



Comhairle Conlaoe Lú
Louth County Council

LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL - CORPORATE POLICY GROUP

Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group Meeting held in the Setanta Meeting Room, County Hall, on Thursday, 4th December 2025 at 9:30am

In attendance:

Cathaoirleach, Cllr: Seán Kelly

Members, Cllrs: Rachel Kerley
Kevin Meenan
Robert Nash

Officials: Thomas McEvoy, Deputy Chief Executive
Joanna Kelly, Acting Director of Services
David Jones, Director of Services
Róisín McAuley, Accountant
David Hanratty, Acting Director of Services
Ger Murphy, Director of Services
Sinéad Dooley, Meetings Administrator

Apologies: Cllr. James Byrne
Cllr. Pío Smith
David Conway, Chief Executive
Bernadette Woods, Director of Finance

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 6th November 2025

The minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 6th November were confirmed as:-

Proposed by: Cllr. Kevin Meenan
Seconded by Cllr. Rachel Kerley
And approved

2. Matters Arising

None

3. SPC Work Programme – Update from each SPC Chair

- Social Development – Cllr. Meenan advised that the Social Development SPC will meet during the week commencing 8th December to develop its Work Programme for 2026, which will be presented at the next meeting of the CPG. He noted that certain items from the 2025 Work Programme, including the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, will carry forward into 2026.

- Planning - Cllr. Kerley advised that the Planning SPC met in November. The Committee's primary focus has been on the development of Shop Front Guidelines, while also progressing the establishment of its Work Programme.
- Community and Placemaking – Cllr. Nash advised that the Community and Placemaking SPC is scheduled to meet during the week commencing 8th December to consider its Work Programme for 2026. Priority items will include Urban Speed Limits, Outdoor Recreation, and Byelaws for St. Patrick's Cemetery.

4. Council Meeting Agenda

Acting Director of Services, Joanna Kelly, presented the December Council Meeting Agenda to the Members and highlighted specific matters arising, including:-

- Consideration of the Audit Committee's Report on the Audited Annual Financial Statement for 2024 and the Local Government Auditor's Report under Section 60 of the Local Government Act 2014
- Attendance of Drogheda Port Company to present to the Members.

5. Members Allocations

Noted

6. Conferences and Events

Members noted the schedule of Conferences and Events as presented. The associated costs of attending the Irish Mayors' Conference, scheduled to take place in Slovenia in March 2026, were raised in terms of value for money versus the benefits to be achieved by attendance. It was reiterated that, in accordance with Sections 142 and 143 of the Local Government Act 2001, authorisation to attend conferences is a reserved function of the Council and requires formal approval, having regard to the benefits likely to accrue, the interests of the local community, and the total cost involved.

7. Draft Meeting Room Policy for Elected Members

Acting Director of Services, Ms. Joanna Kelly, presented Members with the updated Draft Meeting Room Policy for Elected Members, advising that additional meeting facilities had been provided for by way of an Addendum (Section 13) and Section 4 – Permitted Use had been amended to allow meetings with constituents.

Members noted that, while the Policy includes the meeting pods at the Civic Offices, Fair Street, Drogheda, no private meeting space was made available. They were advised that the meeting rooms at the Drogheda Offices are heavily booked with only two rooms available. Director of Services, Ger Murphy, undertook to examine the practicality of making these rooms available to Elected Members, noting that the rooms are in high demand, particularly by the Housing Team.

In relation to key card access for Elected Members to enable direct entry to meeting rooms generally, Members were advised that following an examination of office accessibility, the Executive's position remains unchanged. Members attending meetings at County Hall will continue to be escorted to the meeting room.

The Executive highlighted the need to ensure compliance with Data Protection requirements and to maintain staff safety through appropriate boundaries. While acknowledging Members'

frustration with this decision, a commitment was given to ensure staff are available to meet Members when attending for meetings, noting that staff have an obligation to be proactive in this regard.

8. Hybrid Council Meetings and Standing Orders

Concerns were raised regarding the increasing frequency of requests from Elected Members to attend meetings remotely, noting that the current Standing Orders do not provide for such arrangements. It was suggested that, should hybrid meetings be accommodated as standard practice, the Standing Orders be amended to include clear parameters—for example, requiring notification by close of business on the last working day prior to the scheduled meeting.

It was agreed that the Standing Orders should be updated accordingly for consideration by Council.

9. Communications for Weather Events

Acting Director of Services, Mr. David Hanratty, advised that a WhatsApp group chat had been set up for use during the most recent yellow weather warning. He noted that three Elected Members do not have access to WhatsApp and that one Member was using a private personal number. It was highlighted that, from a Freedom of Information perspective, it would be preferable for Members to use official Council-issued mobile phones and numbers.

Mr. Hanratty reaffirmed his commitment to developing a document outlining the operating boundaries for the WhatsApp Group. He further noted that outdoor workers and engineers are not on-call during a yellow weather warning but do respond to issues on a goodwill basis, and Members should be mindful of and respect that arrangement.

Cllr. Kelly welcomed the facilitation of a WhatsApp group chat for Weather Events.

10. Update on Planning Matters

Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Services, Mr. Thomas McEvoy, advised that by the closing date of 21st November, 463 submissions had been received on the County Development Plan. He further noted that approximately 300 of these submissions primarily related to Renewable Energy and the Carlingford Greenway. Mr. McEvoy confirmed that a schedule of next steps will be compiled for Members' information.

He also advised that there is no further formal update at this time regarding the enactment of the Planning and Development Act 2024.

11. CRM

Acting Director of Services, Ms. Joanna Kelly, advised that the full rollout of the new CRM system is scheduled for April 2026, with a Housing module anticipated prior to Christmas. She further directed that all Members should utilise the new CRM Councillor Portal to raise matters relevant to Operations, rather than duplicating work by submitting queries via CRM Elected Reps, noting that the latter will be phased out over the coming months.

Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Services, Mr. Thomas McEvoy, noted that he has been receiving emails directly and requested that such correspondence be routed through CRM Elected Reps to ensure appropriate tracking and timely response.

12. Any other business

- It was noted that Members wishing to amend their SPC representation or participation should submit formal written notice to Acting Director of Services, Ms. Joanna Kelly, in the first instance.
- Cllr. Kelly advised that an initial meeting had taken place to consider the Procedural Document for the Louth County Council Twinning Committee, which had been provided by Acting Director of Services, Ms. Joanna Kelly, in September. He requested that the document be amended to allow for the participation of five Elected Members rather than three, noting a general view that the workload justified an increase.

The Minutes were confirmed at a meeting of the Corporate Policy Group held on:-

Date:

8TH JAN '26

Cathaoirleach:



Meetings Administrator:

Sinead Donley