

**Minutes of Leitrim County Council meeting held in the Council Chamber, Áras an Chontae,
Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim on Tuesday, 7 May 2024**

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 Pádraig 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 (Cathaoirleach) presiding

Apologies: Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn

Officials Present: Joseph Gilhooly, Deputy Chief Executive
Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services,
Community and Cultural Services
Vincent Dwyer, Head of Finance, Water, Environment, Climate
Action and Emergency Services
Justin Fannon, A/Director of Services, Economic Development,
Planning and Infrastructural Services
Terry McGovern, Senior Engineer
Bernard Greene, Senior Planner
Joseph Banks, A/Assistant Engineer
Alison McKeon, Assistant Engineer
Kieran Brett, Meetings Administrator
Kathleen Ellis, Assistant Staff Officer

MM.54.24 Votes of sympathy

The Members extended a vote of sympathy to the following

- Mrs Kay Cryan, Kiltymoodan, Ballinamore on the death of Columba Cryan R.I.P.
- Mr Tommy Masterson, Beaghmore, Carrigallen, Co Leitrim on the death of Gearld Masterson R.I.P.
- Mr Gabriel Lunney, Toome, Carrigallen, Co Leitrim on the death of Pádraig Lunney

R.I.P

MM.55.24 Adoption of Minutes 4th March 2024

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Paddy O'Rourke
SECONDED by Cllr. Mary Bohan

It was **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of the meeting of the 4th March 2024.

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Justin Warnock agreed to suspend the Standing Orders at this point in the meeting to give a presentation to the retiring Elected Members of Leitrim County Council.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly, Chief Executive (Interim) outlined the achievements of the Council over the last 5 years and paid tribute to the members of the outgoing Council for their dedication, commitment and vision for County Leitrim, all of which were instrumental in delivering growth and development of the county

Mr Gilhooly reflected on a challenging 5 years which saw the Council manage a number of emergencies, the principal one being the local and community response to the Covid pandemic, but also the Ukrainian response, energy costs and inflation along with successfully responding to unexpected events including the Shaus Mountain Landslide and the Leitrim Village Tornado.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly noted over the term of the council there was a 9.5% increase in the population of the county, well ahead of both National and Regional averages, with a 16% increase in people working in the County, 28% of which are hybrid working. The County was recognised in a number of awards such as the Best County to Start a Business and received the Best County Tourism Office at the ITTN Awards. The level of volunteering in the county has also been noted as the highest in the country at 18%. Over the 5 year period, the revenue budget of the Council grew from €36.5 million in 2019 to €52.5m for 2024 showing a 44% increase in investment in the delivery of a wide range of services coupled with an ambitious strategic capital investment programme.

In 2020 the Council developed an ambitious six-year strategic capital investment programme which now stands at €385m aimed at transforming the county through economic and tourism development, infrastructure and capital investment including roads and housing, environmental enhancements and recreational and amenity investment. Active implementation of the programme has been ongoing since with key projects initiated and delivered. Examples of projects range across town regeneration including Carrick on Shannon Public Realm, The Junction Project Balliamore, with Mohill public realm ongoing, provision of new library in Dromahair, the acquisition of the former MBNA facility in Carrick on Shannon and provision of the access to the sea at Tullaghan Shore. The programme has a strong pipeline of projects such as the design of the SLNCR Greenway, the design of the Blueway Boardwalk Experience from Carrick on Shannon to Battlebridge, the development of an water activities building at Acres Lake Drumshanbo, the N4 Carrick on Shannon to Dromod Project and substantial social housing delivery. The delivery of this capital

investment programme is highly dependent on, and has been extremely successful in, securing substantial investments from key national funds. Funding through Minister Heather Humphrey's Department of Rural and Community Development has enabled the development of a wide range of projects across the county and has contributed significant funding of up to 90% of the cost of many projects, through funding streams such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, for which the Council is very appreciative.

The housing division of the Council has seen a very active 5 years with over 1,000 social housing applications. Despite this level of activity, the Council has succeeded in maintaining the social housing waiting list at approximately 200 households, over the past 5 years. The Council has met all its social housing targets, delivering more than 170 housing units to a value of €37m including new housing estates and availing of a range of other options to meet the demand and is currently in the third year of a five-year plan to deliver 139 units. The three existing private housing grants schemes continued to grow in scale over the last 5 years increasing from 39 grants and a value of €193,000 in 2019 to 116 grants with a value of €698,000 in 2023.

Investment in the county's roads infrastructure increased from an annual budget of €16.7million in 2019 to an annual spend of €26.1 million in 2023, an increase of 56% including Leitrim County Council's contribution to local roads increasing by 30%. The new Active Travel program delivered over 100 projects such as footpaths, cycleways, road crossings, and permeability links with an average budget of €2 million per annum. Over the term of the council, approximately 60 bridges underwent rehabilitation works. A new Local Improvement Scheme was developed while all 216 schemes remaining on a waiting list in 2019 have been addressed. The Council's winter gritting programme expanded significantly from 366km to 490km of routine gritting cover.

In regard to planning and development the Council has put in place a comprehensive county development plan for the period 2023-2029 responding to key policies such as the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Plan. The new Plan contained the first Renewable Energy Strategy for the County, a review of the Landscape Character Assessment to include Designated Landscape and Protected Views and Prospects along with written statements of objectives for the County's main towns. Planning activity during the lifetime of the council was active particularly regarding Council own works. Over the last five years the level of planning applications has remained constant while a total of 151 individual houses with standalone wastewater treatment systems were granted planning permission.

The Council focused on the economic development of the county as a key priority over the last 5 years, working closely with local town teams and community organisations in areas such as town and village renewal, remote working hubs, shop front schemes and other business support initiatives. Since the introduction of new funding opportunities by the DRCD, the Council has delivered some 200 projects to a value of €9m concerning town and village renewal and outdoor recreation in collaboration with local communities. The Local Enterprise Office supported areas such as the small and medium enterprise sector, Brexit response, Trading Online Vouchers, Covid supports and training programmes. Considerable attention was devoted to the promotion of the county as a location of choice

in which to live, work, invest or visit with numerous initiatives developed and delivered. Comprehensive tourism marketing programmes have ensured that the county tourism offering was visible particularly in the staycation market. A recent campaign of scale had a combined reach of 5.5 million impressions. The campaign created several new assets, including three high-quality destination videos, that will continue to serve the destination for future campaigns. The Council's role in increasing sports participation through the Local Sports Partnership has been augmented through an increase of over 50% in funding by Sport Ireland. In addition, the Council's Art Programme continued to expand through both direct Council support and the support of the Arts Council and Creative Ireland, reflecting in an increase of 45% in the Arts budget over the last 5 years.

The Council also focused on community empowerment and place making, through initiatives such as the establishment of the 'Love where you Live' awards, participation in Pride of Place Awards and delivering programmes such as Age Friendly, Healthy Ireland, Peace Plus, Community Enhancement Programme, and the Community Recognition Fund. The Council continued to ensure the delivery of an effective and efficient Fire Service which is reflected in the level of increase in budgetary provision over the last 5 years.

The Council continued to enhance its Library programme through increasing the financial provision by 15% with resulting additional services and activities including a new branch in Carrick-on-Shannon, improvement works in Manorhamilton and the provision of the Open Library in Drumshanbo. A resulting increase in registered library users of over 50% was achieved with a substantial increase in activity in new online platforms for borrowing items, up from 2,898 in 2019 to 18,988 items in 2023. Other initiatives developed and delivered include digital skills for adults, a tablet lending service, Reader Pens, and local studies digitisation programme.

In, 2023 the Council adopted its first Climate Action Plan which provides a detailed roadmap to assisting the Council in achieving its targets in this area by 2030 and has also established a dedicated Climate Action Committee and Team.

The Council staff compliment has grown by 13% while service areas were augmented by additional specialist resources e.g. Heritage Officer, Biodiversity Officer, Healthy Ireland Co-Ordinator, Assistant Arts Officers, Sports Officers, Town Regeneration Officer, Vacant Homes Officer along with the establishment of both Investment and Housing Capital dedicated teams and the expansion of other teams such as Economic Development, Road Design, Community Development and Local Authority Integration Team.

Going forward confidence is high for the continued progression of the county as a vibrant and distinctive place to live, work, invest and visit. The new Corporate Plan will set out the objectives and priorities for the next 5 years, building on the success and achievements of the last 5 years.

Mr Gilhooly paid tribute to the Council staff for their continued drive and commitment to ensuring that all opportunities and services for the county were maximized and delivered to a very high standard.

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Justin Warnock thanked Mr Gilhooly for his comprehensive report and acknowledged that a lot has been accomplished over the last 5 years.

The Cathaoirleach, Councillor Justin Warnock outlined that this was a particularly special meeting, being the last meeting for 6 retiring Councillors. He paid tribute to Councillors Thomas Mulligan, Gerry Dolan, Caillian Ellis, Frank Dolan, Sean McDermott and Finola Armstrong McGuire, who are not seeking re-election at the upcoming local elections and are retiring from Leitrim County Council, following years of dedicated and distinguished service. The Cathaoirleach noted the achievements of each of the retiring elected members and highlighted the years each one had served as Cathaoirleach of the Council, of their respective Municipal District or of a Strategic Policy Committee.

All of the members in turn concurred with the good wishes extended to Councillor Thomas Mulligan, Councillor Gerry Dolan, Councillor Caillian Ellis, Councillor Frank Dolan, Councillor Sean McDermott and Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire and it was acknowledged that one third of the members are retiring. Tributes were paid by the members to the integrity and the ability of the retiring Councillors and to the great dignity and dedication with which each of them had served the County.

Councillor Thomas Mulligan, Councillor Gerry Dolan, Councillor Caillian Ellis, Councillor Frank Dolan, Councillor Sean McDermott and Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire each individually thanked past and present members, Chief Executives, and staff with whom they had served for their courtesy, friendliness and support shown to them over the years. They all outlined some highlights of their period as elected members of Leitrim County Council.

Mr Gilhooly, on behalf of the Management Team, Senior Offices and all the staff thanked the retiring members for their contribution and service over the years.

The Cathaoirleach, Councillor Justin Warnock and Mr Joseph Gilhooly, Chief Executive made a presentation of appreciation to each of the 6 retiring members on behalf of the members and staff of Leitrim County Council.

MM.56.24 Disposals under Section 183(1) of the Local Government Act, 2001

MM.56.24a Consider for disposal area of land comprising circa 0.013 hectares located alongside house No 1 in Lahard, Ballinamore, Co Leitrim in Folio LM14081

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Paddy O'Rourke

SECONDED by Cllr Caillian Ellis

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council consent to the disposal of area of land comprising circa 0.013 hectares located alongside house No 1 in Lahard, Ballinamore, Co Leitrim in Folio LM14081 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 area of land comprising circa 0.013 hectares located alongside house No 1 in Lahard, Ballinamore, Co Leitrim in Folio LM14081

The Consideration proposed in respect of the disposal: The purchase price for the disposal of the property is €320. Leitrim County Council will be responsible for their own legal fees. The Purchaser will be responsible for the purchaser's own legal fees associated with this disposal. The Property being disposed of is being disposed in its present condition. The disposal of this property is conditional upon the Contract for Sale being completed within 3 months of this disposal being approved by the Members of Leitrim County Council.

MM.57.24 Consider the approval of additional expenditure by Leitrim County Council in the performance of its functions in 2023

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

SECONDED by Cllr. Gerry Dolan

It was **AGREED** to approve the additional expenditure incurred by Leitrim County Council in the performance of its functions in 2023 in accordance with the provisions of Section 108(4) of the Local Government Act, 2001.

MM.58.24 Consider the Annual Financial Statement for the year ending 31st December 2023

The Annual Financial Statement for Leitrim County Council for the year ended 31st December 2023 was circulated to the Members.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Enda Stenson

SECONDED by Cllr. Mary Bohan

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Annual Financial Statement for the Year ended 31st December 2023 in accordance with Section 108 of the Local Government Act, 2001.

MM.59.24 Consider the draft Annual Report 2023

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Caillian Ellis
SECONDED by Cllr. Enda McGloin

It was **AGREED** to adopt Leitrim County Council's Annual Report, 2023.

MM.60.24 Consider the issue of Polling Information Cards in relation to Local Elections 2024

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Des Guckian
SECONDED by Cllr. Pdraig Fallon

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council issue Polling Information cards for the Local Elections 2024.

Councillor Mary Bohan advised members of the public on the register to bring ID with them to the polling stations on the day of polling.

MM.61.24 Management Reports - February & March 2024

The Monthly Management Reports for February and March 2024 as circulated, were noted by members.

Councillor Des Guckian raised the following queries:

- Hartley Bridge – Any progress on this?
- Landfills – Any results published to date?

Mr Joseph Gilhooly outlined that Planning permission has been received for Hartley Bridge, it is a significant project and it will be a year before work commences.

Mr Vincent Dwyer outlined that landfill risk assessments are being carried out to ascertain if any works need to be carried out and no results have been published to date in this regard.

The members noted the February and March 2024 reports.

MM.62.24 Note the National and Local Service Indicator Reports

The National and Local Performance Indicators, 2023 reports as circulated was noted by the members.

MM.63.24 **Note the date and time of the Annual Meeting**

Ms Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services, Community, & Cultural Services outlined in line with the legislative provisions for the holding of the Annual Meeting in a year in which a local election is held, that the Annual Meeting is to take place on Friday, 21st June 2024 at 12 noon.

MM.64.24 **Commitments**

There are no commitments to be noted.

MM.65.24 **Report from Corporate Policy Group**

Ms. Mary Quinn, advised that the Corporate Policy Group considered the following items at their meeting held on 3rd May 2024

- Updates from SPC's
- Considered members attendance at upcoming conferences, training events and seminars.
- Considered the agenda items for the Council meeting of the 7th May 2024

The update from the CPG was noted by the Members.

MM.66.24 **Attendance at conferences/training**

On the **Proposal** of Cllr Sean McDermott
Seconded by Cllr Finola Armstrong McGuire

It was **AGREED** that the attendance of Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire at the National Launch of the Town Centre First Plans in Adare on the 28th February 2024 be retrospectively approved.

MM.67. **Meeting Correspondence**
24

1. Email from Minister O'Brien of the 11th March 2024 in response to Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to "Housing for All"
2. Co Leitrim Society of New York March Newsletter
3. Resolution from Clare County Council calling on Minster Humphrey to consider and

implement a policy change that allows participants in the CES and RSS and the Tús Programme to continue their valuable contributions to the age of 70.

All Members supported this.

4. Email from Uisce Eireann of the 19th March in response to resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to halt the planned extraordinary hike in water charges.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke expressed his disappointment with the reply received in this regard.

5. Email of the 20th March 2024 from Uisce Eireann in response to resolution passed by Leitrim County Council regarding additional production capacity at the Water Treatment Plant in Carrick on Shannon.

Councillor Sean McGowan sought clarification on what additional works are planned for the plant.

Mr Vincent Dwyer advised Leitrim County Council no longer has a role in regard to the operation and control of the plant as this was taken over by Úisce Éireann / Irish Water in October 2023.

The plant is at capacity, major capital works need to be carried out for the South Leitrim area. The plant is producing water 24hrs a day and it takes a long number of hours to replenish reservoirs when reservoir levels go down due to an outage.

6. Email of the 21st March 2024 from the Office of Minister O'Gorman acknowledging receipt of resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to childcare crisis.
7. Letter dated 30th January 2024 from HSE acknowledging receipt of resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in response to home help.
8. Letter dated 15th March from the Office of the Taoiseach acknowledging receipt of resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to childcare crisis.
9. Letter dated 15th March from the Office of the Taoiseach acknowledging receipt of resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to support for Gaza.
10. Letter dated 21st March 2024 from the Office of HSE in regard to ambulance and crews in County Leitrim

Councillor Brendan Barry referred to the KPI's of 75% that are being met and he insisted that this is not the case in Leitrim. Cllr Barry proposed that a further letter issue to the HSE and to direct them to answer the questions that they were asked

in the original resolution.

11. Resolution dated 21st April 2024 from Westmeath County Council supporting the IFA campaign “Enough is Enough”
12. Co Leitrim Society of New York April Newsletter
13. Letter from the Embassy of Israel dated 19th March 2024 in response to resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to the war in Gaza.
14. Email of the 14th April 2024 from the Office of Minister O’Brien in relation to current income limits for social housing.

Members said that the increase to the current income limits is nowhere near the need that is required. This issue is coming up on the door steps during the election campaign and it is not an adequate threshold and it needs to be further increased.

15. Letter dated 21st March 2024 from the HSE acknowledging receipt of resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to increasing home help hours.
16. Email of the 9th April 2024 from the Office of the Minister for State acknowledging receipt of resolution passed by Leitrim County Council regarding the driving test waiting period.
17. Email of the 11th April 2024 from the Office of the Minister for Finance acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council regarding help to buy scheme.
18. Email of the 16th April 2024 from the Office of the Minister McConalogue acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council regarding environmental and climate change support.
19. ICBAN Update – April 2024
20. Letter from the European Commission acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to the IFA Campaign “Enough is Enough”
21. Resolution from Louth County Council dated 18th April 2024 reaffirming its support to the Good Friday Agreement.
22. Email of the 20th April 2024 from Úisce Eireann in response to request to halt the planned extraordinary hike in water charges.
23. Email of the 24th April from the Office of the Minister for Transport referring to the OPW for review in response to resolution passed by Leitrim County Council regarding funding for drainage schemes in County Leitrim.

Councillor Des Guckian expressed his disappointment with the reply received in this regard.

Other matters raised under Meeting Correspondence

Councillor Sean McDermott circulated brochures to the Members on the Sean MacDiarmada Summer School 2024 which is taking place on 31st May & 1st June 2024 in Kiltyclogher, Co Leitrim.

MM.68.24 Presentation on Promotion of the Irish in the County

The Cathaoirleach, Councillor Justin Warnock welcomed representatives from Conradh na Gaeilge Liatroma to the meeting and invited Séan Ó Suilleabháin, Séan Ó Murchada and Séan Ó Tuathaláin to deliver a presentation on the promotion of the Irish Language in the County. Séan O'Suilleabháin, Séan O'Murchada and Séan O'Tuathaláin thanked the members for affording them the opportunity to present their proposal to establish a full-time post of Oifigeach Gaeilge with Comhairle Contae Liatroma.

The Cathaoirleach, Councillor Justin Warnock and the members thanked Séan Ó Suilleabháin, Séan Ó Murchada and Séan Ó Tuathaláin for the presentation.

The members raised the following:

- The need for a full time Irish language Officer was recognised and funding should be made available for same.
- Members commended all the people who look after the Irish language and proposed that Leitrim County Council should ensure these groups are supported.
- Members thanked Mr Ó Súilleabháin for all his work with the GAA in a voluntarily capacity in the county an in promoting the Irish language.
- The members queried if there are part-time Irish Officers employed in the country.

Mr Séan Ó Murchada confirmed there are part-time Irish Officers employed.

Ms Mary Quinn advised the members as with all staffing matters, the role of a full time Irish Officer will be assessed and considered in terms of budget availability.

MM.69.24 Motion from Councillor Padraig Fallon on behalf of the Members of the Manorhamilton Municipal District - Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement for freedom, justice, and equality

That this Municipal endorses the reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories that show Israel is committing the crime of apartheid against the Palestinian people; and further noting that the United Nations has declared apartheid a crime against humanity under the

'The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid'; this Council, in line with our commitment to the principles of international law, declares itself an Apartheid Free Zone, and in doing so, fully supports and endorses the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement for freedom, justice and equality."

On the **Proposal** of Cllr Padraig Fallon
Secoded by Cllr Brendan Barry

It was **AGREED** that that Manorhamilton Municipal Distrist and Leitrim County Council endorses the reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories that show Israel is committing the crime of apartheid against the Palestinian people; and further noting that the United Nations has declared apartheid a crime against humanity under the 'The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid'; this Council, in line with our commitment to the principles of international law, declares itself an Apartheid Free Zone, and in doing so, fully supports and endorses the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement for freedom, justice and equality."

MM.70.24 Motion from Councillor Felim Gurn - Construction Costs

"The construction industry and house building has stalled recently because of construction costs involved for first time builders or those completing a self-build. VAT rates are 23% or for self-build 13.5%. The average house build is €375k. If the VAT rate was zero, it would reduce the costs for a self-build by €86k or €50k on a contractor build and it would incentivise more house building. I call on the Minister of Finance, therefore, to remove VAT on house building projects for a period of one year, this measure would bring down the cost for building and be quick solution to our housing problem."

On the **Proposal** of Cllr Felim Gurn
Secoded by Cllr Des Guckian

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council call on the Minister of Finance, therefore, to remove VAT on house building projects for a period of one year, this measure would bring down the cost for building and be quick solution to our housing problem. The construction industry and house building has stalled recently because of construction costs involved for first time builders or those completing a self-build. VAT rates are 23% or for self-build 13.5%. The average house build is €375k. If the VAT rate was zero, it would reduce the costs for a self-build by €86k or €50k on a contractor build and it would incentivise more house building.

MM.71.24 Motion from Councillor Des Guckian - Compensation to homeowners who have been flooded

"That in light of the careless planning decisions, given, by Leitrim Planning, over the years, in areas liable to flooding, our Council officials must consider granting compensation to homeowners whose foundations have been flooded or whose houses have been entered by flood waters"

Report by Economic Development

"The Planning Department takes exception to the baseless statement contained in this Notice of Motion. The assessment of flood risk in development proposals are always based on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines issued by the Department in November 2009 whereby individual applications are required to be accompanied by an appropriate flood risk assessment. Subsequent to the assessment process and decision making process of the Planning Authority, provision applies for the appeal of such decisions to An Bord Pleanála by any interested party. In addition, the consideration of lands suitable for housing and other uses, sensitive to the effects of flood risk, in statutory land use plans, are subject to strategic flood risk assessment.

The allegation of careless planning decisions in regard to areas of known flood risk is fully refuted and wholly rejected. Therefore, the Council considers that the issue of compensation does not arise."

Councillor Des Guckian gave the background to his motion and he said all of this did not happen by accident and nobody can deny this is happening, as it can be seen.

Mr Justin Fannon, A/Director of Services refuted fully and wholly rejected the allegation of careless planning decisions in regard to areas of known flood risk.

Councillor Brendan Barry said is it not the responsibility of the Council on how foundations of houses are built. Cllr Barry outlined that he has seen houses built on piles and they are very sturdy. He said the ground plays an important role and it is up to the Architects and Engineers as to how houses are to be built, not the Local Authority.

MM.72.24 Motion from Councillor Sean McGowan - Ash Die Back

"I ask the Director of Services infrastructure has there been any response from either of the Departments of Agriculture and the Department of Transport in our call to provide, a funding scheme as a matter of urgency, to support landowners & farmers to address the serious issue that Ash Die Back poses on the Ash Tree species in roadside hedgerows across the country."

Report by Economic Development

"Following the November 2023 Council meeting, correspondence was issued to the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Transport on this issue. An acknowledgement was received from both Departments in late November 2023, however no further correspondence has been received from either Department in the intervening period. Follow up correspondence will be issued to both Departments on this issue."

Councillor Sean McGowan queried if there was any further update from the Department of Agriculture in regard to resolution passed by Leitrim County Council seeking funding for landowners and farmers to cut/fell trees impacted by Ash Die Back and which pose a safety concern.

Mr Brett confirmed there was no response received to date and follow up correspondence will be issued to both Departments on this issue.

All members supported the motion.

MM.73.24 Motion from Councillor Enda Stenson - Funding to secure Childcare facilities

"I seek the support of the members in calling on Minister Roderic O'Gorman, to provide a proper source of funding to Community groups to enable them to acquire or fund the purchase of premises, needed at present, to cope with the current demand, for Childcare"

On the **Proposal** of Councillor Enda Stenson
Seconded by Councillor Mary Bohan

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council call on Minister Roderic O'Gorman, to provide a proper source of funding to Community groups to enable them to acquire or fund the purchase of premises, needed at present, to cope with the current demand, for Childcare.

MM.74.24 Motion from Councillor Enda McGloin - Private Housing Strategy for the County

"I call on Leitrim County Council to consider adopting a private housing strategy for the County, that needs to address our current lack of private and affordable new housing which would be considered by the local authority for adoption before the end of this calendar year. While acknowledging the progress under the Croí Cónaithe scheme, we must address the lack of enthusiasm by developers to build new homes in our county with the exception of Carrick on Shannon. This will adversely affect our potential to bring jobs and investment to Leitrim."

Report by Economic Development

"The Local Authority acknowledges that the lack of multiple housing developments currently under construction across the county is a cause of concern for individuals seeking to purchase or rent residential, and individuals and businesses seeking to invest and live in the county. The Housing Strategy contained within the County Development Plan 2023-2029 provides the basis for the quantum of land required to be zoned for residential purposes including an accepted level of headroom. The lands identified for housing in each of the development centres ensured that sufficient lands to meet these housing targets have been identified and that these lands were serviced from a water supply and wastewater perspective and connect to or can easily connect to footpaths. The Department of Housing,

Local Government and Heritage have introduced and extended the waivers for the payment of development contributions until the end of this year and for water connections charges payable to Uisce Éireann until 30 September 2024 (refer to Planning Circular PL 02/2024 Extension of the Temporary Development Contribution waiver and Uisce Éireann Water Connection Charge refund arrangements). In addition, each private housing scheme which is brought forward is required to ensure that 20% provision is made therein for social, affordable, and cost rental housing. This is referred to as the 'social dividend.' The Government have also introduced land activation measures through the Residential Zoned Land Tax scheme but the tax liability for landowners not releasing lands identified for housing has been deferred by the Government until next year at the earliest.

In line with the current DHLGH policy, Leitrim County Council has given consideration to the feasibility of an Affordable Housing Scheme, with a general expression of interest process completed earlier this year. Leitrim County Council has tentatively explored the identification of suitable lands in Carrick on Shannon with a view to a potential application to the DHLGH under an Affordable Housing Scheme in the future."

Councillor McGloin acknowledged the reply and said he hoped that between now and year end, a forum would be set up between the Executive, Policy Makers, Builders and Architects to examine the unique difficulties that exist in our towns and villages in relation to building houses.

Councillor Pádraig Fallon, Councillor Gurn, Councillor Bohan, Councilor Des Guckian, Cllr Barry, Councillor Stenson, and Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire supported the motion.

Mr Justin Fannon outlined that Leitrim County Council has given consideration to the feasibility of an Affordable Housing Scheme, with a general expression of interest process completed earlier this year. Leitrim County Council has tentatively explored the identification of suitable lands in Carrick on Shannon with a view to a potential application to the DHLGH under an Affordable Housing Scheme in the future.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly noted that balance is required on this topic. He advised that quite amount of work has been done on the promotion of the county. Leitrim is no worse than any comparable location and he emphasized that there is good talent around the county and Leitrim is an attractive destination in which to live and work.

MM.75.24 Motion from Councillor Sean McDermott - Depopulation of rural parishes

"I raise the issue of depopulation in many of our rural parishes. There is concern that there are plans to discourage one-off housing in the countryside. The population make up of Leitrim has always been town, village, and one-off housing. For years there has been no rural houses built in many parishes. Only 10 houses received planning in Glenfarne in 2004, but none since 2016. Will the engagement the Council has had with Trinity College, the EPA and the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage lead to a solution to facilitate planning for one-off housing before it's too late for many of our parishes."

Report by Economic Development

"The rural housing policy adopted by this Local Authority in 2023-2029 does not discourage persons seeking to obtain planning permission in rural parts of the county. There are only 2 distinct areas of the county where the satisfying of a local housing need (applicants required to demonstrate a functional economic or social requirement for housing) is required, within 5 electoral divisions around Carrick-on-Shannon and 4 electoral divisions around Dromahair. In all other areas of the county including Glenfarne, no such local housing need is required to be demonstrated. The retention of sustainable rural communities is and remains a priority of the County Development Plan.

The facilitation of rural housing, however, poses a significant challenge in rural Leitrim owing to the poor percolation characteristics associated with soil conditions across most of the county. These soil characteristics make it difficult for applicants from rural areas to satisfy the requirements of the EPA Code of Practice for individual wastewater treatment systems in order to build individual houses in the countryside. The 2021 EPA Code of Practice now includes specific measures that take account of land with slower percolation characteristics and has also extended the percolation pass rate by approximately one third.

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. In this regard, Leitrim County Council has been actively pursuing innovative solutions in conjunction with Trinity College Dublin and is currently implementing an EPA funded research programme, 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. This process involves the use of Integrated Constructed Wetlands and the transposition of a willow-based facility, currently used in Denmark (and other European countries), to the Irish context. The installation of such facilities is now complete at 2 locations in County Leitrim with a 3rd installation expected shortly. The examination of the effectiveness of the process will commence later in the year."

Councillor Sean McDermott gave the background to his motion and said the development of one off rural housing is a serious issue for many rural areas.

Councillor Mary Bohan supported the motion.

Councillor Mary Bohan outlined in some countries they can have sealed tanks. Cllr Bohan reiterated we need people in our communities and there must be a way people can have a particular type of septic tank.

Councillor Brendan Barry acknowledged that some changes were made to the EPA Code of Practice and he encouraged people to speak with Architects, seek out the information, go to preplanning meetings and apply for Planning Permission as there is a good chance of getting Planning Permission and he acknowledged things have improved with changes to the Code of Practice.

Councillor Felim Gurn supported the motion, and he outlined that there is frustration among young people and people are emigrating and we are going to lose another generation.

Councillor Des Guckian supported the motion.

Councillor Caillian Ellis noted there are a number of Local Authority houses vacant and he sought clarification on whether the Local Authority are in a position to put them up for sale.

Ms Quinn acknowledged that there are a few vacant social houses and a process is in place to deal with these.

Councillor Sean McDermott said the present situation with the EPA is the reason people can't build houses in rural Leitrim.

Mr Gilhooly said some locations are challenged and some areas are not challenged and he said it is important that people engage with the Planning Authority. Mr Gilhooly acknowledged that the Code of Practice has been enhanced, embraced and the trials will be successful. There is a lot of work that has been done on this topic and more is to happen.

MM.76.24 Motion from Councillor Paddy O'Rourke and Motion from Councillor Brendan Barry - LIS

It was agreed by the Members that Motion No 22 in the name of Councillor Paddy O'Rourke and Motion No 24 in the name of Councillor Brendan Barry be taken concurrently as they relate to the same issue.

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

"I ask what is the position regarding people who's applications for an LIS was unsuccessful under the old rules i.e. (the necessity for two active herd numbers on a roadway) now that the rules have changed and no longer require two herd numbers on roadway. Will there be an opportunity for those applications to be reviewed in light of the change in the criteria."

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

"I request that Leitrim County Council amend the terms and conditions of the Local Improvement Scheme in the county to reflect the changes that the Department who are funding the schemes have made regarding herd numbers. Applications that were previously rejected should be reviewed."

Report by Economic Development

"Leitrim County Council is awaiting exact details and clarification from the Department of Rural & Community Development on the implications of recent changes to the terms and conditions of the LIS scheme. From the 2024 scheme details received to date, it appears that an eligible laneway has to provide access to parcels of land, of which, two or more are owned or occupied by different persons, one of which must be engaged in separate agricultural activities.

In order to respect the integrity of the original priority list and the reasonable expectation of project delivery for those on that priority list Leitrim County Council will continue to work through the existing priority list during 2024 with funding of €0.966 million allocated by the DRCD for 2024-2025.

The additional information and clarification from the Department of Rural and Community Development will be considered in due course, in the context of the Council's current priority list, arising from the previous closed call for applications."

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke gave the background to his motion and sought clarification as to where does this leave people that were ineligible in June 2023.

Councillor Brendan Barry asked when the clarification comes from the Department on this matter that it be circulated to the Elected Members.

Councillors Mary Bohan, Enda Stenson and Pdraig Fallon supported the motions.

Mr Terry McGovern, Senior Engineer said until clarification is received from the Department of Rural and Community Development the current list will stand and in order to respect the integrity of the original priority list and the reasonable expectation of project delivery for those on that priority list, Leitrim County Council will continue to work through the existing priority list during 2024 with funding of €0.966 million allocated by the DRCD for 2024-2025. The Allocation announced recently is for over 2 years. Mr McGovern said the list contains some longer roads which are more expensive, 2 or 3 of the roads will be over €100,000 to complete and they will have more beneficiaries.

Councillor O'Rourke said when the clarification is received it will be clear as to what is required, He said there was some confusion in relation to the last announcement of funding as it was assumed that it was for this year. Councillor O'Rourke said many people have been misled over the last few months in this regard.

MM.77.24 Motion from Councillor Justin Warnock - Sustainable Agriculture Group

"I ask for a review of the Council's role in the Leitrim's Sustainable Agriculture Group for the term of the next Council?"

Report by Head of Finance & Water Services

"This request can be facilitated."

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Justin Warnock requested that the matter be addressed after the

Elections outlining it is important that Leitrim County Council values the farmer and he would like to see more people kept on the land.

MM.78.24 Motion from Councillor Paddy Farrell - Regulate the large flow of illegal immigrants

"I call on Leitrim County Council to send a strong motion to the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee and the Government to work with their counterparts in Northern Ireland to immediately regulate the large flow of illegal immigrants flocking to this country without proper checking or identification."

Councillor Sean McGowan supported the motion.

On the **Proposal** of Councillor Paddy Farrell
Seconded by Councillor Sean McGowan

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council send a strong motion to the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee and the Government to work with their counterparts in Northern Ireland to immediately regulate the large flow of illegal immigrants flocking to this country without proper checking or identification.

Councillor Des Guckian supported the motion.

Councillor Brendan Barry said IPASS should be asking how a person gets into the country. Our government should be enforcing the law and because they are not, this issue is arising.

Councillor Caillian Ellis supported the motion and he outlined that this would not be allowed in other European countries and he said people involved in petty crimes should be deported back to their home nation.

Councillor Padraig Fallon supported Councillor Barry's comments on this matter.

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Justin Warnock said we do not want a hard border and we need to be careful and mindful of this and we do not want people undocumented in the county.

MM.79.24 Motion from Councillor Mary Bohan - Lack of communication

"I propose that Leitrim County Council contact the Taoiseach, Simon Harris TD, the Tánaiste, Micheál Martin TD, Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee TD, and Minister Roderic O'Gorman TD to express our total dissatisfaction with the lack of communication in relation to the placing of international protection persons to locations in County Leitrim."

Councillor Mary Bohan said the West of Ireland has taken in the most international protection persons head of population in the county and they have been welcomed. Cllr

Bohan expressed her disappointment with the lack of communication with communities in Dromahair and that there has been no consultation with primary, secondary schools or doctors in relation to the placing of international protection persons to locations in County Leitrim.

Cllr Felim Gurn, Cllr Des Guckian and Cllr Pdraig Fallon supported the motion.

On the **Proposal** of Councillor Mary Bohan
Seconded by Councillor Felim Gurn

It was **AGREED** that Leitrim County Council contact the Taoiseach, Simon Harris TD, the Tánaiste, Micheál Martin TD, Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee TD, and Minister Roderic O'Gorman TD to express our total dissatisfaction with the lack of communication in relation to the placing of international protection persons to locations in County Leitrim.

Councillor Bohan expressed her disappointment in the way Leitrim County Council has been ridiculed recently at the High Court ruling in relation to the Abbey Hotel in Dromahair.

Cathaoirleach's Address

Cathaoirleach, Justin Warnock outlined that he was honoured and privileged to have served as Cathaoirleach and to have represented the Council and the people of County Leitrim both throughout the County and abroad. Councillor Warnock thanked the elected members of Leitrim County Council for affording him that privilege and for all their support throughout the year. He also expressed thanks to Joseph Gilhooly, Chief Executive, the Management Team, Senior Officers and all the staff of Leitrim County Council. He also thanks Councillor Paddy O'Rourke, Leas Cathaoirleach and Councillor Stenson who stepped in on occasion, for their support, co-operation and courtesy shown to him as Cathaoirleach. Cathaoirleach, Councillor Warnock said he hoped that the trips he had attended abroad would bring some good for the county and he wished all those standing for re-election the very best of luck.

The members unanimously complimented and expressed thanks to Councillor Warnock on his fairness and impartiality in the role of Cathaoirleach and on the way in which he had represented the Council and the County with pride, respect, and distinction throughout his year as Cathaoirleach.

Mr Joseph Gilhooly, on his own behalf and on behalf of the Management Team, Senior Officers, and staff of the Council, thanked Councillor Justin Warnock for his support and co-operation during his term as Cathaoirleach and for representing the county both at home and abroad. He said Councillor Warnock was an excellent Ambassador for the county and thanked him for his professionalism and wished all good going forward.

Mr. Gilhooly and the Management Team presented Councillor Warnock with a pictorial memoir of his year as Cathaoirleach of Leitrim County Council.

This concluded the business of the meeting at 3.09 pm

Signed:

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke
Cathaoirleach

Kieran Brett
Meetings Administrator

Dated:

8th July 2024