

WEXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of Meeting of Wexford County Council
held on Monday 9th March, 2020 – 2.30 p.m.
in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Wexford.**

Attendance:

In The Chair: Cllr. M. Sheehan, Cathaoirleach

Councillors:

P. Barden	A. Bolger	A. Browne	C. Byrne
G. Carthy	J. Codd	K. Codd-Nolan	A. Connick
D. Devereux	A. Donohoe	M. Farrell	J. Fleming
T. Forde.	J. Hegarty	D. Hynes	W. Kavanagh
L. Kelly	D. Kenny	G. Laffan	G. Lawlor
L. McDonald	J. Moore	B. A. Murphy	B. Murphy
J. O'Rourke	F. Ó Súilleabháin	J. Owens	J. Sullivan
O. Walsh	M. Whelan		

Officials: Mr. T. Enright, Chief Executive
T. Larkin, E. Hore, E. Taaffe, C. Godkin, Ms. A. Byrne, Directors of Services;
Ms. A. O'Neill, Head of Finance; Mr. P. Collins, County Secretary, Mr. D.
Minogue, Broadband Officer, Mr. N. McCabe, Senior Executive Officer,
Housing Section

Apologies: Cllr's. M.Bell, P.Breen, F. Staples.

**1. Presentations to the Council - National Broadband Ireland Fibre Rollout Project
- Presentation on Housing Management & Maintenance Programme**

National Broadband Ireland Fibre Rollout Project

The Cathaoirleach invited Mr. D. Minogue, Broadband Officer to introduce the speakers. The Broadband Officer welcomed Geoff Shakespeare, Chief Operations Officer, National Broadband Ireland and his colleague, Niall Hayes, Head of Account Management, National Broadband Ireland to the Council meeting.

Mr. Shakespeare set out the background to the Fibre Rollout Project and likened it to Rural electrification in the nineteen forties in terms of scale. The State has had to intervene to ensure that broadband is rolled out to the whole of the country and National Broadband Ireland have been awarded the contract to carry out this work. He advised that the project will be completed over a seven year period.

He then set out the plans for fibre rollout to County Wexford. Today's presentation to Wexford County Council is part of a Roadshow to notify local authority members, other representational bodies and the wider community about the fibre Broadband rollout.

Members then sought clarification on whether or not a number of areas would be covered by the rollout including Wexford town and other urban centres, Monamolin, New Ross town and in areas of the Enniscorthy District.

Cllr. B. Murphy joined the meeting at 15.08.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the officers from National Broadband Ireland for their presentation. Mr, Shakespeare agreed to send a copy of the presentation to the members.

Presentation on Housing Management & Maintenance Programme

This presentation was deferred until later in the meeting.

Expressions of Sympathy:

The Members expressed their sympathy to the families of the following recently deceased:

- The family of Liam McGarry, Kilmore Quay, Co. Wexford.
- The family of P.J. Jordan, Tullycanna, Ballymitty, Co. Wexford
- The family of Carmel Sheehan, Rosslare Harbour, Co. Wexford, whose brother works in the Harbourmaster's Office in Kilmore Quay.
- The Dixon and Kavanagh families in respect of Maggie Kavanagh, Hill View, Gorey, Co. Wexford.
- The family of Thomas O' Hara, Gorey, whose two sons both work in the Fire Service.
- The family of Aidan Cummins, Ballintubber & Hewittsland, New Ross, Co. Wexford.
- The family of William (Bill) Nolan, father of Bridget Kelly, who works in the Machinery Yard, Enniscorthy.
- The family of Patsy Roche, father-in-law of Liz Hore, SEO Local Enterprise Office.
- The family of William (Bill) Creedon, former County Secretary, Wexford County Council.
- The family of Vincent Kelly, father of Joe Kelly, Rosslare Municipal District and father-in-law of Una Kelly who work in the Housing Department.

Vóta Comhghairdeas:

Déan na Comhairleoirí comhghairdeas ar na ghrúpaí/dhaoine liostaithe thíos:

- To members, officials and staff of Wexford County Council for winning the County Council of the Year run by the Excellence in Business Awards (Public Sector Review).
- The Council was also the overall winner of the Small European Regions of the Future 2020/2021 run by the Financial Times Magazine Research Centre.

The Council won this award based on the strategy for direct investment in the South East. The Chief Executive thanked the members for their support and congratulated Director T. Larkin and his team for their work in achieving the award.

- The Slaney Search & Rescue Service In Enniscorthy for their efforts in locating a missing person.
- Garda Youth Awards held recently in County Hall.
- Ciara Wilson, DMP, who recently won the 3,000 metres in the National Senior Indoor Athletics Championships
- Richard Malone, Wexford who won the International Woolmark Prize for design in London Fashion Week.
- Alex Saunders, who won the Wexford's Got Talent competition.
- All involved in the successful Invest New Ross evening held recently.
- Students of various secondary schools around Wexford, including St. Peter's College, who took part in the National Finals of the Student Enterprise Programme.
- County Wexford Ladies Darts Team who won the All Ireland trophy for the fifth year in a row.

- Cllr. G. Carthy congratulated his colleagues in Primary Care and the National Ambulance Service for their work in containing the Coronavirus.

Update on Coronavirus

The Cathaoirleach advised that news had been received that all St. Patrick's Day parades nationwide have been cancelled. He called on Ms. C. Godkin, A/Director of Service to give an update to members about the Council's response to the Covid-19 virus.

The A/Director then gave a report on measures taken by the Council in response to the Covid-19 virus. She advised that the Coronavirus outbreak is an evolving situation, with the HSE, as lead agency.

The Council has set up a Task Group which is reviewing the situation on an ongoing basis. A number of actions have been prioritised:

- The introduction of hygiene measures in all local authority buildings.
- The preparation of Business Continuity Plans and the identification of essential services.
- The health and safety of Council staff.
- The active reviewing of contact between the staff and members of the public.
- The review of non-essential travel.
- The review of non-essential events, including the likelihood that the St. Patrick's Day parades will be cancelled.

She also advised that the Senior Management Team is meeting tomorrow morning to consider further measures and priorities.

Members then raised a number of issues and concerns, including the following:

- The need for clear communication with the public about the Council's Business Continuity Plans and the delivery of services.
- The need for the Council to show leadership.
- The need for the Government to move quickly to deal with the crisis.
- The need for a channel of communication between the Government Task Force and the Council
- The cancellation of St.Patrick's Day parades.
- The lack of intensive care facilities available.
- The need for offering support to the HSE.
- The professionalism that the Council has shown in the past in dealing with emergencies

The A/Director stated that a National Committee is in place and that the Council has received information regarding the virus. The Council has also been in contact with the HSE and is willing to offer assistance, as required.

The Council is used to dealing with emergency situations and will take measures to help to slow the spread of the virus. An Emergency meeting of the Council will be called, if required.

She also stated that the Council has a good working relationship with the local St. Patrick'S Day Committees and she was confident that they would take advice from the Council about cancelling parades if this is necessary.

The Cathaoirleach noted that all members of the Council are aware of the seriousness of the Coronavirus and advised that the Director will be in contact with the members.

Staff Changes

The Chief Executive then advised members of a number of staff changes that are taking place. He advised the members that Mr. E. Taaffe had recently been appointed as the National Housing Delivery Officer, and congratulated him on his appointment.

Arising from this appointment and the recent retirement of Director John Carley, the Chief Executive intends to apply to the Public Appointments Commission to fill both positions of Director of Service on a permanent basis.

Ms. C. Godkin has been appointed Acting Director of Services in Housing and Community, and Ms. A. Byrne has been appointed Acting Director of Service for Special Projects, Corporate Services and HR and will also be responsible for the Gorey/Kilmuckridge District.

Mr. P L'Estrange has been appointed Acting Senior Executive Officer in the Community Department and it is expected that his role as Chief Fire Officer will be filled on an acting basis in the near future.

The Cathaoirleach congratulated all of the new appointees and wished them well in their new roles.

Presentation on Housing Management & Maintenance Programme

Mr. Niall McCabe, Housing Officer, then made a Presentation on Housing Management & Maintenance Programme, which had been previously circulated to the members.

He informed the meeting that approx. 3% of the total housing stock of 4750 becomes vacant and is relet each year. 57 properties are vacant as at 1st March 2020.

15.49 Cllr. F. Ó' Súilleabháin arrived.

Members then raised a number of issues, as follows:

- Transfer of properties
- Overdoing repair and maintenance to local authority houses.
- Too high of a standard for repairs/maintenance – usable items being disposed of.
- The cost of repairs and the availability of finance.
- Length of time taken for pre-letting repairs

The Housing Officer responded by saying that the need for replacement of kitchens and carpets will be looked at more carefully in the future to reduce costs and waiting times, which, at present, stands at 15 weeks on average. Houses will no longer be painted prior to re-letting.

Ms. C. Godkin, A/Director added that no two vacant houses are the same - some have been the tenants home for many years and are subject to normal wear and tear, others have been left in very bad condition. The Council doesn't tend to follow tenants who leave a house in bad conditions.

Further issues were then raised by members, including the following:

- Some houses are vacant for 6 months.
- Repairs to inside doors are not carried out by the Council – tenant's responsibility
- Average figures and cost of pre-letting repairs
- Pre-assessment of people moving from the private sector or transferring into local authority houses.
- Turn-down rate for local authority housing.
- The need for a targeted approach to inspections
- Houses not financially viable to relet.

The Housing Officer advised that budgets are set on an annual basis. He also noted that all houses were inspected prior to transfers, that there is a Refusal rate of 25% and that the average cost of re-letting repairs is €6,500.

He further advised that a targeted/managed programme of 150 inspections had been carried out in 2019.

Members then raised a further set of concerns, as follows:

- The length of time to take a decision to sell house which are not fit for repair
- The small number of housing inspections
- The need to be pro-active in communications between the Council and it's tenants.
- Average cost per house – no budget for checking houses

16.12 Cllr. G. Carthy left the meeting.

The Housing Officer replied that the Department does not encourage the sale of properties, but are looking into allowing the sale of properties where there is a prohibitively high cost involved in carrying out pre-letting repairs.

He also agreed that 150 inspections is not enough, but pointed out that the Council carried out 1,700 private rented inspections in 2019 for the PRTB and have been tasked with carrying out 2,400 inspections in 2021.

Members raised a number of further issues, including the following:

- Refusals of offers of houses adds to the length of time that the house is vacant.
- Sale of long-term voids.
- The small number of inspections on local authority houses.
- Grants of up to €2,500 available from the Community Welfare Officers for new tenants for painting and new carpets should be taken into consideration by the Council when carrying out pre-letting repairs.
- Allocation of vacant houses is too slow – applicants on the list for five or more years.
- Cost of cleaning backyards of Council houses who have no waste service should be added on to their rent

The Director advised members that choice-based letting is being introduced before Easter which will help reduce the lag-time caused at present by refusals. She also advised there is no queuing system in relation to the allocation of houses – it is done on a needs basis.

The Director also noted that, while the number of inspections is low, repairs had been carried out to over 900 houses in the first two months of the year. Houses let by the Council meet all the

required standards at the time of letting. She stated that it was the tenant's responsibility after that to make sure that any works carried out complied with the relevant standards such as planning permission. Finally, she stated that the vast majority of tenants keep their houses in very good condition,

2. Confirmation of Minutes

2.1 Special County Council Meeting – 14th February, 2020

On the proposal of Cllr. M. Farrell seconded by Cllr. W. Kavanagh and agreed by all the Council approved the minutes of the Special Council meeting held on 14th February, 2020.

2.2 County Council Meeting - 14th February, 2020

On the proposal of Cllr. L. Kelly seconded by Cllr. P. Barden and agreed by all the Council approved the minutes of the Council meeting held on 14th February, 2020.

3. Proposed disposal of land under Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001:

3.1 Proposed disposal of land at Clongeen, Foulksmills, Wexford.

On the proposal of Cllr. W. Kavanagh seconded by Cllr. L. McDonald the proposed disposal of land under Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 200, as submitted, was agreed by the Council.

4. Q4 Finance Report – to 31st December, 2019

Ms. A. O'Neill, Head of Finance presented Q4 Finance Report, which had previously been circulated to members. She advised that the end of year figures are a draft only, but that she expects to have the full accounts for 2019 by April 2020. At this point, she wished to flag a surplus on the Revenue Account.

On the proposal of Cllr. M. Farrell and seconded by Cllr. J. Hegarty, and agreed by all, the Quarter 4 Report to 31st December 2019 was approved.

5. Borrowing – New Ross Port

The Head of Finance had previously circulated a memo the Members setting out the background to the transfer of loans of €1.49m. owed to AIB Bank by the New Ross Port Company to Wexford County Council.

She advised that she was now seeking the formal approval of the Council and Ministerial sanction to add this borrowing to the Council's loan portfolio.

The Chief Executive stated that he would update the Council on New Ross Port at the next monthly meeting.

The Head of Finance advised that there was scope to refinance the loans previously taken out by the New Ross Port Company, following the receipt of Ministerial sanction.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Fleming, seconded by Cllr. J. Sullivan, and agreed by all, the Council gave approval to borrow €1.49m and to seek Ministerial sanction for the loan.

At 16.45, Cllr's J. O' Rourke and D. Hynes left the meeting.

6. Capital Programme 2020 - 2022

The Capital Programme 2020 - 2022 had been circulated to Members by the Head of Finance. The Programme is comprised of 163 projects with a best estimate cost of €352m.

Members sought information on the progress of projects including the Advance Factory in New Ross and the Cherry Orchard Sports Field.

On the proposal of Cllr. C. Byrne, seconded by Cllr. D. Devereux, and agreed by all, the Council adopted the 3 Year Capital Programme 2020 – 2022.

7. Draft Harbours and Piers Byelaws 2020

Ms. C. Godkin, A/Director of Services then presented the draft Harbours and Piers Byelaws 2020, a copy of which had been previously circulated to members.

She advised members that the proposed changes are mainly technical in nature relating to definitions, harbour charges, use of drones, diving and bathing issues.

The Draft Byelaws will go through the public consultation process and will be placed on public display for two months. During this period, the Council will invite submissions from the public.

The final byelaws will be brought before the Strategic Policy Committee before being considered by the full Council.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Moore, seconded by Cllr. M. Farrell, and agreed by all, it was agreed that the draft Harbours and Piers Byelaws 2020 now go out for public consultation.

8. Approval for appointment of Sharon Kennedy as PPN Social Inclusion Representative to LCDC.

On the proposal of Cllr. BA Murphy, seconded by Cllr. L.McDonald, and agreed by all, approval was given to the appointment of Sharon Kennedy as PPN Social Inclusion Representative to LCDC.

Members requested that a short biography of nominees to Council committees should accompany future appointments.

9. Report of Corporate Policy Group

9.1 CPG meeting on 02.03.2020

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Hegarty seconded by Cllr. D. Devereux, the minutes of the CPG meeting held on 02.03.2020 were adopted.

Cllr. L. Kelly asked for clarification of the discussion about the University of the South East at the CPG. Cllr. J. Hegarty outlined the main points of the discussion.

10. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive's Report was considered by the Members. The Chief Executive and Members of the Management Team responded to Members queries arising from the Report including the following:

- The 12 month delay of the Sewerage Works in Duncannon.
- The effect of the delay in the Sewerage Scheme in Kilmore Quay and its wider impact on infrastructure in the county
- Site for the University of the South East.
- Letter re 5G to be circulated to the Members.

17.09 Cllr. J. Owen left the meeting

- Update on Templeshannon Regeneration
- Update on Speed Limit Bye Laws for Enniscorthy
- Update on Waterford Airport
- Congratulations to the Invest Wexford events.
- The lack of secondary school places in Wexford as a disincentive for the families of companies hoping to set up in Wexford
- The effect of climate change actions on the Agri sector in County Wexford
- County Development Plan – recognition that Irish Water are not delivering infrastructure
- Capital programme for County Wexford
- Lack of water services the biggest barrier to development investment in rural areas

12. List of Councillors' Conferences and Training

- **Approval for delegation to travel to Cavalcade of Fleurus in April, 2020.**

The above was proposed by Cllr. A. Connick, seconded by Cllr. J. Fleming and agreed by all, subject to any travel restrictions which may be put in place as a result of the Coronavirus.

- **Approval for attendance at The London Wexford Association functions:**
- The London Wexford Association will hold their annual 66th dinner dance at The Clayton Crown Hotel in Cricklewood, London NW2 3ED on Saturday 25th of April.
- The Wexford Towns reunion buffet dance on Saturday 24th of October at The Mazenod Social Club in Kilburn, NW6 4LS.

The above was proposed by Cllr. J. Moore seconded by Cllr. A. Connick, and agreed by all.

- **Approval for delegation to travel to Moncoutant in France in April, 2020.**

The above was proposed by Cllr. A. Bolger, seconded by Cllr. J. Sullivan, and agreed by all.

- **Conference Report – Cllr. J. Moore (Creating Economic & Business Opportunities from Climate Change)**
- **Conference Report – Cllr. J. Moore (Wind Energy onshore and offshore incl. maintenance)**

The members noted the conference reports submitted by Cllr. J. Moore.

- **March 2020 Training & Conferences**

The list of Councillor Conferences and Training, as circulated, was proposed by Cllr. BA Murphy, seconded by Cllr. A. Connick, and agreed by all.

13. Minutes of Meetings:

- 12.1 Climate Change, Biodiversity & Environment SPC Meeting - 14.11.2019
- 12.2 Borough District of Wexford Meeting – 20.01.2020
- 12.3 Rosslare Municipal District Meeting – 20.01.2020
- 12.4 Gorey Kilmuckridge Municipal District Special Meeting – 21.01.2020
- 12.5 Gorey Kilmuckridge Municipal District Monthly Meeting – 21.01.2020
- 12.6 New Ross Municipal District Meeting – 08.01.2020
- 12.7 Enniscorthy Municipal District Meeting – 20.01.2020

On the proposal of Cllr. A. Browne, seconded by Cllr. J. Fleming, and agreed by all, the above minutes, as circulated, were taken en bloc, noted and approved.

13. Sealing of documents

The Sealing of Documents as submitted to the meeting was proposed by Cllr. BA Murphy, seconded by Cllr. A. Bolger, and noted and approved by all.

14. Correspondence and Communications

- **Acknowledgement letter from Conor Cleary Private Secretary to the Minister for Justice and Equality dated 24th February, 2020.**
- **Acknowledgement letter from Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government dated 28th February, 2020.**
- **Thank you letter from Foreign Affairs Office of the people's Government of Yingtan City dated 2nd March, 2020.**

The correspondence outlined above was noted by the members.

15. Notices of Motion

15.1 Cllr. L. Kelly

“Wexford County Council calls on the Irish Government Departments of Health, Justice and Equality and Children and Youth Affairs to recognize that Parental Alienation is “Substantial and sustained dissatisfaction within a caregiver-child relationship associated with significant disturbance in functioning” as coded by the World Health Organisation in the latest International Classification of Diseases version 11 and to implement recommendation 36 of the Report of the Reform of the Family Law System October 2019.”

Cllr. L. Kelly withdrew this motion.

15.2 Cllr. T. Forde

“Wexford County Council calls on the Office of Public Works to carry out the necessary excavation works to recover the remains of Joe Brady, Daniel Curley, Michael Fagan, Thomas Caffrey and Tim Kelly, in what is commonly known as the Invincibles Yard at Kilmainham jail.

The bodies of these five members of the Irish National Invincibles lie beneath the paving slabs of the yard where they were executed in 1883 for their part in the Phoenix Park assassinations.

The families of the five men are represented by the National Graves Association and the wish of the families is for their relatives to be exhumed from Kilmainham jail and reinterred in consecrated ground at Glasnevin Cemetery.”

As Cllr. T. Forde was not in attendance, the motion did not go ahead and is deferred to the April 2020 meeting of the Council.

15.3 Cllr. J. Moore

“Wexford County Council requests the Department of Environment to amend the current Road Traffic legislation and introduce a ‘**Speed Awareness Course**’ instead of the automatic imposition of penalty points under certain conditions. By giving the offender an opportunity to avail of education / awareness training can only improve the current driving practice in Ireland, reduce court activity and most importantly reduce Insurance costs. These can be achieved with appropriate controls eg one can only apply for such a course once in a 3-year period.”

The above motion was proposed by Cllr. J. Moore, seconded by Cllr. J. Hegarty, and agreed by all.

15.4 Cllr. L. Kelly

“Wexford County Council requests that the Minister undertakes the following: That the stillbirth register and stillbirth registration be removed and be replaced with a birth and death certificate for babies who are stillborn, so that babies who are stillborn can be registered on the birth and death register and can receive the same state records of their existence as everyone else. Parents whose babies are currently listed on the stillbirth register should be given the opportunity to have their babies placed on the birth and death register and to receive a birth and death certificate for their babies.”

The above motion was proposed by Cllr. L. Kelly, seconded by Cllr. M. Farrell and agreed by all.

16. Any Other Business

Cllr. M. Whelan asked that planning for Wind Farms on the coast and planning for log cabins as housing units be included on the April 2020 agenda for discussion. Mr. T. Larkin, Director advised that permission for off-shore wind farms are outside the Council's jurisdiction, but that both items could be included on the next agenda for discussion .

Cllr. A. Connick asked for an update on the preparation of a countywide list of Defibrillators, as discussed at the February 2020 Council meeting. The Director advised that Community are drawing up a list at present.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Daingithe ar an 29ú la de Meitheamh, 2020.

Cathaoirleach

County Secretary