

Minutes of Leitrim County Council meeting held in the Áras Padraig, Drumshanbo (N41 YE63) on Monday, 4 July 2022

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

Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn (Cathaoirleach) presiding

Apologies: Vincent Dwyer, Head of Finance, Water, Environment, Climate Action, and Emergency Services
Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services, Community and Cultural Services

Officials Present: Lar Power, Chief Executive
Joseph Gilhooly, Director of Services, Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructural Services
Shay O'Connor, Senior Engineer
Terry McGovern, Senior Engineer
Bernard Greene, Senior Planner
Emer Connolly, Senior Executive Officer
Kathleen Ellis, Assistant Staff Officer
Kieran Brett, Meetings Administrator

MM.80.22 Votes of Sympathy

The Members extended a vote of sympathy to the following:

- The Rooney Family, 23 Glenview, Kinlough, Co Leitrim on the death of Ann Marie

Rooney RIP

- The Clarke Family, Drumhall, Drumshanbo on the death of Michael Lynch RIP
- The McPartlin Family, Boston on death of Frankie McPartlin RIP
- The Egan Family, Drumany, Foxfield on the death of Pat Egan RIP

MM.81.22 Adoption of Minutes

MM.81.22a Adoption of Minutes 9th May 2022

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Caillian Ellis
SECONDED by Cllr. Sean McDermott

It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of 9th May 2022

MM.81.22b Adoption of Minutes of the Annual Meeting 24th June 2022

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Paddy O'Rourke
SECONDED by Cllr. Finola Armstrong McGuire

It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the 24th June 2022.

MM.82.22 Section 85 Agreement with Donegal County Council under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 2001 concerning the design, construction and completion of the R280 Lennox Bridge Project with Leitrim County Council being the administering authority

Mr Terry McGovern, Senior Engineer provided an overview of the proposal and outlined that the Department of Transport has given approval and funding for the appointment of a Technical Engineering Specialist to examine options and alternatives for the R280 Lennox bridge. Leitrim County Council has in the past been the lead authority for this scheme and have strived to alleviate safety problems caused by the narrow bridge cross-section on the regional road R280. The regional road is an important link road, and acts as a strategic route between Leitrim and Donegal. As construction and environmental standards have developed since the inception of this scheme in the early 1980's, the Department advised the local authority to reassess the bridge and commence the appraisal for the project once more. The scheme will be examined against the RW06/2018 Appraisal Procedures and Forms for Regional and Local Roads (RLR) Capital Projects [DOT], this will also align with the TII PE-PMG-02041, TII Project Management Guidelines, Common Appraisal Framework and Public Spending Code.

It has been agreed with Donegal County Council that Leitrim County Council will act as lead authority for this scheme.

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

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council enter into an agreement with Donegal County Council under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 2001 concerning the design, construction and completion of the R280 Lennox Bridge Project with Leitrim County Council being the administrating authority.

MM.83.22 Section 85 Agreement with Cavan County Council under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 2001 concerning the planning, design, construction and completion of the SLNCR Greenway Project with Leitrim County Council being the lead authority

Mr Shay O'Connor, Senior Engineer provided an overview of the proposal outlining that the SLNCR Greenway project is to construct a greenway between Sligo and Enniskillen in County Fermanagh largely following the redundant Sligo, Leitrim Northern Counties Railway Line.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) have been appointed as funding authority for all regional and national greenway projects in Ireland, of which the SLNCR Greenway is one. In accordance with TII policy, the TII must be a signature to all Section 85 Agreements for their projects. Leitrim County Council will act as lead authority for this scheme.

It is therefore necessary to approve a revised Section 85 Agreement with Cavan County Council, which the TII will also sign.

Leitrim County Council will also sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council for the purpose of Leitrim County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council to work in partnership to assess the feasibility, design, obtain appropriate approvals and prepare tender documentation for the construction of the greenway

Mr O'Connor said this proposal would be presented to Cavan County Council at their July monthly meeting for approval.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Sean McDermott
SECONDED by Cllr. Mary Bohan

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council enter into an agreement with Cavan County Council under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 2001 concerning the design, construction, and completion of the SLNCR Greenway Project with Leitrim County Council being the lead Authority.

MM.84.22 Section 85 Agreement with Sligo County Council under Section 85 of the

Local Government Act 2001 concerning the planning, design, construction and completion of the SLNCR Greenway Project with Leitrim County Council being the lead authority

Mr O'Connor said this proposal would be presented to Sligo County Council at their July monthly meeting for approval.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Sean McDermott
SECONDED by Cllr. Mary Bohan

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council enter into an agreement with Sligo County Council under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 2001 concerning the design, construction, and completion of the SLNCR Greenway Project with Leitrim County Council being the lead Authority

Councillor Mary Bohan paid tribute to the great work being done by Leitrim County Council in this regard.

MM.85.22 **Consider extension of the existing County Development Plan 2015-2021, as varied, up to 31st March 2023**

Mr Bernard Greene, Senior Planner outlined that the Chief Executive's report has been issued to the Elected Members which appears as **Appendix 1** to the minutes of this meeting reporting on the outcome of the statutory consultation process as prescribed in Section 11D of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended and to extend the duration of the existing Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2021.

Mr Bernard Greene, Senior Planner said the extension of the existing Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2021 (as varied) is necessary to ensure it remains operational until such time as the new Leitrim County Development Plan 2023-2029 comes into effect. The extension of the duration will provide for a further period of up to 9 months in order to complete the review of the Leitrim County Development Plan 2015-2021 (as varied) and to prepare and make a new Leitrim County Development Plan for the functional area of Leitrim County Council.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Padraig Fallon
SECONDED by Cllr. Enda McGloin

It was **AGREED** to extend the existing County Development Plan 2015-2021 as varied up to the 31st March 2023.

Councillor Des Guckian said he was not in favour of extending the County Development Plan 2015-2021 (as varied) up to the 31st March 2023 as this could present an opportunity for Vulture Funds to operate in Leitrim.

Councillor Pádraig Fallon said a number of workshops have been held with Elected Members on this matter. He acknowledged that these workshops have been most valuable and it is the view of most of the Elected Members who have attended the workshops that it is important that the new County Development plan is thoroughly and properly prepared, rather than rushing through the new Leitrim County Development Plan due to the existing one coming to the end of its term.

MM.86.22 Approve the raising of a loan of €5m for the purposes of matched funding requirements of the Capital Investment Programme for the period 2022 - 2027

Mr Lar Power, Chief Executive outlined that the raising of a loan of €5m was for the purposes of matching funding requirements of the Capital Investment Plan for the period 2022-2027 that was presented to the Elected Members in January 2020.

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

It was **AGREED** to approve the raising of a loan of €5m for the purposes of matched funding requirements of the Capital Investment Programme for the period 2022 – 2027.

MM.87.22 Management Reports - April & May 2022

The Monthly Management Reports for April and May 2022, as circulated, were noted by Members.

Councillor Des Guckian raised the following items:

- He referred to a motion he put forward recently at a Carrick on Shannon Municipal District meeting seeking the installation of a WWTP at Kilclare and sought an update on the recently announced scheme for unsewered towns and villages
- He welcomed the Balance Bike Programme that was delivered in Annaduff.
- He queried why the Contactor has pulled out of the Carrick Destination Town Scheme and what is going to happen now with this scheme.
- He paid tribute to the student from Mohill Community College who won the “Young Historian for 2022” under the “Young Historian Programme”. The project was on the life and deportation of Jimmy Galton.

Mr Shay O’Connor outlined that the Contactor appointed to the Carrick Destination Town Scheme could no longer stand over the contract price that was originally agreed, due to inflationary costs on construction materials, and has withdrawn from the scheme. Leitrim County Council are now in discussions with Fáilte Ireland with a view to sourcing extra funding.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly confirmed that further information will be made available to Councillor Des Guckian regarding the pilot programme that has been announced for unsewered small towns and villages.

MM.88.22 Report from Corporate Policy Group

Mr Kieran Brett, outlined the Corporate Policy Group had considered the following items at their online meeting held on the 1st July 2022:

- Update on Housing, Community & Culture SPC.
- Items for Council Meeting 4th July 2022.
- Members considered the forthcoming events and determined which events were appropriate to attend having regard to training needs of the elected members and approved the attendance of Elected Members at the Sean MacDiarmada Summer School in Kiltyclogher held on the 17th to 18th June 2022.
- Consider request for Civic Reception for Rickie Wynne arising from Ballinamore MD Meeting.

Mr Brett outlined that Mr Ricki Wynne had recently broken a world record for the most vertical metres ascended and descended in a 24-hour period by running up and down Croagh Patrick 15 times.

The members agreed that this would be an appropriate recognition for Rickie Wynne, and it was agreed that a presentation will be made to Mr. Wynne at the September Council meeting.

The update was noted by Members.

MM.89.22 Attendance at conferences/training

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Paddy Farrell
SECONDED by Cllr Sean McDermott

It was **AGREED** that the attendance of Cllr Paddy O'Rourke at the Age Friendly Ireland event on the 7th April 2022 in Croke Park, Dublin be retrospectively approved.

MM.90.22 Meeting Correspondence

- Email of the 16th May 2022 from Victor Boyhan enclosing information on the provision of Cost Rental Housing.
- 2. Resolution dated 17th May 2022 from Cavan County Council to the Minister for Environment, Climate & Communications opposing the ban on the cutting and sale of turf.

Councillor Des Guckian proposed that Leitrim County Council support this motion.

This was seconded by Councillor Mary Bohan and supported by Councillor Paddy Farrell.

3. Email of the 24th May 2022 from Head of Service, Disability Services acknowledging receipt of letter in regard to Respite Centre for Carrick-on-Shannon.
4. Email from Senator Victor Boyhan of the 14th May 2022 enclosing copy of the Urban Regeneration Report.
5. Letter dated 24th May 2022 from the Office of the Tanaiste acknowledging Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council.
6. Letter dated 24th May 2022 from the Office of the Minister for Social Protection acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to artists with disabilities be allowed an artists payment without it affecting their disabilities supports.
7. Email of the 25th May 2022 from the Office of the Minister for Transport acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council regarding the upgrading of septic tanks.
8. Email of the 25th May 2022 from the Office of the Minister for Transport acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council regarding Flintridge Resources.
9. Email of the 26th May 2022 from the Office of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council regarding septic tanks.
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10. Resolution from Galway County Council dated 27th May 2022 regarding public recognition marker for the LGBTQI+ Community.
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11. Email of the 30th May 2022 from the Central Bank in regard to Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council regarding assistance to Ulster Bank Customers.
12. Letter dated 30th May 2022 from the Head of Service Disability, HSE in regard to Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council regarding the provision of a Respite Centre in Carrick-on-Shannon to meet the needs of people with disability.
13. Acknowledgement dated 1st June 2022 from the Office of the Taoiseach in regard to Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council regarding working conditions and Pay Increase for Hospital staff.

Councillor Des Guckian queried if any further update has been received in this

regard. Mr Kieran Brett confirmed no further update has been received to date in this regard.

14. Acknowledgement dated 1st June 2022 from the Office of the Taoiseach in regard to Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council regarding the Prospecting Licence to Flintridge Resources.
15. Email of the 8th June 2022 from Marian Harkin TD acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council regarding the prospecting licence to Flintridge Resources.
16. Resolution from Sligo County Council dated 16th June 2022 calling on the Government to open a public passport office in Sligo to serve communities and people in the West, North-West and North of Ireland.
17. Resolution from Sligo County Council dated 16th June 2022 calling on the Ministers for Social Protection and Justice to ask that the National Abhaile Service be secured permanently for the future and that vital Dedicated Mortgage Advisor roles be continued and for the creation of more DMA roles throughout the country.
18. Resolution from Cork City Council dated 20th June 2022 calling on the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications and Minister Peter Burke, Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government and Planning to ensure specialist staffing resources are in put in place in 2022 to ensure the delivery of transformative change and measurable climate action across our cities and counties.
19. Resolution from Cork City Council dated 20th June 2022 reaffirming the motion of no confidence in the Board of An Bord Pleanála passed on the 13th July 2020.
20. Resolution from Donegal County Council dated 24th June 2022 calling on the Department to consider changing Culture Night in September to Culture Weekend for future years.
21. Resolution from Donegal County Council dated 24th June 2022 calling of Minister Humphrey that recently arrived Ukrainian Nationals would qualify for the TUS Scheme.
22. Memo to Elected Members of Leitrim County Council dated 24th June 2022 confirming the date and time of a workshop on the Local Improvement Scheme with Members.
23. Resolution from Kerry County Council dated 23rd June 2022 calling for the provision of long covid clinics to be retained and expanded.

Other items discussed under meeting correspondence

Councillor Brendan Barry said the following motion has been supported by all Local Authorities and he asked for the support of the Members "that this Council calls on the Irish government to ratify, as soon as possible, The Convention Against Trafficking in Human Organs which was adopted by the Council of Europe on 9 July 2014 in order to criminalise illegal organ transplantations. The Irish Government has already signed this convention but is yet to ratify it."

The members supported this.

MM.91.22 Motion from Councillor Des Guckian - Extension of the N4

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

"That we ask Leitrim Co Council officials and TII to immediately publish their intentions about the detailed design and the actual route to be taken by the N4 extension of The Dromod /Rooskey By-pass, from Faulties to the new bridge over the Shannon, close to Glas na hAbhainn Estate, Carrick-on-Shannon. There is great concern among the farming community who fear difficulty of access to lands and, also, residents of homes whose houses may be demolished or end up too close to the new roadway. It is grossly unfair that such concerned citizens should be left in a cruel limbo situation."

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

"Leitrim County Council has a Project Liaison Officer in place who is available to meet in-person with concerned residents, farmers and property owners to discuss their concerns and to explain the process to them, and indeed, many one to one meetings have taken place. The design team are closing out the final part of Phase 2 Options Selection following on from the recent public display and subject to approval by TII will progress to Phase 3 Design and Environmental Assessment later this year. During the next phase, the proposed design will be discussed with the affected property owners so that it can best fit into the receiving environment. Access to property, both residents and farms, is a key part of this design and mitigation and will take cognisance of the engagement and information received from the property owners."

Councillor Des Guckian gave the background to his motion, and he stated there are many fears expressed by farmers who fear difficulty in accessing their lands and residents of homes whose houses may be demolished or end up too close to the new roadway. Councillor Des Guckian referred to an online meeting held on the 17th May last with representatives from the Council and where Marian Harkin TD called for the Council to be honest and truthful to those most effected and he said this is a renewal of her appeal.

Councillor Brendan Barry said nobody should have the fear of their house being demolished.

He said the Council have given some guidance on the route corridor, which is 300 metres, however only approximately 40 metres of this corridor will actually be used for the roadway.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly said the design is quite complicated and the design is going to be appropriate.

Mr Terry McGovern outlined that there is a Project Liaison Officer in place who is available to meet in-person or via online with residents, farmers, and property owners to discuss their concerns and to explain the process to them. He said 650 people attended the public consultation, 38 people attended one to one meetings, there had been 27 phone calls and 30 emails from concerned locals. The width of the corridor is 300 metres and there is no intention of demolishing 10-12 houses. The design team are closing out the final part of Phase 2 - Options Selection - following on from the recent public display, and subject to approval by TII will progress to Phase 3 - Design and Environmental Assessment - later this year. During the next phase, the proposed design will be discussed with the affected property owners so that it can best fit into the receiving environment.

Mr McGovern said all concerns are taken into consideration and the main objective is safety. There are currently 150 direct access points onto to the road but there will be no direct access onto the new proposed roadway. Access will be facilitated but they will be grouped together.

Councillor Des Guckian said the letter of the law was being followed and not the spirit of the people.

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn sought a seconder for the proposal and as the motion was not seconded, she proceeded to the next item of business.

MM.92.22 Motion from Councillor Pdraig Fallon - Reduction in excise and vat

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

"I propose that this Local Authority write to the three Government party leaders as well as the Ministers for Finance and Transport seeking a reduction in excise and VAT on fuel and home heating oil."

Councillor Pdraig Fallon said this is an issue that is raised everyday with him, and he said we can do nothing about it. Councillor Pdraig Fallon gave the background to his motion and said a reduction of 20% in transport fares is welcomed but he said a rural dweller in Leitrim does not see this impact and he proposed that Leitrim County Council write to the three Government party leaders as well as the Ministers for Finance and Transport seeking a reduction of 20 % for a limited time, in excise and vat on fuel and home heating oil, as rural dwellers cannot avail of the 20% reduction in transport costs. A reduction in excise and vat will reduce delivery costs as there is not an item that fuel prices don't have an impact on. People need to understand that a reduction in excise and vat will reduce delivery costs As

fuel prices increase the Government is gaining additional income through greater amounts of excise and VAT.

Councillor Brendan Barry supported the motion and he asked that this extra money be passed back to the people as the state is profiteering.

All members supported this.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Padraig Fallon
SECONDED by Cllr Brendan Barry

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council write to the three Government party leaders as well as the Ministers for Finance and Transport seeking a reduction in excise and vat on fuel and home heating oil.

Councillor Des Guckian said he does want to see no more discrimination against rural Ireland.

MM.93.22 Motion from Councillor Enda Stenson - IDA visit Leitrim

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

"May I ask, have IDA personnel visited Leitrim in 2022? We urgently need employment opportunities to keep our young people in Leitrim."

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

"The Council can confirm that IDA personnel have visited Leitrim this year already. The Council engages on an ongoing basis with the IDA in regard to the potential of securing foreign direct investment. The IDA are fully familiar with all property solutions in the County including both established buildings and opportunity sites including being planning ready. The IDA also continues to work closely with the existing IDA supported companies in the County where employment has grown by 9% in the last year, well ahead of the region's average. In addition to focusing on supporting the growth of the existing companies ongoing and active support is provided in training, upskilling, research and development, future proofing, and sustainability measures. The potential too for remote working is also recognised and fully supported by the IDA as part of their suite of initiatives. Finally, national policy now determines that 50% of FDI created employment is focused on the regions, notwithstanding the difficulties experienced in securing investment decisions across many regions within a fiercely competitive marketplace, along with specific targets."

Councillor Enda Stenson welcomed the reply received in this regard.

Councillor Enda Stenson asked if IDA come to the county with intent or just to visit around the county.

Councillor Enda Stenson proposed that some multi-national company be brought into the county to bring jobs and provide opportunities for young people in Leitrim. Councillor Stenson acknowledged that the population of Leitrim has increased in the last census. Councillor Stenson said 98% of GAA players have to go to work at least 100 kms from the county. Cllr Stenson acknowledged that Leitrim has an excellent road and rail network, Knock Airport is in close proximity, and the availability of good quality commercial buildings.

Councillor Enda McGloin said the world has changed alot where we can get our employment. Most of employment in this county is not related to IDA and he noted that there are a lot of entrepreneurs in this county and most of the foreign investment goes to the East coast of this country.

Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire said that many of our youth want to go away and travel.

Councillor Mary Bohan supported the motion and said this issue needs to be kept on the agenda. Councillor Bohan acknowledged that people want to move away, and she noted that not every location has proper broadband in the county.

Councillor Mary Bohan said more people must be encouraged to come back and to bring back their families as these are great resources for our county.

Councillor Justin Warnock supported the motion and he said we don't have the infrastructure in place to bring in the jobs.

Councillor Thomas Mulligan proposed that the Enterprise office put in place a process to hold a meeting at least once a year with IDA and the Elected Members. Councillor Enda McGloin and Councillor Sean McGowan supported this.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly said Leitrim County Council engage on an ongoing basis with the IDA and many other agencies to equip the county for people who want to return to live in Leitrim. Leitrim County Council also engage on an ongoing basis with the IDA to secure potential foreign direct investment for the county and using the existing facilities of the locality and he pointed out that the investor makes the final decision.

MM.94.22 Motion from Councillor Felim Gurn - Leader Programme

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

"I call on Minister Heather Humphreys to reduce the amount of match funding that applicants to the new Leader program will have to come up with from 25 percent to 5 - 10 percent, before the new programme for funding starts next year, as new applicants will struggle to fund projects due to high material costs and inflation."

Councillor Felim Gurn gave the background to his motion and said new applicants will

struggle to fund projects due to the high material costs.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Felim Gurn
SECONDED by Cllr Enda Stenson

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council call on Minister Heather Humphreys to reduce the amount of match funding that applicants to the new Leader program will have to come up with from 25 percent to 5 - 10 percent, before the new programme for funding starts next year, as new applicants will struggle to fund projects due to high material costs and inflation.

All members supported this.

MM.95.22 Motion from Councillor Sean McGowan - Local Link

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

"I will seek the support of members in calling on the Dept of Transport & the Local Link office to look at the possibility of providing transport to our rural towns & villages to support the night-time economy particularly at weekends."

Councillor Sean McGowan said there are no taxis services in a lot of towns in the County apart from Carrick-on-Shannon. Smaller villages are suffering because they don't have local taxis services.

Councillor Sean McGowan proposed that Local Link services be provided in our rural towns and villages to support the night-time economy particularly at the weekends on a pilot basis to see if there is demand for the service. Local businesses would also like to see this introduced.

Councillor Caillian Ellis supported the motion and said this will not be easy to achieve.

Councillor Brendan Barry said it should be done at least on a pilot basis. Councillor Barry also asked if Councillor Mc Gowan would include in his motion that the current Local Link services could be reviewed with regard to extra capacity or additional buses being provided around peak times on popular/busy routes.

Councillor Justin Warnock said a local link bus service is available in Kinlough up to 12 midnight which is very beneficial.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Sean McGowan
SECONDED by Cllr Caillian Ellis

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council call on the Dept of Transport & the Local Link office to look at the possibility of providing transport to our rural towns & villages to support

the night-time economy particularly at weekends and that the current local link services could be reviewed with regard to extra capacity or additional buses being provided around peak times on popular/busy routes.

MM.96.22 Motion from Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire - Planning Applications

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

"I ask that our Planning Department leads out on minimising the paper content required in Planning applications made by the public. Copies of numerous numbers of items are requested by our planning office while many readings are easily available to do online. An in-house audit of hard copy and online copy would reduce paper usage, print usage and space provision going forward."

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

"The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage are responsible for specifying the requirements of a planning application through the Planning & Development Regulations, 2001, as amended. The Regulations require the submission of 6 no. copies of all drawings and reports submitted with a planning application and 3 no. copies of revised drawings or additional reports resulting from a Further Information request. The Planning Regulations do allow for a Planning Authority to consent to the making of a planning application wholly or partly in searchable electronic or other electronic form; where that occurs, one hard copy of the application or part thereof is sufficient. The Planning Authority have not been requested to date to allow for a planning application to be submitted in electronic form. The Planning Authority would require a minimum of 2 no. hard copies in such a situation.

Separately, the Department are currently in the process of rolling out an Electronic Planning (E Planning) process on a nationwide basis. Leitrim County Council are scheduled within Wave 3 of the rollout for online planning which is scheduled for Q1 2023. This will allow for the seamless submission of a planning application by electronic means in a similar manner to submitting a Commencement Notice. It will be optional for planning agents to avail of such a facility, and we will be required to continue to operate a dual system after its introduction whereby agents can still submit an application in hard copy format. In tandem with the introduction of E-Planning in Q1 of next year, the Planning Authority will seek to encourage the maximum use of this facility to reduce the extent of paper used in the planning application process."

Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire gave the background to her motion and said that planning agents and architects are not aware that electronic planning documents can be submitted and are not availing of this service.

Referring to the response to the motion, Mr Bernard Greene, Senior Planner said the

Planning Regulations do allow for a Planning Authority to consent to the making of a planning application wholly or partly in searchable electronic or other electronic form; where that occurs, one hard copy of the application or part thereof is sufficient.

Mr Bernard Greene said the new system, once introduced, will reduce the amount of paper and also the work that goes in copying files for appeals and information requests.

Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire welcomed this reply.

MM.97.22 Motion from Councillor Brendan Barry - Local Improvement Scheme

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

"I request that Leitrim County Council reopen the Local Improvement Scheme for new applications."

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

"As the members have been made aware from our correspondence of June 21st, a workshop has been held this morning with all members, which outlined the current situation of the LIS waiting list on hand, and considerations to be taken into account with regard to any opening of the scheme going forward. This matter continues to be under consideration by the council executive and the members and it is expected that a definite position with regard to reopening the scheme will be arrived at later in the year."

Councillor Brendan Barry welcomed the useful workshop held prior to the Council meeting regarding the Local Improvement Scheme. Councillor Barry said he is looking forward to the scheme opening as soon as possible and he welcomed that 12-13 laneways will be completed this year. Cllr Barry said the LIS form should be simple and straightforward.

Councillor Mary Bohan supported the motion outlining that there are 39 schemes on the old list and a once off payment is needed to get these completed.

Mr Terry McGovern said he will revert to the Members at the next meeting with the revised Local Improvement Scheme.

MM.98.22 Motion from Councillor Justin Warnock - Population Growth in Leitrim

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

"The CSO has published the preliminary figures from the Census 2022 on population growth in Leitrim, which records a population of 35,087. This is an increase of 3,043 or 9.5%. Does this welcomed increase in population sound alarm bells in this Local Authority, as

housing stocks to be delivered during the lifetime of our new County Development Plan will be totally inadequate. I ask that the Housing Strategy section of the CDP be revisited and amended to reflect the increase in population."

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

"The Planning Authority welcomes the population growth recorded in the preliminary Census results. Official Census results will not be published until Q2 of next year. The preliminary Census results have no bearing on the Housing Strategy as contained within the draft County Development Plan. The preparation of the Housing Strategy was required to be consistent with the published Section 28 Guidelines – Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning, which were published in December 2000. These Guidelines do not specify population targets but rather household targets to accommodate population growth in line with the National Planning Framework. What the preliminary Census results show is that the population of Co. Leitrim has or is approaching the growth provided for up to 2026 4 years early. This population increase was provided for in the Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework (July 218) which is turn fed into the preparation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for our region.

The results are also interesting in highlighting that although the population increased by 9.5%, the growth in the number of housing stock increased by 3%. This highlights the extent of existing vacant and underutilized housing stock that is being brought back into beneficial use.

It is the view of the Planning Authority that until such time as the Department reviews their Section 28 Guidelines which would not be expected before the official Census results are published that there is no basis or indeed evidential base to review the extent of lands zoned in the new County Development Plan. No review of the Housing Strategy is therefore required noting that it is a legal requirement to do so within 2 years of the new County Development Plan taking effect."

Councillor Justin Warnock gave the background to his motion and said Leitrim County Council needs additional social housing and Leitrim County Council does not have the land to build houses in Kinlough and Kiltyclogher and so the Council have to buy houses. He said people currently in the rental sector need affordable housing which they can buy, the working poor need to be recognised and looked after.

Councillor Justin Warnock proposed that the County Development Plan needs to be amended, as there are not enough of houses to meet the needs of the people.

Councillor Des Guckian supported the motion and said the County Development Plan needs to be revisited to meet the current needs.

Councillor Enda McGloin supported the motion and said it is interesting that although the population increased by 9.5%, the growth in the number of housing stock increased by 3%.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke said the Department of Housing are working on a new scheme to incentivise people to refurbish vacant houses. He acknowledged this will not meet the entire demands of the county. Cllr O'Rourke said vacant houses are a major issue as pointed out in the census, but this proposed new scheme will go somewhere to deal with the issue.

Councillor Brendan Barry said that less land is being zoned for housing and this allows landowners to push up prices and he called for more land to be zoned to make houses more affordable to be built.

Councillor Felim Gurn said the population has increased significantly stating it is cheaper to buy houses than build a house as the costs are very high.

Councillors Mary Bohan, Gerry Dolan, and Sean McDermott supported the motion.

Mr Bernard Greene outlined that it will be a year before the detailed population breakdown is available from the Census. The census figure also includes transient persons, such as those that have recently moved to Leitrim from the Ukraine. The issue is not about the availability of zoned lands as the amount of zoned land far exceeds the housing need. The issue is not one of supply and demand, it is an affordability issue.

Mr Bernard Greene outlined that although the motion has been proposed and seconded, a review of the Housing Strategy will not take place at this time. An appropriate time for such a review is in two years' time once the full Census data is known. Of the Census data already released, it is positive news that the number of unoccupied houses in the county is decreasing.

Councillor Justin Warnock said he can only speak for his own area and there is no social housing in Kinlough, we must look after the working poor and make housing more affordable and available for them, we must step up and sort the issue as we cannot wait 2 years - something must be done.

MM.99.22 Motion from Councillor Sean McDermott - Slow Adventure Tourism

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

"Can I ask what progress is been made in regards to Slow Adventure Tourism for Leitrim as we are a designated area for Slow Adventure Tourism."

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

"Slow Adventure Tourism was the result of a research and development transnational project with the partner countries Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland. Leitrim was the Irish partner and has become the designated area for Slow Adventure Tourism in Ireland, alongside Derry in Northern Ireland.

The project developed principles and guidelines, and Leitrim was a pilot initiative to develop Slow Adventure experiences. On completing the project, we continued to create the experiences to an international standard and developed a website and social media platforms. Slow Adventure Tourism is ideal for Irelands Hidden Heartlands and has become one of their key offerings. During the last few years, we have seen an increase in demand from the tourist for this type of Slow Tourism, providing Leitrim with a unique selling point and a competitive edge over other regions.

The recent pandemic and the impact of SMEs in the tourism sector have resulted in some business closures and some new businesses opening. We have felt the need to take time to revisit the current offering and refresh existing and develop new experiences."

Councillor Sean McDermott welcomed the reply received in this regard.

Councillor Justin Warnock supported the motion and asked if any progress has been made on taking in charge of the Arroo Trail.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly said the Arroo Trail has developed satisfactorily for a number of years with support of grant aid. Leitrim Recreation Forum and Leitrim Development Company are in ongoing discussions with landowners to restore permissive access. Leitrim County Council will only explore taking in charge the Arroo trail once all means to reopening the trail have been explored and a satisfactory outcome has failed to be agreed.

Councillor Justin Warnock expressed his concerns for local farmers who are losing out on grant payments while the trail is closed.

MM.100.22 Motion from Councillor Paddy Farrell - Leaving Certificate Students

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

"I call on Leitrim County Council to contact Minister for Education, Norma Foley, to put more funding and resources into children with special needs, and also to give as much help as possible to next years Leaving Cert students as they have lost a lot of school time and have never sat a state exam."

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Paddy Farrell
SECONDED by Cllr Sean McGowan

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council contact Minister for Education, Norma Foley, to put more funding and resources into children with special needs, and also to give as much help as possible to next years Leaving Cert students as they have lost a lot of school time and have never sat a state exam.

Councillor Mary Bohan supported the motion and said that additional resources should be made for speech therapy as the shortage of resources in this area is having a detrimental

effect on children who require this service.

Members expressed their concerns that the Leaving Certificate results will not be released until the 2nd September and this leaves it very difficult for parents and children to seek accommodation and there should be a major effort put in place to get the necessary staff required to correct the exams and get the results out quickly.

Councillor Des Guckian said adequate facilities and staffing are badly needed for children with disabilities.

MM.101.22 Motion from Councillor Enda McGloin - House Vacancy

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

"While County Leitrim has recorded a reduction in house vacancy it still has almost 2,900 houses empty according to the 2022 census. I propose that this local authority applies for funding to investigate through an expert led study to clarify what is the reason for such a large number of vacant properties, the reason for same and what measures can be considered to encourage the owners of these properties if they are viable to either sell them or rent them, to allow some ease to the pressure we have in Leitrim for homes to buy or rent."

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

"The recently published census data show a significant reduction in the level of vacancy rates across the County. Notwithstanding this reduction Leitrim County Council acknowledges the need to further reduce the number of vacant homes throughout the County.

The Council has appointed a fulltime Vacant Homes Officer who will actively monitor and assess vacancy data locally using CSO / Geo Directory data, vacanthomes.ie, etc., build local vacancy knowledge through site inspections, surveys, etc., and support the implementation of current and any emerging initiatives from the Department.

The Vacant Homes Officer will provide an advisory role to local authority teams and is available to provide advice to members of the public on vacant homes/properties to assist, inform, provide and promote up to date advice on bringing vacant property back into use including across the suite of schemes available at national level."

Councillor Enda McGloin said 2,900 is a significant number of houses to be vacant across a population of 35,000. Councillor Enda McGloin noted it is a shame to see so many houses empty during a housing crisis and that nothing is ever done about them. Councillor Enda McGloin proposed that Leitrim County Council seek funding for a study to be undertaken to clarify what is the reason for so many vacant properties, and what measures can be considered to encourage the owners of these properties if they are viable to either sell or

rent them, which will in turn ease the demand that exists in Leitrim for homes to buy or rent.

Councillor Enda McGloin welcomed the reply received and welcomed the appointment of a Vacant Homes Officer. Councillor McGloin said he hoped to receive a report from the Officer in the near future as to how these vacant properties could be brought back into use in the community.

Councillor Sean McDermott said this would be one way of correcting the problem of rural depopulation and getting people back into living in these areas.

Councillor Brendan Barry said many people like to come and live in Leitrim, but he acknowledged that landowners are afraid of selling property they own as issues may develop after the property is purchased.

Councillor Felim Gurn said he was shocked by the number of vacant houses in Manorhamilton and there is a need to get them back into use and make them viable.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke supported the motion said there are many houses out there and he referred to a house in his area that was built in 1963 that has been turned into a family home with a relatively small outlay and he said once houses are structurally sound these have quite a potential.

Councillor Des Guckian said he is not sure if this will sort out the issue and he referred to the Urban Regeneration Report that was circulated to the Members from Senator Victor Boyhan. Councillor Des Guckian said he was very sceptical of what is being said as there is no damp proof in these older houses, and they are not suitable for present day needs as they are expensive to renovate and to heat.

Councillor Gerry Dolan supported the motion and said there is too much red tape involved in Local Authority tenants buying out their houses from the Local Authority.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly said there was good news in the census regarding houses vacancies and he noted that the census information released does not give a breakdown on the different categories of vacancy.

MM.102.22 Motion from Councillor Paddy O'Rourke - Bus Tickets

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

"I ask that Leitrim County Council contact the School Transport Section of Bus Eireann urging them to notify parents and guardians as to which Students/Pupils are going to be eligible for bus tickets this coming school year, to avoid the deplorable situation that arose last year when parents and guardians were not informed until within days of the schools reopening, leaving them with inadequate time to come up with other solutions."

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke gave the background to his motion and called on the School Transport Section of Bus Eireann to notify parents and guardians in a timely manner as to which Students/Pupils are going to be eligible for bus tickets this coming school year so that they can make alternative arrangements if necessary. Councillor O'Rourke said how can the delay of last year be justified. Councillor O'Rourke proposed that this be sent to the Department of Education and Bus Eireann.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Paddy O'Rourke
SECONDED by Cllr Caillian Ellis

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council contact the School Transport Section of Bus Eireann urging them to notify parents and guardians as to which Students/Pupils are going to be eligible for bus tickets this coming school year, to avoid the deplorable situation that arose last year when parents and guardians were not informed until within days of the schools reopening, leaving them with inadequate time to come up with other solutions.

All members supported the motion.

MM.103.22 Motion from Councillor Mary Bohan - Shass Mountain Task Group

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

Councillor Mary Bohan asked if her motion could be considered as she did not have it submitted in time for the motion deadline date. The Members agreed to her request. Councillor Mary Bohan proposed that Leitrim County Council call on Minister Noonan to call a meeting of the Shass Mountain Task Group as a matter of urgency.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Mary Bohan
SECONDED by Cllr Padraig Fallon

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council call on Minister Noonan to call a meeting of the Shass Mountain Task Group as a matter of urgency.

MM.104.22 Any other Business

- Councillor Justin Warnock paid tribute to Mr Shay O'Connor and the staff of Leitrim County Council for their work on providing access to the sea at Tullaghan.

Members were informed that Minister Humphrey will be visiting Leitrim on the 20th July 2022 and notification will issue to Members in due course in this regard.

This concluded the business of the meeting at 1.05 pm

Signed:

Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn
Cathaoirleach

Kieran Brett
Meetings Administrator

Dated: Monday, 5 September 2022