, coupled with the additional overheads arising from Covid-19, decreased car parking income and increased energy costs associated with public lighting.
- The over expenditure of €74,083 in Water Services is mainly attributable to increased costs in the administration of the Rural Water Programme and the timing of Irish Water recoupments.
- Over Expenditure of €886,603 under the development management heading is attributable to the rollout of the Restart Grant Programme within County Leitrim, coupled with the increased expenditure by the LEO office to support local businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Councillor Felim Gurn queried if there will be any restart grants introduced this year.

Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire thanked the Council for all the help, supports and rates waiver provided to ratepayers during 2020.

Councillor Des Guckian stated it was a pity that item 3 and item 4 were not discussed separately. He queried if there are any penalties to be imposed in regard to the Carrick-on-Shannon Public Realm project. He noted that the Annual Financial Statement as presented is

unaudited and expressed his disappointment that this has not been audited at this stage.

In reply to queries raised - Mr Vincent Dwyer advised that the Local Authority have not to date, been notified of restart grants applicable in 2021. Mr Dwyer acknowledged the work of the LEO office who have provided a significant level of support to businesses during the Covid pandemic, and this will be continued in 2021.

Mr Vincent Dwyer outlined that the financial reports presented to the members relate to the Revenue account. The Carrick on Shannon-on-Shannon Public Realm works are funded through the Capital account. He stated that delays in projects of this scope are not uncommon and issues will be resolved with the contractor.

Mr Vincent Dwyer clarified that the Local Authority is legally obliged to present the unaudited report to the Members and informed the members that the Local Government Audit will commence in July and the final report will be presented to the Members at either the September or November meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Caillian Ellis
SECONDED by Cllr. Finola Armstrong McGuire

It was **AGREED** to approve the additional expenditure incurred by Leitrim County Council in the performance of its functions in 2020 in accordance with the provisions of Section 108(4) of the Local Government Act, 2001.

MM.68.21 Consider the Annual Financial Statement for the year ended 31st December 2020

The Annual Financial Statement for Leitrim County Council for the year ended 31st December, 2020 was circulated to the Members.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Enda McGloin
SECONDED by Cllr. Paddy Farrell

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Annual Financial Statement for the Year ended 31st December 2020 in accordance with Section 108 of the Local Government Act, 2001.

MM.69.21 Consider the Draft Annual Report 2020

Councillor Des Guckian referred to the Draft Annual Report and made a number of observations in relation to it - very glossy but not reflective of what's happening on the ground, criticism of the Vision statement of Leitrim County Council, lack of reference to farming and the front cover photograph of Lough Melvin with wind turbines in the

background.

Ms Mary Quinn, Director of Services, advised the Members that the Local Authority is legally required to publish an Annual Report by end June each year, which reports on activities and services delivered in the previous year, for which the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to provide. Leitrim County Council has no statutory responsibility for agriculture and therefore there is no reference to it contained in the annual report. The Vision Statement of Leitrim County Council as set out in the annual report was agreed by the Elected Members in adopting the Corporate Plan in 2019.

Councillor Justin Warnock welcomed the photo of Lough Melvin and pointed out that the wind turbines referred to in the background are in County Fermanagh.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Sean McDermott
SECONDED by Cllr. Thomas Mulligan

It was **AGREED** to adopt Leitrim County Council's Annual Report, 2020.

MM.70.21 Management Reports - February & March 2021

The Management Reports for February 2021 and March 2021 were circulated to Members in accordance with Section 136 (2) of the Local Government Act, 2001 as inserted by Section 51 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014.

Councillor Des Guckian queried what are the future plans for the Dromod Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Mr Francis Gaffney, A/Senior Engineer said Dromod has a properly functioning waste water treatment plant that has sufficient capacity to meet the current existing need. The plant is maintained on an on-going basis by Irish Water.

Councillor Des Guckian referred to an occasion when he visited Shannon Grove and the smell coming from the plant was very bad and a number of big lorries were in place taking away waste.

Mr Gaffney advised that wastewater treatment plants require ongoing mechanical maintenance and on these occasions effluent is brought away to a nearby plant by large tanks. Mr Gaffney asked Councillor Guckian to furnish him with the date and time he witnessed this event and he will verify this for him.

Councillor Des Guckian thanked Mr Gaffney for his reply in this regard.

The monthly management reports were noted by Members.

MM.71.21 Report from Corporate Policy Group

Ms Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services, Community and Cultural Services outlined that the Corporate Policy Group had considered the following items at their meeting on the 29th April 2021

- Update from the Environment, Climate Action and Agriculture SPC

Mr Vincent Dwyer gave a report from the Environment, Climate Action & Agriculture Strategic Policy Committee meetings that were held on 30th March 2021 and from 27th April 2021 as set out in **Appendix 1** to the Minutes of this meeting.

- Items for Council Meeting 4th May 2021
- Date for the Annual Meeting of Leitrim County Council will be Friday 25th June 2021. The Annual Meeting of each of the Municipal Districts will be scheduled in conjunction with their monthly meeting. In line with current public health advice, it is anticipated that the municipal Annual Meetings will take place online. The situation with regard to holding face to face meetings in a physical space for both the plenary Annual Meeting and the plenary July meeting will be kept under review in line with public health advice. Consideration may be given to holding the Annual Meeting and the July meeting on the same day same, similar to last year. The matter will be kept under review by the Corporate Policy Group.

Cathaoirleach, Cllr Mary Bohan noted 2 external members are to be nominated to the LCDC. Ms Quinn advised that the nominations will come before the Members at the July meeting.

This update was noted by Members.

MM.72.21 To note date and time of Annual Meeting 2021

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Enda McGloin
SECONDED by Cllr. Frank Dolan

It was **AGREED** to hold the Annual Meeting of Leitrim County Council on Friday, 25th June 2021 at 12 noon.

Councillor Enda McGloin outlined that it is important that a physical meeting is held if public health guidance allows it.

MM.73.21 Attendance at conferences/training

It was noted that all training is taking place online.

MM.74.21 Meeting Correspondence

1. Resolution from Killarney Municipal District in regard to payment of student nurses.
2. Resolution from Tipperary County Council in regard to Mother and Baby homes.
3. Resolution from Sligo County Council in regard to Community & Voluntary Sector Funding.
4. Resolution from Sligo County Council in regard to Post Office contracts.
5. Resolution from Sligo County Council in regard to Independent Meat Regulator.
6. Resolution from Sligo County Council in regard to Local Development Agency Bill 2021.
7. Acknowledgement from Minister Burke in regard to Centenary of Partition.
8. Acknowledgement from Minister Donnelly in regard to Medical Cards.
9. Resolution from Dun Laoighaire Rathdown in regard to the Housing Crises.
10. Acknowledgement from Deputy Marian Harkin in regard to the Centenary of Partition
11. Acknowledgement from Minister Noonan in regard to pesticide cypermethrin to control pine weevil.
12. Acknowledgement from An Taoiseach regarding Partition Events
13. Reply from Minister Catherine Martin in regard to support for local newspapers.

Councillor Enda McGloin said in the last 10 days funding has been announced for local radio and he hoped ongoing discussions would continue with a view to find funding for local newspapers who provide a valuable service. He asked that Leitrim County ask Minister Martin to reconsider the current position so that her Department can provide similar funding to local print media as given to local radio.

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan supported the proposal.

14. County Leitrim Society of New York March Newsletter
15. Reply from Minister McConalogue in regard to the Beef Regulator and Beef Prices

Councillor Brendan Barry said he hoped that a Beef Regulator would be put in place as an Ombudsman would not have the same powers as a Regulator. Councillor Pdraig Fallon outlined his support in this regard.

16. Acknowledgement from Senator Peppa Hackette in regard to the pesticide cypermethrin.
17. Resolution from Kerry County Council in regard to the Land Development Agency Bill 2021.
18. Resolution from Wicklow County Council in regard to the Land Development Agency Bill 2021.
19. Reply from the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage in regard to the Land Development Agency.
20. Resolution from Galway County Council in regard to the Land Development Agency Bill.
21. Resolution from Louth County Council in regard to the Land Development Agency Bill.
22. Resolution from Mayo County Council in regard to the Land Development Agency Bill.
23. Resolution from Limerick City and County Council in regard to the National Union of Journalists.

Councillor Des Guckian supported the motion from Limerick and City Council.
Councillor Guckian welcomed the response from other Local Authorities regarding the Land Development Agency Bill.

24. Reply from Minister McConalogue in regard to pesticide cypermethrin.
25. Resolution from Monaghan County Council in regard to the World Health Organisation's plea for the global equitable distribution of all vaccines, treatments and therapies developed to combat covid.
26. Resolution from Cork City Council in regard to the Lord Mayor of Dublin.
27. Co Leitrim Society of New York April Newsletter.
28. Acknowledgement from Minister McGrath in regard to the Centenary Partition Event.
29. Letter from HSE in regard to vaccine rollout for people who are not registered with a GP.
30. Reply from Bank of Ireland regarding service changes.

31. Resolution from Roscommon County Council in regard to the National Fund for cemeteries

Councillor Brendan Barry proposed that Leitrim County Council support the resolution and he acknowledged funding in Leitrim is restricted and it would be better to have a National Programme.

32. Resolution from Donegal County Council to support Rosses Community School in their campaign address period poverty.
33. Resolution from Sligo County Council in regard to tax increases post covid.
34. Resolution from Sligo County Council in regard to insurance crises facing our community sector.
35. Resolution from Limerick City and Council in regard to Land Development Agency Bill 2021.
36. Resolution from Limerick City and Council in regard to one off housing.
37. Ballinaglera GAA raising awareness regarding the difficulties experienced by young people when looking to build a house in the parish.
38. Letter from the Tanaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade & Employment in regard to CETA.
39. Letter from the Office of the Minister for Social Protection in regard to Community Employment.

Other Matters raised under Meeting Correspondence.

Councillor Justin Warnock proposed that Leitrim County Council request An Taoiseach Michael Martin and the Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney, to put a resolution before the United Nations to call for a global ban on fracking.

Councillor Sean McGowan and Councillor Des Guckian supported the proposal

MM.75.21 Presentation from National Broadband Ireland

The Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan welcomed Joe Lavin and Damian Fitzgibbons from National Broadband Ireland to the meeting.

A copy of the presentation delivered by the National Broadband Ireland to the members

appears as **Appendix 2** to the Minutes of this meeting in the Minute Book.

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan thanked Joe Lavin for his presentation and invited any questions/comments from the Members.

The following items and questions were raised:

- The Broadband mapping exercise was not accurate in Drumkeeran.
- Lack of broadband service in the Centre of Drumkeeran impacting on ability of Enterprise Centre to become a remote working hub. When work on broadband service was completed in Drumkeerin Village all premises and some homes on the outskirts were to have high speed broadband. The area north of the enterprise units have high speed broadband, but there are shops, post office, businesses, community centre and residents that are unable to access this high-speed service.
- Existing usage limit caps are very restrictive.
- Will it take 6 years to connect all houses in Leitrim?
- The NBI website shows areas as “Survey Planned” and “Survey Pending”; which is closer to happening?
- Allowing Eir to cherry pick densely populated areas was not good practice, if all areas had been included in tender there would be more bidders which would have been better for the general public.
- Keshcarrigan has an existing fibre exchange: will NBI have to run their infrastructure alongside the existing Eir infrastructure.
- When will fibre optic service the village of Kinlough and its primary school?
- Businesses in Manorhamilton have been quoted figures of €10,000 to get a fibre optic connection. This is not viable for small businesses.
- How long until fast broadband speed will be available to national schools in the Ballinamore area?
- Will people be able to tap into the fibre cable which was extended from Mohill to Cloone village and when can they look forward to a reliable useable service?
- People are frustrated with deadlines that are not being met. When is high speed broadband expected to be delivered in the Glenfarne area?
- Broadband service is still not working properly in St Michael’s NS in Glenfarne.
- No power to prevent private service providers charging what they like?

Joe Lavin responded to the above queries raised as follows:

- The Mapping Service was carried out in 2019 and all Service Providers were asked to submit plans of their networks. He advised the members that the public can easily determine if they are in the intervention area, via an Eircode search function on the NBI website. If members of the public are not in the Intervention area and still cannot get high speed broadband from broadband providers, the Department of Communications has a process to review.
- Members of the public should contact the Department of Communications at broadband@decc.gov.ie to pursue this. It would be helpful if members of the public

could advise the Department of any operators, they may have contacted in relation to service issues at their property.

- National Broadband Ireland have not built in the Drumkeerin area yet and will liaise with Cllr Bohan in regard to broadband service for the Enterprise Units.
- Service providers are moving away from usage limit caps. 43 service providers have signed up with NBI and will provide a service over NBI infrastructure, this will make it easy for users to change service provider as required.
- NBI are building infrastructure to 544,000 premises. Alternative technology may be used for particularly remote houses or businesses.
- Over time the demand will be there for higher speeds and the NBI system can easily be upgraded to facilitate this.
- People in remote areas will get similar service to what is being delivered in towns today.
- NBI will be using their own fiber optic infrastructure which will be installed on existing EIR poles.
- NBI have no power to prevent service providers charging what they like.
- NBI will sell a nondiscriminatory service to all 43 service providers that have signed up with them.
- NBI are in the 2nd year of a 7-year build. This is a significant project, 31 local authorities to deal with. This is the 3rd time the Government has looked at providing broadband services.
- NBI promise to deliver a network that is fit for future generations.
- Email for political reps: reps@nbi.ie
- €10,000 is excessive for businesses to get connected to fibre optic. A list of enterprise and business products with speeds up to 10 Gb is available and is priced a lot cheaper than that to install.
- If an Eircode search on the NBI website returns “Survey Pending”, no date has been set for the survey.
- NBI will provide a service to any premises that their infrastructure passes.
- NBI had to stand down their surveying contractors with the onset of COVID-19. The surveying programme is now back on track. The Design phase is now catching up following the shutdown of the surveying programme. The build phase of project is behind schedule, but it is likely that there will be an acceleration in this phase in 2022.

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan thanked Joe Lavin and Damian Fitzgibbons from National Broadband Ireland for attending the meeting.

It was agreed by the Members to take a 20 minute break at this point and resume the meeting at 1.20 p.m.

MM.76.21 Motion from Councillor Enda McGloin and Motion from Councillor Sean McDermott - Planning Issues in the County

It was agreed by the Members that Motion No 12 in the name of Councillor Enda McGloin and Motion No 14 in the name of Councillor Sean McDermott be taken concurrently as they relate to the same matter.

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Enda McGloin;

"Members will have received a letter from the Ballinaglera GAA Club in April regarding the current difficulties faced by young people from their parish who wish to build a home on their own landholding. I ask that the Chief Executive provide a detailed reply to this letter at the May meeting of Leitrim County Council so that we, the members, can consider and debate thoroughly the genuine concerns as expressed in this letter, understand the current challenges we face in addressing planning issues in this county, and what work is underway by this Local Authority in finding a long term solution to this issue."

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

"The substantive issue in relation to one off housing in Leitrim including the area surrounding Ballinaglera is not one necessarily related to the rural housing policy contained in the County Development Plan, it relates to the effective treatment and disposal of wastewater treatment from individual houses. Any person originally from or residing in the Ballinaglera parish would satisfy the rural housing need of Medium Capacity with the area along the Regional Road identified as Low Capacity. The area north of Ballinaglera and including Dowra is identified as High Capacity to accommodate individual houses.

Unfortunately, due to the underlying nature of the sub soils which are present across the majority of our county (estimated at 87% of our soils), the soil percolation tests fail to meet the acceptable percolation rates required to comply with the EPA Code of Practice and the sites are deemed unsuitable for discharge of treated wastewater or effluent to ground. As is well known and debated on numerous occasions already this is proving a significant impediment to the granting of planning permission for individual dwellings in the countryside by the Planning Authority and indeed is preventing many prospective applicants making applications in the first instance as agents are aware that the subject sites will be deemed unsuitable once the soil percolation tests are undertaken. The points raised in the letter in relation to the underlying soils having a disproportionate impact on Leitrim is both acknowledged and accepted by the Planning Authority and has been debated locally by the Council and articulated on many occasions at national level.

For new individual houses in the countryside, site characterization tests must be carried out in accordance with the EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (p.e=10), 2009. This will be replaced from 7th June by the updated version of the Code of Practice. Some of the more significant changes with this new Code of Practice will be:

- a) Additional options in low permeability soils: Drip dispersal: These are pressurised systems that release effluent through a network of pipes just beneath the surface. They can be used in low permeability soils up to a percolation value of 120. (Previous maximum acceptable value was 90). They are specialised systems that require expert design and installation and increased maintenance.
- b) Low-pressure pipe distribution: These are pressurised systems that release

wastewater through pipes laid in shallow trenches beneath the surface. They can be used in low permeability soils up to a percolation value of 90.

- Willow bed evapotranspiration systems:

These can be used for secondary treatment of effluent. They are large, sealed basins planted with willow. Monitoring of full-scale systems found that full evapotranspiration was not achieved so discharge of final effluent to ground will require an offset tertiary soil polishing filter. The work undertaken by Leitrim County Council on highlighting such options through trials was considered the basis for the inclusion of this concession which provides the foundation for the continued pursuit of the zero-discharge solution.

It is considered that these amendments in the Code of Practice will allow some marginal sites to obtain planning permission which would not have been possible previously. This is welcomed by the Planning Authority although it is likely that it will take some time for this impact to become evident.

The requirement to comply with the applicable Code of Practice is enshrined in the County Development Plan in accordance with the instruction of the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government by way of Circular PSSP 01/2010. The Circular clearly requires Planning Authorities to ensure both policies and development management procedures are explicitly clear that all sites will be rigorously assessed in accordance with the Code of Practice.

Notwithstanding the requirement for the Code of Practice to be adhered to regarding planning policies and development management processes as set out persons building an individual house are obliged to comply with the requirements of the Building Regulations under a separate code from Planning. The aim of the Building Regulations is to provide for the safety and welfare of people in and about buildings. The Building Regulations apply to the design and construction of a new building (including a dwelling) or an extension to an existing building. The minimum performance requirements that a building must achieve are set out in the second schedule to the building regulations. These requirements are set out in 12 parts (classified as Parts A to M). Technical Design Document H deals with 'Drainage and Wastewater Disposal' updated in 2016 S.I. No. 561/2010 - Building Regulations (Part H Amendment) Regulations 2010. They require that a building shall be provided with such a drainage system as may be necessary for the hygienic and adequate disposal of foul wastewater from the building. A wastewater treatment system shall be so designed, sited and constructed that it is not prejudicial to the health of any person, it does not cause a risk to public health or the environment, it prevents unauthorised access but allows adequate means of access for emptying and maintenance, it will function to a sufficient standard for the protection of health in the event of a system failure, it has adequate capacity, it is impermeable to liquids, and it is adequately ventilated.

Section 2.1.2 of Technical Guidance Document states

In general, the design and installation of wastewater treatment systems for single houses should comply with the relevant parts of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Code of Practice 2009 Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses.

This publication also includes guidance relating to site assessment, test holes, the appropriate distances between the wastewater treatment systems and critical targets including dwellings, wells and site boundaries.

The Water Services Act, 2007 places a duty of care on homeowners to ensure that all standalone wastewater treatment systems are kept so as not to cause a risk to human health or the environment or create a nuisance through odours.

The problem which prevails is not therefore one which is within the gift of the Local Authority to remedy.

Leitrim County Council has been attempting to identify options that could be explored to provide a wastewater treatment system solution that would be suitable, acceptable and affordable. Not all options which have been explored and suggested adhering to these 3 principles. Leitrim County Council has been actively pursuing innovative solutions to facilitate the design of a wastewater treatment and disposal facility that would have the potential to have a zero discharge or near zero discharge of effluent and, if successful, allow sites with poor percolation characteristics to treat the discharge of treated wastewater in a manner which was not prejudicial to public health. The cost of implementing this system was subsequently highlighted as prohibitive. However, the costs were in the context of the testing of the solution as part of a pilot scheme. The Council has, for quite some time, been pursuing financial support nationally towards these costs. Trinity College has been identified as the academic partner of the Council in setting out a possible research programme to support the pilot. The Council awaits the opening of a call for research projects by the EPA in the coming weeks in order to submit an application for support in conjunction with Trinity College. If successful, this process would allow the pilot scheme for the purposes of the testing of the zero-discharge concept to proceed at more reasonable cost to the householder.

One further option now being considered would be the direct discharges from domestic wastewater systems to surface waters and provide appropriate levels of environmental protection with associated general application rules/alternative licensing system. Leitrim County Council are exploring and evaluating this option regionally (with Roscommon, Longford, Cavan and Monaghan County Councils) and subsequently then with the Department. The Council believes that there is the potential for an intervention in the Wastewater Pollution Regulations to accommodate a more suitable permission system for domestic scenarios.

In addition, the Council is considering the option of identifying locations for serviced sites in selected locations which are serviced by the public drainage network through the Development Plan process. Subsequently an external funding source would be required to put the serviced sites in place."

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Sean McDermott;

"In light of the recent revelations from Ballinaglera GAA Club on the subject of depopulation and how it is "Sucking the life blood out of it's community" and which is repeated in rural parishes around the county, their press release indicates the need for solutions with substances to be enshrined in the next County Development Plan. Can we as a Council and Councillors address this issue of depopulation in our rural parishes in the next County Development Plan. When the Council are making decisions on planning in rural areas, special considerations should be given to rural areas that has sustained population loss."

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

"It is considered that the substantive issue raised in this Notice of Motion will be considered in the context of the draft County Development Plan, the preliminary draft of which is nearing completion. It is considered that the response to Notice of Motion No. 12 is also of relevance to this Motion. The issue of depopulation is acknowledged but the overriding issue of sites having to comply with the EPA Code of Practice remains."

Councillor Enda McGloin welcomed Pdraig Loughlin, Chairman of Ballinaglera GAA to the meeting who was joint author of the letter from Ballinaglera GAA. He thanked Mr Lar Power, Chief Executive, Mr Joseph Gilhooly, Director of Services and Mr Bernard Greene, Senior Planner for their comprehensive reply to the motion.

Councillor Enda McGloin outlined the concerns expressed in the letter from Ballinaglera GAA, and the current challenges that Members face in addressing planning issues in county Leitrim and he said if Members had the power to deal with this they would have done so.

Councillor Enda McGloin said he would not accept the statement that rural Ireland is finished. Cllr McGloin said there are a lot of sites available, and he would like to see different scenarios for people who may have a job and who have no contact to farming. Councillor McGloin said he would like to see timelines for particular studies carried out by EPA and a soil type map.

Councillor Enda McGloin said he will continue to work with Ministers to provide a wastewater treatment system solution that will be suitable, acceptable and affordable and pursue funding for a trial system in this regard.

Councillor Sean McDermott referred to the letter from Ballinagelera GAA which stated that 10 or 12 GAA clubs will not be around in future. He said his own GAA club will definitely not survive if something is not done to address the planning issue.

Councillor Sean McDermott said solutions with substance should be included in the next County Development Plan and this issue needs to be looked at seriously.

Councillor Brendan Barry supported both motions.

Councillor Brendan Barry acknowledged Leitrim County Council are working within the rules and he said there should be more "lee way" on the requirement of "immediate vicinity" and

he referred to a scenario whereby a person has a site in Ballinaglera and is renting in Drumshanbo and would be excluded due to immediate vicinity.

Councillor Sean McGowan supported the motions and he paid tribute to Ballinaglera GAA for raising the matter and he hoped Ballinaglera GAA with the support of the County Board would further highlight this problem.

Councillor Sean McGowan referred to his motion he raised at the January meeting in regard to wastewater treatment systems and how capable these systems are for serving one off houses. Councillor McGowan requested that we continue to push the Government on this issue.

Councillor Felim Gurn supported the motions and said a solution has to be found, as there is a huge demand to live in the North West since the onset of the Covid pandemic and people want to move back to rural Ireland.

Councillor Justin Warnock said if there is no planning for one-off houses it will lead to afforestation. If people want to work the land, they have to live on the land, and something needs to be done to address this.

Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn asked if clarification on the position from the EPA can be sought as this is such a serious situation.

Councillor Pdraig Fallon paid tribute to Ballinaglera GAA and the extensive coverage this issue has got nationally. He concurred with Cllr Barry in regard to the review of immediate vicinity and outlined ribbon and cluster developments may provide options, but it is not the solution.

Councillor Enda McGloin commended Deputy Kenny for his Private Members Bill on Local government (Water Pollution) (Amendment) Bill and he outlined the contents of the bill and reason why the bill has to be reviewed by a water review group.

Councillor Mary Bohan outlined that everyone is trying to get a resolution to this issue. Leitrim County Council have met Ministers, went on deputations and still have not been able to get a solution and a solution to this issue is not within the power of Leitrim County Council.

Mr Bernard Greene, Senior Planner stated he had read and considered the letter from Ballinaglera GAA and has given a comprehensive reply. Mr Greene outlined that due to the underlying nature of the sub soils which are present across the majority of County Leitrim, the soil percolation tests fail to meet the acceptable percolation rates required to comply with the EPA Code of Practice and the sites are deemed unsuitable for discharge of treated wastewater or effluent to ground.

Leitrim County Council are working with other local authorities in the region and with the Department on the issue. Leitrim County Council believes that there is the potential for an intervention in the Wastewater Pollution Regulations to accommodate a more suitable

permission system for domestic scenarios.

Leitrim County Council is considering the option of identifying locations for serviced sites in selected locations which are serviced by the public drainage network through the Development Plan process. An external funding source would be required to put the serviced sites in place.

Mr Greene said there is no impediment in living in the area and renting in Drumshanbo and outlined he would speak to Cllr Barry in this regard.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly outlined the requirement to comply with the applicable Code of Practice is enshrined in the County Development Plan in accordance with the instruction of the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government by way of Circular PSSP 01/2010. The Circular clearly requires Planning Authorities to ensure both policies and development management procedures are explicitly clear that all sites will be rigorously assessed in accordance with the Code of Practice.

From 7th June 2021 there will be an updated version of the Code of Practice. These amendments in the Code of Practice will allow some marginal sites to obtain planning permission which would not have been possible previously. This is welcomed by the Planning Authority although it is likely that it will take some time for this impact to become evident.

The requirements under the Code of Practice set out the planning policies and development management processes that must be adhered to. Persons building an individual house are further obliged to comply with the requirements of the Building Regulations under a separate code.

The Water Services Act, 2007 places a duty of care on homeowners to ensure that all standalone wastewater treatment systems are maintained so as not to cause a risk to human health or the environment or create a nuisance through odour.

Mr Gilhooly outlined Leitrim County Council has been actively pursuing innovative solutions to facilitate the design of a wastewater treatment and disposal facility that would have the potential to have a zero discharge or near zero discharge of effluent and, if successful, allow sites with poor percolation characteristics to treat the discharge of treated wastewater in a manner which was not prejudicial to public health. The cost of implementing this system was subsequently highlighted as prohibitive. However, the costs were in the context of the testing of the solution as part of a pilot scheme. Leitrim County Council has been pursuing financial support nationally towards these costs.

Leitrim County Council awaits the opening of a call for research projects by the EPA in the coming weeks in order to submit an application for support in conjunction with Trinity College. If successful, this process would allow the pilot scheme for the purposes of the testing of the zero-discharge concept to proceed at more reasonable cost to the householder.

Mr Francis Gaffney said the new Code of Practice, while with some relaxations, is still going to be prohibitive. Mr Gaffney outlined that surface water regulations are very strict and serious. It is very difficult to adjudicate on if all the supporting backup data is not made available.

Councillor Enda McGloin noted Trinity College has been identified as the academic partner of the Council for a possible research programme and he queried if this will this be funded by the Department.

Mr Gilhooly said the Executive and the Members had previously sought to secure funding from two Governments departments for research and this did not come to fruition. The EPA annually do a research call, and this is due to open within weeks and Leitrim County Council will make an application under that call for research of zero discharge systems.

Cathaoirleach, Cllr Mary Bohan queried if successful what timeline will be involved.

Mr Gilhooly outlined it would be 12 months from point of application.

Councillors Des Guckian, Finola Armstrong McGuire and Paddy Farrell all complimented Ballinaglera GAA for their correspondence and supported the motion.

MM.77.21 Motion from Councillor Des Guckian - Rural Areas

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Des Guckian;

"That, as representatives of a very rural County, we discuss the very great disadvantages being suffered by our rural areas, put forward solutions and seek to have them implemented ASAP."

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

"The issues facing rural areas are being increasing documented and discussed nationally. Leitrim County Council is acutely aware of the impact such issues is having on the County, which outside of Carrick on Shannon is classified as rural, and as a consequence is actively pursuing the regeneration and revitalisation of the County.

The Council has developed a forward-thinking capital investment programme consisting of projects of scale that have the potential to be impactful and transformational. The Council has now secured and is in the process of implementation of five regeneration projects coupled with design processes for expansion of the Shannon Blueway and with the substantial design process of the SLNCR Greenway at tender stage. In addition, the Council continues to pursue additional tourism investment projects and other outdoor recreation initiatives etc.

The Council is also actively involved in supporting digital hubs in the County along with the installation of Broadband Connection Points and Free Wifi all of which equips the county to

avail of the potential of remote or blended working arrangements into the future. In addition, the Council works with and supports both business and community organisations in their efforts to contribute to a sustainable county into the future.

The Council Executive will continue to work closely with all lead departments and agencies that has the potential to assist in the overall objective of the sustainable development of the County."

Councillor Des Guckian gave the background to his motion and referred to the following issues – Our Rural Future – uninspiring and unclear, abandonment of rural areas by successive governments, lack of off-farm employment, lack of broadband, arterial drainage of waterways, CIS and LIS road schemes not adequate, wind farms being erected with larger turbines, Shass Landslide, EPA Code of Practice and sites deemed unsuitable for discharge of treated wastewater or effluent to ground, attempted closure of bogs. Cllr Guckian stated that planning has been denied to people from farming backgrounds, with planners hiding behind TCD schemes.

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan stated the motion was very broad and proposed that a list of proposals be submitted to the Council for consideration. Cllr Guckian stated he was outlining all the problems which are being ignored.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly said the requirement to comply with the applicable Code of Practice is enshrined in the County Development Plan in accordance with the instruction of the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government by way of Circular PSSP 01/2010. Soil percolation tests failing to meet the acceptable percolation rates are required to comply with the EPA Code of Practice and the sites in Leitrim are deemed unsuitable for discharge of treated wastewater or effluent to ground. He outlined that this is the position Leitrim is in and nobody is hiding behind policy as inferred by Councillor Des Guckian. Cllr Guckian stated his view that the Council has gone far beyond what is required for planning for one-off houses. The Director of Services again clarified the position in relation to compliance with Government policy and regulation.

MM.78.21 Motion from Councillor Pdraig Fallon - Tenant Purchase Scheme

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Pdraig Fallon;

"I propose that this Local Authority ask the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage when the report into the tenant purchase scheme will be published, and if the issues relating to income from social welfare, and persons over the age of seventy, being allowed to purchase a Local Authority house will be addressed?"

Councillor Pdraig Fallon said he has had this motion before the Council previously and he has asked Deputy Kenny to again raise a PQ by on this issue.

Councillor Fallon proposed that this motion be circulated to all Local Authorities for support.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Pdraig Fallon

SECONDED by Cllr. Mary Bohan

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council ask the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage when the report into the tenant purchase scheme will be published, and if the issues relating to income from social welfare, and persons over the age of seventy, being allowed to purchase a Local Authority house will be addressed?

MM.79.21 Motion from Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire- Presentations

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Finola Armstrong-McGuire;

"I ask that consideration be given for presentations from both internal departments and external bodies/agencies to be made available to elected members through online meetings. For example, I suggest that a representative from GrowRemote.ie is invited to update councillors on the current opportunities open to all living in County Leitrim."

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

"Presentations by both internal departments and external agencies or bodies are currently facilitated at both council and municipal district meetings. Internal departments typically make presentations to the members when strategic planning or policy documents are before the members for consideration and before public consultation takes place.

Delegations from external agencies or bodies are facilitated as requests are received and in consultation with the CPG, with presentations made in the past year either at plenary or municipal level by Local Link Transport, Coillte, ICBAN, Comhairle na nOg and, at this meeting, by National Broadband Ireland.

With regard to the proposal to invite a representative from GrowRemote.ie to a future council meeting, an invitation will be issued in this regard."

Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire said that Grow Remote should be invited to update Members on the current jobs open to all living in the county and this needs to be highlighted by Leitrim County Council. Councillor Armstrong McGuire outlined that there are 3,000 empty units in the County and this has to be addressed by owners and members.

Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire welcomed the reply and said all presentations have been very beneficial.

Councillor Mary Bohan supported the motion.

MM.80.21 Motion from Councillor Felim Gurn- Purchase and develop Bank Branches

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Felim Gurn;

"That this council calls on the Minister for Community and Rural Development Heather Humphreys TD and the Tanáiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Leo Varadkar TD to consider a funding scheme through local authorities for active and experienced community groups with a proven track record in enterprise and community development to provide funding opportunities to negotiate with Bank of Ireland (and possible other Banks) to purchase and develop bank branches due to close in September 2021 into rural working office hubs and also maintain ATM services in our towns."

Cllr Gurn proposed that a fund be set up for community groups to be able to purchase closed bank buildings. Councillor Justin Warnock supported the motion and said some buildings will fall into dereliction and highlighted these would be good for remote working hubs.

Councillor Enda McGloin proposed that the Local Authority carry out a survey to see if people working from home would take up a desk in these locations.

Councillor Des Guckian proposed that the banks must be compelled to invest in the community and hand these buildings over to the community.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr.Felim Gurn
SECONDED by Cllr. Justin Warnock

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council call on the Minister for Community and Rural Development Heather Humphreys TD and the Tanáiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Leo Varadkar TD to consider a funding scheme through local authorities for active and experienced community groups with a proven track record in enterprise and community development to provide funding opportunities to negotiate with Bank of Ireland (and possible other Banks) to purchase and develop bank branches due to close in September 2021 into rural working office hubs and also maintain ATM services in our towns.

MM.81.21 Motion from Councillor Sean McGowan - Housing Grant Scheme

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Sean McGowan;

"That Leitrim County Council call on the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Minister Mr. Darragh O'Brien, TD, to review the terms and conditions of the Housing Grant Scheme to allow Local Authorities to use discretion in awarding house repair grants for older people. Where an applicant has transferred ownership of their home over to one of their children, and they continue to live in their home for the rest of their days, that they would be entitled to apply for and receive grant approval for works on the merits of their own income."

Councillor Sean McGowan proposed that the terms and conditions of the Housing Grant Scheme be reviewed to allow Local Authorities to use discretion in awarding house repair grants for older people.

Councillor Enda McGloin, Councillor Paddy O'Rourke and Councillor Des Guckian supported the motion.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Felim Gurn
SECONDED by Cllr. Justin Warnock

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council call on the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Minister Mr. Darragh O'Brien, TD, to review the terms and conditions of the Housing Grant Scheme to allow Local Authorities to use discretion in awarding house repair grants for older people. Where an applicant has transferred ownership of their home over to one of their children, and they continue to live in their home for the rest of their days, that they would be entitled to apply for and receive grant approval for works on the merits of their own income."

MM.82.21 Motion from Councillor Justin Warnock - Young Adults

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Justin Warnock;

"The Covid pandemic has shown how vulnerable we are as a society, so therefore I will ask the elected members to support this motion to call on the Leaders of every political party and grouping in the Oireachtas to open the debate around Civic Engagement and National Service for our young adults, which would encompass a wide range of activities including community service, environmental service, training programmes including Civil Defence and Reserve Defence Forces."

Councillor Justin Warnock said it is time to open a debate on Civic Engagement and National Service for young adults. This would be a good opportunity for young people to get involved in community services.

Councillor Des Guckian said he could not support the motion as young people have enough to contend with and he queried who will pay for such a programme.

Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn supported the motion and said it would be nice to encourage a community ethos in our youth and culture of giving back to their community.

Councillor Mary Bohan said it would be unfair to say young people are not involved in community groups.

Councillor Brendan Barry supported the motion and he appealed to parents to encourage their children to help neighbours, join the Reserve Defence Forces, Community Groups and the Civil Defence.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Justin Warnock
SECONDED by Cllr. Ita Reynolds Flynn

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council call on the Leaders of every political party and grouping in the Oireachtas to open the debate around Civic Engagement and National Service for our young adults, which would encompass a wide range of activities including community service, environmental service, training programmes including Civil Defence and Reserve Defence Forces. The Covid pandemic has shown how vulnerable we are as a society.

MM.83.21 Motion from Councillor Caillian Ellis - Buying Sites outside Towns and Villages

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Caillian Ellis;

"I propose that Leitrim County Council would look at the possibility of buying sites outside our Towns and Villages and put in the essential services and then sell sites to people from that area who are not able to get planning permission elsewhere due to the stringent EPA guidelines, and thereby enable people to build a house of their choice."

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

"This issue will be included in the draft Development Plan but only in the context of being located at identified locations within / immediately contiguous to existing development centres serviced by the public drainage network. No such proposals will be considered in the open countryside as the same considerations which apply to an individual would equally apply to the Local Authority in relation to the servicing of such houses. As outlined in the response to Notice of Motion No. 12, a funding source would require to be identified and a Department in the Council identified to take responsibility for implementing such a programme."

Councillor Caillian Ellis referred to an initiative in Tipperary where serviced sites were made available for people to purchase. He also referred to the correspondence from Ballinaglera GAA regarding the lack of housing and the threat to local GAA clubs. Councillor Caillian Ellis said his proposal would allow people who are unable to get planning permission due to the EPA code of Practice, to build their own houses.

Councillor Mary Bohan supported the motion.

Mr Bernard Greene, Senior Planner said the Executive support this and the Local Authority are aware of the KILLSHEELAN, Co. Tipperary development referred to. Mr Greene said the development referred to was not a ribbon development but was on a road within a village. Mr Greene outlined that Councillor Sean McDermott has raised a similar proposal in relation to Glenfarne. The issue will be considered in the Draft County Development Plan and will support revitalisation of our smaller areas within our communities.

MM.84.21 Motion from Councillor Paddy Farrell - REAP Scheme

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Paddy Farrell;

"I call on Leitrim County Council to write to Minister for Agriculture, Charlie McConalogue TD, to put more resources into the new REAP scheme, as a lot of farmers are coming out of GLAS and the AEOS. Without additional resources allocated, these applicants will be left in limbo with no support."

Councillor Paddy Farrell outlined that he had received a lot of representations in this regard over the last 2 weeks and stated that there needs to be more thought and funding put into this scheme.

Councillors Justin Warnock, Paddy O'Rourke, Frank Dolan, Brendan Barry, Des Guckian and Sean McGowan expressed their support for the motion.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Paddy Farrell
SECONDED by Cllr. Justin Warnock

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council write to Minister for Agriculture, Charlie McConalogue TD, to put more resources into the new REAP scheme, as a lot of farmers are coming out of GLAS and the AEOS. Without additional resources allocated, these applicants will be left in limbo with no support.

MM.85.21 Motion from Councillor Frank Dolan - Wind Farms

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

"I propose that we as a Council seriously consider in the new development plan what is acceptable in relation to wind farms. The latest proposals coming forward for wind turbines is that of enormous height and proximity to family homes is also of concern to the general public. While wind energy may be necessary going forward how it is done must be considered."

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

"The Elected Members will be afforded an opportunity to consider the draft Development Plan for a period of up to 8 weeks once submitted to them by the Chief Executive. This will include the Renewable Energy Strategy and in particular, the proposed policy in relation to siting and location of wind farms. The policy must have regard to the Wind Energy Guidelines (2006) to ensure Ireland meets its national reductions in energy and greenhouse gas emissions targets.

The Council are aware from previous presentations on the draft County Development Plan that a draft of revised Wind Energy Guidelines was published in December 2019. These includes minimum separation distances which include regard to the height of the structures

(minimum 500 metre separation distance or 4 times the tip height of the turbine). The Departments are in the process of preparing finalised guidelines having undertaken detailed consideration and analysis of the 500 no. submissions received. The draft Development Plan will also have regard to these revised Guidelines."

Councillor Frank Dolan outlined that he has received a lot of correspondence over the last few months expressing serious concerns in relation to wind farms. He highlighted that there are a lot of objections regarding the siting of windfarms at enormous heights and their proximity to family homes.

Councillor Sean McDermott supported the motion and said wind farms are far too large and they are having an impact on the skyline and the environment. Councillor McDermott acknowledged that the development of wind energy has to be considered.

Councillor Felim Gurn said wind energy should be put out at sea and a debate should take place around this.

Councillor Justin Warnock said he was totally opposed to any more windfarms outlining that there is no consideration given to local people and technology should be used to develop wave energy.

Councillor Des Guckian supported the motion and said a total ban on further windfarms should be put in the County Development Plan and they should be located off the coast where they are not interfering with anyone.

Councillor Pdraig Fallon supported the motion and proposed that contact is made with other authorities to give an idea of what they are doing in this regard. Councillor Fallon said he was not opposed to wind farms as a number of local families will benefit from them. However, he didn't want to see the county littered with them and proper consultation needs to take place.

Councillor Enda McGloin outlined the need to be mindful in playing our part, to have a happy medium, control the size of them to minimise impact.

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan said apart from the visual impact it is more serious for the people that live beside them. She noted the application at Lisnagroagh will not be decided by Leitrim County Council, but will go before An Bord Pleanala for decision because of its size.

Mr Bernard Greene, Senior Planner said Leitrim Planning Authority will have a role to play in the Lisnagroagh windfarm application. An Bord Pleanala will require the Council to prepare and submit a comprehensive report on the application. This will be brought before the Members for consideration before its submission to an Bord Pleanala.

He further outlined that a Renewable Energy Strategy and the proposed policy in relation to siting and location of windfarms will be included in the draft County Development Plan and

will come before the Members for consideration.

MM.86.21 Motion from Councillor Brendan Barry - Pre Planning Meetings

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Brendan Barry;

"I request Leitrim County Council do what it can within its control to help people get planning permission. It would be very helpful if the Council facilitated pre-planning meetings at the site of proposed developments. By having the Planner, Architect, and applicant onsite, everyone should have a clearer understanding of the outcome each person wants to achieve at the end of the meeting. This could help streamline planning applications, make the process less costly on the applicant and improve the success rate of planning applications. We need to change the perception that people can't get planning permission in County Leitrim."

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

"Leitrim County Council provides an effective pre planning service within the resources of a small and busy Planning Authority. As outlined to Cllr. Barry in a similar Notice of Motion at the May meeting in 2020, the purpose of pre planning consultations is to afford the opportunity to an applicant intending to apply 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.

In any consultations, the Planning Authority is obliged to 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. This is the extent of service to be provided by the planning legislation.

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 and if deemed necessary) 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. Any advice given are given in good faith and cannot predetermine the Planning Authority in their assessment and decision 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 preplanning becoming the subject of a Further Information request. However, the responsibility for the design and presentation of a planning application is a matter for the applicant and their appointed agent (if any) while the primary role of the Planning Authority is the independent assessment of and decision on the application as presented.

The holding of such suggested meetings would therefore be outside the normal provisions of the Planning Acts in regard to pre planning and as such would undermine the fact that project design is a matter for the applicant and not the Planning Authority. In addition, on site matters also involve areas relevant to a variety of stakeholders such as the District Engineers Office and Environment Department within Leitrim County Council for example and a host of external stakeholders. 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 Brendan Barry said he received a similar response to a motion he raised 12 months ago.

Councillor Barry referred to the system used by agricultural planners carrying out inspections on farms using technology and he proposed that this could be useful for pre-planning meetings.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke supported the motion and outlined that the Department of Agriculture visit sites before and after projects are built and this would be equally worthwhile for Planners and would eliminate a lot of grievances and play important role for architects.

Councillor Des Guckian supported the motion stating that Planners are playing games with young peoples lives.

The Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan, asked Councillor Guckian to withdraw that comment.

Mr Bernard Greene said the reply is similar to last year, as it is the same motion. He outlined that what is being expected of Planners is above and beyond what is required by the planning legislative provisions and the service is not to be used as a vetting service. Mr Greene outlined that Leitrim County Council Planning Authority offer a much better service than the larger Planning Authorities and all Planners take their role very seriously. He outlined that at present there are no plans in this Authority to provide the technology as referred to by Councillor Barry but as technology advances this may be taken into consideration.

MM.87.21 Motion from Councillor Mary Bohan - Home Improvement Grants for Town and Rural Houses

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Cllr Mary Bohan;

"I propose that Leitrim County Council call on the Government to introduce a scheme of home improvement grants for town and rural houses.
This would revitalise our towns and villages and assist those in the rural areas."

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan said most of our towns and villages have a number of vacant premises and to bring these Towns and Villages back to life either a tax incentive or a straight grant should be introduced and it should also apply to rural areas to renovate houses.

Councillor Enda McGloin supported the motion and referred to an announcement last week from Minister Humphrey of €15 million to revitalise Towns and Villages. Cllr Enda McGloin outlined that people who have property and access to money should consider engaging with this scheme on a pilot basis.

Councillor Justin Warnock referred to the level of vacant properties in North Leitrim and in the context of a national housing crisis he did not agree that with a pilot basis.

Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire outlined the need for reducing the carbon footprint highlighting that there are buildings ready to be lived in and it is important to take this on board in our county.

Councillor Felim Gurn said it is important to bring businesses back into our Main Streets and bring the towns and villages back to life.

Councillor Des Guckian said he could not support the motion outright as speculators will not invest in schemes to renovate houses .

Councillors Sean McGowan and Paddy Farrell also supported the motion.

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan outlined her view that a home improvement grant should be made available to owners of town and rural houses in order to renovate those properties.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Mary Bohan
SECONDED by Cllr. Enda McGloin

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council call on the Government to introduce a scheme of home improvement grants for town and rural houses. This would revitalise our towns and villages and assist those in the rural areas.

MM.88.21 Motion from Councillor Enda Stenson - Road Works Schedule

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Enda Stenson;

"With 4 months of our Road works schedule lost to COVID19, will Leitrim County Council be allowed employ extra staff to try and complete the works program for 2021, or will outside contractors be employed to do this work?"

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

"Leitrim County Council will be making every effort possible to deliver the roadworks program within the available timescale. The program is carried out each year with a combination of both Direct Labour works and Contractor works, and this is the case in the current year. In regard to seasonal roads staff, we currently have temporary staff employed on the roadworks program and are in the process of recruiting some additional temporary staff."

Councillor Thomas Mulligan moved this motion as Councillor Enda Stenson had to leave the meeting.

MM.89.21 Motion from Councillor Gerry Dolan - Afforestation and Felling Licences

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

"As Leitrim has over 32,000 hectares of conifer plantations and the fact that there have been 8 substantial forest fires in the last 10 years, I ask Leitrim County Council to write to the Minister for Agriculture Charlie McConalogue to make it compulsory that fire breaks are installed when granting afforestation and felling licences, to protect people, property and the fire service employees."

Councillor Justin Warnock moved Councillor Gerry Dolan's motion as he was not in attendance.

MM.90.21 Motion from Councillor Paddy O'Rourke - Decentralisation Government Departments to provincial towns

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Paddy O'Rourke;

"I propose that Leitrim County Council ask the Minister for Community and Rural Development what plans are there, if any, at Governmental level to investigate opportunities to Decentralise Government Departments to provincial towns. If the pandemic has done anything for us, it has proven that a great number of jobs are doable from towns in Rural Ireland. For this reason, along with the benefits of reducing road traffic and congestion, surely the Government must consider a Decentralisation Programme at this time."

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke said since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people who previously commuted to work are now working from home. Councillor Paddy O'Rourke proposed that Leitrim County Council find out what plans are in place at Government level for a Decentralisation programme as such a programme would have many advantages and Leitrim is well suited, ready for it and would welcome it.

Councillor Justin Warnock supported the motion outlining that there is a big shift to rural areas and this will have a positive impact on rural communities.

Councillor Enda McGloin supported the motion and pointed out that the Minister with responsibility for this remit is the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. Councillor Enda McGloin outlined that an audit should be carried out among civil servants to ascertain where they are and where they want to relocate to under such a programme.

Councillor Des Guckian said this will not be a success and the last decentralisation programme was a failure.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke said it was not a failure. He has spoken to people who availed of the programme and the quality of their lives has improved and it has given a better chance to their children.

Councillor Paddy Farrell and Councillor Felim Gurn supported the motion.

Councillor Des Guckian said under the last programme, people were forced into the programme by authorities, no real consultation took place and it was wrong.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Paddy O'Rourke
SECONDED by Cllr. Justin Warnock

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council ask the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform what plans are there, if any, at Governmental level to investigate opportunities to Decentralise Government Departments to provincial towns. If the pandemic has done anything for us, it has proven that a great number of jobs are doable from towns in Rural Ireland. For this reason, along with the benefits of reducing road traffic and congestion, surely the Government must consider a Decentralisation Programme at this time.

MM.91.21 Any Other Business

Cathaoirleach Councillor Mary Bohan paid tribute to Councillor Paddy O'Rourke on his recent successful fundraising campaign for North West Hospice.

Mr Terry McGovern, A/Senior Engineer advised that a joint meeting of members from Carrick-on Shannon Area in Leitrim and members from Boyle Area in Roscommon will take place on 19th May 2021 at 11 am in relation to the draft route for the N4 Carrick-on-Shannon to Dromod Project.

This concluded the business of the meeting at 4.20 pm

Signed:

Cathaoirleach

**Kieran Brett
Meetings Administrator**

Dated: Monday, 12th July 2021