



Comhairle Contae 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, 6th November 2025 at 9:30am

In attendance:

Cathaoirleach, Cllr: Seán Kelly

Members, Cllrs: Rachel Kerley
Kevin Meenan
Pio Smith

Officials: David Conway, Chief Executive
Thomas McEvoy, Deputy Chief Executive
Joanna Kelly, Acting Director of Services
David Jones, Director of Services
Bernadette Woods, Director of Services
David Hanratty, Acting Director of Services
Declan grimes, Senior Engineer
Sinéad Dooley, Meetings Administrator

Apologies: Cllr Byrne
Cllr Nash
Ger Murphy, Director of Services

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 6th November 2025

The minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 9th October were confirmed subject to one amendment under discussion item '**Request from Drogheda Port Company for briefing to Members**' to state: *"It was agreed that the matter be brought before Council for consideration and resolution, in accordance with the provisions of Section 23 of the Harbours Act 2015."*

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

2. Matters Arising

None

3. Council Meeting Agenda

Acting Director of Services, Joanna Kelly, presented the November Council Meeting Agenda to the Members and highlighted specific matters for discussion and decision, including:

- Consideration and Adoption of the Draft Traffic Calming Policy as deferred at the October meeting of Council
- Requirement for Council to pass a resolution, in accordance with the provisions of Section 23 of the Harbours Act 2015, to invite Drogheda Port Company to present to the Members

Director of Services, Bernadette Woods, provided a brief update on preparations for the County Council Budget 2026 Meeting, scheduled to follow the November Ordinary Meeting. Councillor Kelly suggested that it may be beneficial for Members to convene ahead of the Budget Meeting to address minor or routine queries. Ms Woods confirmed that she would be available to respond to any questions and provide clarifications in advance of the Budget Meeting.

4. Members Allocations

Noted

5. To consider and recommend conferences and events

Noted

6. Communications for Weather Events

Acting Director of Services, Mr. David Hanratty, advised that he proposes to develop a communications document relevant to weather warnings, to align with the current Communications Plan.

To avoid duplication in incident reporting and to facilitate timely communication, it was suggested that a WhatsApp group chat, open only for the duration of weather events, be trialled. Mr. Hanratty committed to exploring the feasibility of such a group and to liaising with IT to assess any privacy or cyber security risks.

It was emphasised that, should such a communication channel be implemented, any responses issued by Operations Team members must be treated as real-time updates and should not be quoted in media or online platforms. It was further agreed that no Councillor should publicly name individual staff members under any circumstances.

7. Draft Feasibility Review on the Live Broadcasting and Online Observation of Public Council Meetings

Acting Director of Services, Joanna Kelly presented the Draft Feasibility Review on the Live Broadcasting and Online Observation of Public Council Meetings prepared on behalf of the Corporate Policy Group following the Notice of Motion passed by the Council on 16th June 2025.

She advised that while the broadcasting or enabling online observation of Council meetings is technically feasible, the review concluded that the associated risks - particularly regarding data protection, privacy, and unauthorised recording - currently outweigh the potential benefits.

Members expressed agreement with the findings and considered the rationale to be clear. It was agreed that the draft review would be brought before full Council for approval of the recommendations contained within.

8. Draft Meeting Room Policy for Elected Members

Acting Director of Services, Ms. Joanna Kelly, presented Members with a Draft Meeting Room Policy for Elected Members.

Councillor Kelly raised several concerns regarding the policy, including the lack of provision for meeting spaces at the Ardee and Drogheda offices, restrictions on meeting constituents at the proposed facility, and the absence of a sign-in procedure. In relation to meeting constituents, Councillor Kelly noted that Elected Members are now advised not to invite constituents to their private homes or attend meetings in constituents' homes due to the associated security risks. He further indicated that the current annual expenses provision of approximately €4,200 is insufficient to support the booking of alternative meeting venues for the purpose of conducting constituent business.

Councillors Meenan and Smith highlighted a separate issue regarding the general lack of key card access for Elected Members and requested that basic access be provided to enable direct entry to meeting rooms.

The issue of access cards was discussed, with emphasis placed on the dual considerations of staff duty of care and data protection. It was noted that access to meeting rooms involves passing through staff areas, and that once corridor access is granted, office access may also be possible - posing a serious security and data protection risk. It was further noted that staff members only have access to their designated areas, with access levels varying accordingly. Nonetheless, the Executive undertook to consider the matter further and advised that efforts are ongoing to implement appropriate systems and security measures.

It was agreed that the Draft Policy would be reviewed in light of the feedback received, with consideration to be given to: capacity issues, particularly at Ardee; possible introduction of Pods at County Hall, similar to those at Drogheda; facilitation of constituent business.

9. Municipal District of Ardee Civic Awards

Members were advised that the Municipal District of Ardee proposes to confer its Civic Awards on 8th December. It was noted that each Municipal or Borough District may confer up to ten awards annually; however, this figure should be regarded as a maximum limit rather than a target, in order to preserve the significance and value of each award.

On that basis, it was noted that the six Members of the Municipal District of Ardee had each submitted an individual nomination, and made three nominations agreed as a group, resulting in a total of nine awards to be conferred. Members noted the list of intended recipients.

10. Update on Planning Matters

Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Services, Mr. Thomas McEvoy, advised that two weeks remain for the submission of observations on the County Development Plan. He informed Members that they would receive a document outlining the next steps in the process.

It is expected that the Chief Executive's Report will be compiled in early 2026, with a draft plan scheduled to go to public consultation by Quarter 3 of 2026. The challenges arising from the Planning and Development Act 2024 not yet being enacted were reiterated.

It was further noted that a Settlement Capacity Audit is currently underway and will assess

- Whether sufficient lands are currently zoned to meet projected housing and development requirements.
- What amendments may be necessary should the Development Plan require revision following the enactment of the Planning and Development Act 2024
- The adequacy of land supply in the context of housing and infrastructure projections extending beyond a ten-year horizon.

11. CRM

Acting Director of Services, Ms. Joanna Kelly, confirmed that the pilot phase of the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system is ongoing. She noted that not all Members have engaged with the system to date and advised that Senior Executive Officer, Ms. Sinéad Dooley, will follow up with Members to encourage engagement. It was further noted that the commencement of the phasing out of Sugar, the current CRM system, is imminent.

12. SPC Work Programmes

Councillor Kerley advised that work is continuing on finalising the work programme for the Planning Strategic Policy Committee.

13. Any other business

Staff Bereavement – Update on Policy for Elected Members

Councillor Kelly sought an update on the previous discussion regarding the potential development of a policy to guide Elected Members in responding to the death of a staff member, noting the sensitivities involved and the importance of respecting the wishes of bereaved families - some of whom may prefer not to have tributes made in the Chamber.

While the necessity of a specific policy for Elected Members was questioned, Councillor Kelly expressed the view that Members require clarity in such situations and highlighted the value of having guidance to ensure consistently appropriate and respectful responses.

Planning permission for murals

Councillor Smith queried whether planning permission is required for murals. Ms Kelly confirmed that planning permission is required for murals; however, advised that they may also be undertaken in partnership with the Local Authority. A procedure is in place through the BIDS initiative. Consideration must be given to the impact on the character of the structure, particularly where architectural merit is involved.

Cyber Security Training for Elected Members

Director of Services, Ms. Bernadette Woods, confirmed that the Cyber Security Training programme for Elected Members is ready for rollout. She advised that a communication regarding the training will be issued to Members shortly. Ms. Woods further noted that completion of the training will be monitored on a weekly basis initially, transitioning to monthly monitoring thereafter.

Twinning Procedure

Acting Director of Services, Joanna Kelly, queried whether Members had reviewed the Twinning Procedure's document as circulated at September's meeting of the Corporate Policy Group.

Councillor Kelly committed to reverting to Ms Kelly week commencing 10th November.

Civic Reception

Members extended their congratulations on the success of the recent Civic Reception held in honour of the Louth GAA Leinster Senior Football Champions, Louth GAA Leinster U20 Football Champions, and the Louth LGFA All-Ireland Junior Football Champions. The event was commended for striking an effective balance between civic formality and celebratory spirit. It was further noted that valuable learnings emerged throughout the organisation of the event, which will be important to reflect upon and apply in future planning of Civic events.

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

Date:

4TH DEC '25

Cathaoirleach:



Meetings Administrator:

Sinead Dooley