



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, 4th September 2025 at 9:30am

In attendance:

Cathaoirleach, Cllr: Seán Kelly

Members, Cllrs: Rachel Kerley
Robert Nash
Kevin Meenan (Online)
Pio Smith

Officials: David Conway, Chief Executive
Thomas McEvoy, Deputy Chief Executive
Joanna Kelly, Acting Director of Services
David Jones, Director of Services
Ger Murphy, Director of Services
Bernie Woods, Director of Services
David Hanratty, Acting Director of Services
Sinéad Dooley, Meeting Administrator

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 9th July 2025

The minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 9th July were confirmed on the

Proposal of: Cllr. Kevin Meenan
Seconded by: Cllr. Pío Smith
And approved

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 4th June 2025

The minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 4th June were confirmed on the

Proposal of: Cllr. Rachel Kerley
Seconded by: Cllr. Kevin Meenan
And approved

3. Council Meeting Agenda

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

- Presidential Elections - Discussion required regarding the forthcoming Presidential Elections with a view to determining whether Members wish to convene a Special Meeting to consider potential candidates which have sought the Council's support for nomination.
- 2026 Budgetary Planning – Members to agree a date for the 2026 Draft Budget Meeting in accordance with the prescribed periods as set out in Department of Finance Circular 13/2025.
- Overdraft Facility – Members approval for an Overdraft Facility of €5 million facility for the financial year 2026 will be sought.
- Nuclear Free Local Authority Membership – Members to consider the appropriateness or otherwise of the continuation of this membership.
- Service Delivery Plan 2025 Mid-Year Review – Members will be provided with an update on progress and performance under the 2025 Service Delivery Plan.
- Community Safety Partnership – Members will receive a follow-up on the presentation delivered in July, including recent developments and next steps.

4. Members Allocations

Noted

5. To consider and recommend conferences and events

The list of conferences and events was noted.

6. Budget 2026

With reference to Department of Finance Circular 13/2025, Director of Services Bernie Woods outlined the statutory requirement to convene the following budgetary meetings:

- Council Budget Meeting – To be held between **3rd November 2025 and 28th November 2025**
- Municipal/Borough District Budgetary Plan Meetings – To be held between **1st October 2025 and 14th November 2025**

In light of these requirements, Ms Woods proposed that the Local Authority Budget Meeting be scheduled to follow the Council's Monthly Meeting on Monday, 17th November 2025.

It is further proposed that the Municipal/Borough District Budgetary Plan discussions take place during their respective October meetings, incorporated into the standard agenda.

7. Approval of a €5 million overdraft facility for 2026

Director of Services, Bernie Woods, advised that under Section 106 of the Local Government Act 2001, Council approval is required to continue the €5million overdraft facility for the 2026 financial year.

8. Presidential Elections

Acting Director of Services, Joanna Kelly, provided an overview of the framework for the upcoming Presidential Election as outlined in the Presidential Order signed by Minister Browne on 3rd September.

Members were advised of the importance of securing Council agreement on the next steps for Louth County Council, including:

- Whether to convene a Special Meeting to consider potential candidates who have sought the Council's support for nomination
- The proposed format of such a meeting
- The process by which a nomination may be made, should the Council choose to support a candidate.

9. Community Safety Partnership

Acting Director of Services, Joanna Kelly, reminded Members of the requirement for the Council to formally ratify nominations from Elected Members for participation in the group. It was noted, as previously discussed, that the agreed recommendation is for each Borough and Municipal District to nominate two representatives.

Ms Kelly confirmed that a minimum of six meetings are expected to be held annually. She undertook to provide a follow-up at the September Council meeting on the presentation delivered in July, and to reiterate, as outlined in the relevant guidance, the importance of securing representation from each Borough and Municipal District. She further emphasized the need to ensure balanced geographical coverage and the inclusion of a diverse range of perspectives within the group.

10. Nuclear Free Local Authorities Membership

Acting Director of Services, Joanna Kelly, informed Members that the 2025/2026 invoice from Manchester City Council, in the amount of £1,283, had been received in respect of the annual membership fee for the UK/Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities network. Ms Kelly noted that the membership appears to predate 2014.

Records indicate that, in 2015, Manchester City Council was formally advised that the Town Council of Dundalk and the Borough Council of Drogheda had been dissolved, and that Louth County Council had assumed responsibility as the successor authority for all local government functions. The correspondence further requested clarification regarding the benefits of continued affiliation with the organisation. However, no response appears to have been received, despite the membership fee being paid annually since that time.

In light of the absence of any correspondence outlining the ongoing advantages of membership, and the continued payment of the fee over an extended period, Ms Kelly recommended that the Corporate Policy Group give initial consideration to the appropriateness of maintaining the Council's affiliation with the body.

Following discussion, the Corporate Policy Group agreed to refer the matter to full Council for further consideration and decision.

11. Twinning Procedure

Acting Director of Services, Joanna Kelly, advised that a Procedural Document for the Louth County Council Twinning Committee had been developed and submitted to the Cathaoirleach. The document sets out the procedures, objectives, and evaluation criteria governing the Committee, which holds responsibility for overseeing and assessing international twinning arrangements.

The Committee is to be chaired by a current member of Louth County Council and will comprise two additional elected members, together with one representative from the executive within the Corporate Directorate.

Councillor Kelly indicated that he would be writing to the Party Whips to seek Expressions of Interest from Members wishing to be considered for appointment to the Committee.

12. Amendment of Standing Orders

Members were advised that, subject to the formal agreement of a change in the day and time of Corporate Policy Group meetings, the Standing Orders would require subsequent amendment.

It was formally agreed that, henceforth, CPG meetings will be held on the Thursday occurring one full week prior to the Monthly Council Meeting, commencing at 9:30 a.m.

The Standing Orders will be amended and ratified accordingly to reflect this change.

13. Planning Matters

Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Services, Thomas McEvoy provided an update on;

- (i) Dart+ Coastal North Project – advising that three weeks ago, An Coimisiún Pleanála formally approved the Railway Order for the DART+ Coastal North project which will enable Iarnród Éireann to move forward with extending the electrified DART network from Malahide to Drogheda MacBride Station. There is a statutory 8-week period during which an application for Judicial Review may be lodged.
- (ii) Current Louth County Development Plan - Proposed variations to the current Louth County Development Plan are scheduled for consideration at the October Council meeting.
- (iii) Settlement Capacity Audit - Correspondence has been received from the Minister requesting that the Council take account of revised housing projections. In response, a review of zoned lands will be undertaken to assess whether sufficient capacity exists to deliver the objectives of the current County Development Plan.

It was noted that the Planning and Development Act 2024 has not yet been enacted, which presents a number of challenges.

The Executive has written to the Department seeking clarification on the appropriate mechanism for issuing statutory notices under the 2000 Act, and to determine whether transitional arrangements will be provided upon enactment of the 2024 legislation. It was further noted that several other local authorities are experiencing similar legislative

uncertainties.

14. Members Reps

Councillor Kelly expressed concern regarding the closure of queries raised by Members, noting that final responses are frequently not communicated to the respective Councillors. He highlighted that this issue appears to be particularly prevalent within the Operations Section, while acknowledging significant improvements within the Housing Section. Councillor Kelly requested that staff responsible for addressing such queries ensure that responses are issued directly to the Councillor who initiated the matter.

15. Scope of role of SPC Chair including SPC Work Programme

Members were informed that Councillor Byrne had submitted a query concerning the responsibilities and functions of the Chairperson of a Strategic Policy Committee. This matter was subsequently placed on the agenda for deliberation by the Corporate Policy Group. In the interim, following receipt of the query, the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) announced a specialised training workshop for SPC Chairpersons, scheduled for the 2nd & 3rd September.

16. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 9th October 9.30am.

17. Any other Business

None

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

Date:

9th Oct '25

Cathaoirleach:



Meetings Administrator:

Sinead Dooley