

Council Meeting 21st March 2022

Minutes of Ordinary Meeting held wholly in person in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Dundalk.

In attendance:

Presiding: Cathaoirleach: Councillor Pio Smith

Members: Councillors: Marianne Butler, Paula Butterly, James Byrne, Joanna Byrne, Kevin Callan, Bernie Conlon, Edel Corrigan, Tom Cunningham, Maria Doyle, Michelle Hall, Conor Keelan, Sean Kelly, Fiachra Mac Raghnaill, Andrea McKeivitt, Kevin Meenan, Declan Power, John Reilly, Liam Reilly, Tomás Sharkey, John Sheridan, Jim Tenanty, Eileen Tully, Antoin Watters, Maeve Yore

Apologies: Councillors: Emma Coffey, Dolores Minogue, Pearse McGeough, Paddy McQuillan

Officials: Chief Executive - Joan Martin
Directors of Services - Joe McGuinness, Paddy Donnelly, Thomas McEvoy (Acting)
Head of Finance - Bernie Woods
Meetings Administrator - Gráinne Tuomey
Senior Executive Officers - Aoife Lawler, Colette Moss, Willie Walsh

Minute No. 35/22

Confirmation of Minutes

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting on Monday **21st February 2022** were

Proposed by: Cllr. Kevin Meenan

Seconded by: Cllr. Joanna Byrne
and adopted.

Minute No. 36/22

Minutes of Municipal District Meetings - Noted

The following Minutes were Noted by Members:

- Municipal District of Dundalk 1st February 2022
- Municipal District of Ardee 3rd February 2022
- Borough District of Drogheda 7th February 2022

Minute No. 37/22

Minutes of Committee Meetings - Noted

The following Minutes were Noted by Members:

- Corporate Policy Group Meeting 9th February 2022
- Audit Committee Meeting 30th September 2021
- Audit Committee Meeting 11th November 2021
- Audit Committee Meeting 27th January 2022

Minute No. 38/22

Report from Chairperson of Corporate Policy Group

Cllr. Maria Doyle informed the members that the meeting of the CPG was held in the Council Chamber at 9.00am on Wednesday 9th March 2022 and that she stood in for the Cathaoirleach. Items discussed included:

- Agreement to hold today's meeting in the Chamber
- Overview of the Council Meeting agenda
- The SPC work programme reports and quarterly reporting on survey monkey
- Section 141 reporting on committee/bodies to be standing item on March Agenda
- Covid Memorial Day events in Dundalk and Drogheda on the 20th March 2022
- St. Patrick's Day representatives to go to New York
- Drogheda Port reps to now be requested to attend April meeting
- Adoption of the Annual Financial Statement was also noted as due for April
- Legislation to be examined by executive about SPC attendance

Following completion of the report, a query was raised by Members about facilitating hybrid meetings on an ongoing basis. It was suggested that this was an important support to encourage women, as predominantly the primary care givers, into politics as there is no statutory maternity leave for councillors. While this was supported by some Members, it was also expressed that in-person meetings were helpful for discussion around topics of importance.

Members advised of SPC meetings being held either in person or online in sequence to accommodate attendance.

The Executive advised that hybrid meetings require significant investment. Standing orders would have to be examined, and a better etiquette process would be needed on standards of online attendance. If it could be done it would be in one venue and not across the districts as standard.

Cllr. Joanna Byrne advised of a possible directive coming on hybrid meetings from Minister Peter Burke.

A query was put to the CPG around who attended the St. Patrick's Day parade normally and Members were advised that each Cathaoirleach was offered the opportunity to attend.

Minute No. 39/22

Strategic Policy Committee Chairpersons Report - Planning and Support Infrastructure SPC

Cllr. Maria Doyle informed members that the meeting of the Planning and Support Infrastructure SPC was held on Wednesday 9th March 2022 at 4pm. Items discussed included:

- Casual Trading Byelaws are drafted, wording is under review
- Motorhome / Caravans - Byelaws of other local authorities being looked at
- The next meeting is scheduled for early June 2022
- As it was Frank Pentony's final SPC meeting as Director, Members wished him a happy retirement

Minute No. 40/22

Strategic Policy Committee Chairpersons Report - Climate Action and Energy

Cllr. Liam Reilly informed members that the meeting of the Climate Action and Energy SPC was held on 13th December 2021. Items discussed (but not limited to) included:

- A presentation on the Energy Policy
- A presentation on the draft Litter Management Plan
- Training on Climate Action for Staff
- Decarbonisation updates
- The draft Climate Action Plan for Louth
- The work plan was set out which included discussion around
 - The Biodiversity Plan
 - Hedge cutting

Minute No. 41/22

Strategic Policy Committee Chairpersons Report - Economic Development and Enterprise Support

Cllr. Pio Smith informed members that the meeting of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC was held on the 1st March 2022. Items discussed (but not limited to) included:

- LECP
- Extension of Shop Front Grants Schemes to villages and back streets
- Closing of historic/incomplete grants
- Funding available from other sources e.g. Foras na Gaeilge, Heritage Council
- Attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)
- Broadband connectivity
- Town Centre Health Checks

Minute No. 42/22

To consider in accordance with Section 60(3) of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, the Audit Committee's report on its consideration of the 2020 Audited Annual Financial Statement and Auditor's Report

Cllr. Tomás Sharkey stated he was 'very concerned at points being brought' to his attention within the Section 60 report of the Audit Committee, as issued and specifically issues in relation to:

- Debit balances
- Compulsory Purchase Orders for public housing
- The number of audits not commenced by the Internal Audit Committee in 2020
- Cash Bonds not in place to finish estates

The auditor report on which the Section 60 was based was also discussed.

Cllr. Michelle Hall commenting on the recommendation that regular site inspections of estates to be taken in charge not being carried out, asked if it was not a false economy not to do so.

Cllr. Marianne Butler requested more information also, on estates to be taken in charge.

The Chief Executive and Head of Finance responded to all comments and queries.

On foot of response from the Executive to a query raised, advising the following line at 13.5 in Auditor Report 'A Protected Disclosures Policy adopted by Members in February 2019...' used incorrect language as it was an internal document and not a reserved function, it was requested that the Auditor be written to, and advised of the incorrect language and asked to amend same:

Joe McGuinness, Director of Services advised Members that the Section 60 Report was brought to them, for their consideration. The Cathaoirleach advised that as it had been considered, the meeting should move on.

Minute No. 43/22

Annual Audit Committee Reports to Council

- Audit Committee Work Programme 2022
- Reports pursuant to Articles 13 and 15 of the Local Government (Audit Committee Regulations 2014) SI 244 2014

Members noted the Work Programme and reports as issued and it was:

Proposed by: Cllr. Marianne Butler

Seconded by: Cllr. Kevin Callan

To accept without change.

Minute No. 44/22

Compliance with Section 141 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended

In accordance with S141 (1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended, verbal reports were received on the activities of the following committees in the past year, by the following elected representatives:

Committee / Organisation	Council Representatives
Association of Irish Local Government	Cllr. James Byrne
Droichead Arts Centre	Cllr. Joanna Byrne
Dundalk BIDS Company	Cllr. M. Butler
Drogheda BIDS Company	Cllr. P. Smith
East Border Region (EBR) Forum	Cllr. M. Hall
Irish Public Bodies Insurance	Cllr. M. Hall
Louth Meath Education and Training Board	Cllr. J. Sheridan
Creative Spark	Cllr. M. Butler
Nth East Regional Drugs & Alcohol Task Force	Cllr. K. Meenan
Regional Health Forum – Dublin North East	Cllr. M. Hall
Local Sports Partnership	Cllr. T. Cunningham

The following are outstanding:

Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA)	Cllr. C. Keelan Cllr. E. Coffey
Local Authority Members Association (LAMA)	Cllr. E. Tully
North East Regional Homeless Forum	Cllr. C. Keelan
Peace Partnership Board	Cllr. A. McKeivitt Cllr. P. Smith Cllr. D. Minogue
An Táin Arts Centre	Cllr. S. Kelly Cllr. John Reilly
Governance/Oversight Committee of the Dublin/Belfast Economic Corridor	Cllr. F. MacRaghnaill Cllr. B. Conlon Cllr. S. Kelly

Cllr. Conor Keelan advised that his reports would be ready for the next meeting in April.

It was noted that Cllr. John Sheridan advised that while he was on the following committee no meeting had taken place to date to his knowledge:

Rural Water Programme - Monitoring Committee	Cllr. T. Cunningham Cllr. J. Sheridan Cllr. E. Tully Cllr. A McKeivitt
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Minute No. 45/22

Breithniú ar Thuarascálacha agus ar Chomhréitigh ón bPríomhfheidhmeannach / Consideration of Reports and Recommendations from Chief Executive

Monthly Management Report

- Finance and Water Services
- Economic Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
- Operations and Waste Management
- Corporate and Emergency Services
- Housing and Quality of Life

Members discussed the report as issued and the following items were highlighted:

Finance and Water Services

- There is no provision for landlord applications for well grants. Head of Water will check if long term tenants may apply or if partial grants are available.
- Head of Water Services to check on works at Clogherhead Harbour and on works affecting greenway access and revert.

Economic Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure

- Members welcomed Thomas McEvoy who is acting in the Director role vacated by Frank Pentony.
- Fair Street offices contract due to be signed during the week with immediate presence onsite thereafter.
- Shopfront Improvement Grant Schemes extension to smaller urban areas was confirmed.
- There was no update on the previously discussed transfer of functions of Short-Term Letting Enforcement to the Residential Tenancies Board.
- Discussions have taken place with Fáilte Ireland on previous motion raised.
- A query raised regarding footpath funding under Active Travel will be examined and responded to by Infrastructure.
- Refugee accommodation provision and access queries at Carnbeg hotel should be referred to the Department of Justice who would have assessed the location.

Operations and Waste Management

- Enforcement of dismount bicycle policy at Navvy bank difficult to achieve. Ownership sits with Dublin Port, who advise that Louth County Council are owners. Executive will examine with view to solution.

Corporate and Emergency Services

- Disappointment was expressed that the Merriweather and Denis Fire vehicles were not included in the Drogheda St. Patrick's Day Parade.
- Lighting up of buildings in purple for Epilepsy on the 26th of March was requested.

Housing and Quality of Life

- Letter that issued re housing of refugees at Sports Centre should not have issued. All sports centre facilities and classes are back to normal. Local Authorities were asked to identify locations over and above normal hotel / B&B emergency accommodation. Usage and assignment of space is ultimately being managed nationally with refugees being met and assessed at entry points into country by Dept.
- Members discussed the longer requirements of refugees, and language classes, Ukrainian books in libraries, trauma training, youth services were suggested
- Repainting of Disabled Bay markings requested.
- Consideration of time extension for Housing Grants to enable applicants to secure contractors was requested.
- Improvement works in Lieu scheme is difficult to progress

Minute No. 46/22

Approval of Attendances at Conferences

In accordance with S142 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended, approval of Attendances at Conferences as notified to the Elected Members was

Proposed by: Cllr. Jim Tenanty

Seconded by: Cllr. Joanna Byrne

And Resolved.

Minute No. 47/22

Allocation of Members Community Grants

In accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended, approval of Allocation of Members Community Grants as notified to the Elected Members was

Proposed by: Cllr. Marianne Butler

Seconded by: Cllr. Kevin Callan

And Resolved.

Minute No. 48/22

LCDC Annual Report for Noting

In accordance with Section 128B(i) of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended, the annual report of the LCDC was submitted to Members setting out the performance of its functions for the year 2021.

The report was noted by Members.

Minute No. 49/22

Joint Policing Committee Annual Report for Noting

In accordance with Section 36 (5) (a) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, Members noted the annual report of the Joint Policing Committee on the performance of its function for the year 2021.

The report was noted by Members.

Minute No. 50/22

Notice of Motion

Proposed by: Cllr. Marianne Butler

Seconded by: Cllr. John Sheridan

“That Louth County Council recognise the unique nature of the Native Irish honey bee population in County Louth and to give official recognition to the County Louth Voluntary Conservation Area.”

Reply:

This is a matter for the Members.

Cllr. Marianne Butler spoke on the important role of bees in the ecosystem, the All Ireland Pollinator Plan, and Louth having a healthy population of native honey bees, which are under threat from non-native species.

The Chief Executive suggested this could be looked at under the Biodiversity Plan.

Minute No. 51/22

Notice of Motion

Proposed by: Councillors Paula Butterly, Bernie Conlon, Pearse McGeough, Dolores Minogue, John Sheridan and Jim Tenanty

Seconded by: Cllr. Joanna Byrne

“The Members of Ardee Municipal District call on Louth County Council to change the current policy of not patching tertiary roads. This is on the basis that it excludes many of our constituents on rural roads where they pay their property tax the same as all other houses. Many of these roads are through-roads to public amenities eg beaches and many of these roads have active development of new houses which have paid/will be paying their development levies.”

Reply from Ms. Catherine Duff, Director of Services, Operations:

The taxonomy of the roads network in Louth and nationally, in order of importance is: Motorway, National, Regional Road, followed by three levels of Local Road classes namely, (1) Primary, (2) Secondary and (3) Tertiary, in rank order. Maintenance and repairs are carried out throughout the road network but are prioritised on the higher designated roads above as these carry the higher volumes of traffic.

Due to the available budget, we are unable to carry out resurfacing/surface dressing/blacktopping on Class 3 roads. However, the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport (DTTAS) normally provides a certain level of funding for the repair and upgrade of Class 3 local public roads, including resurfacing/surface dressing/blacktopping, under the Community Involvement scheme (CIS). The CIS roads are usually annual joint ventures between the local community and Louth County Council/DTTAS, aimed at improving and repairing public roads which are in need of resurfacing.

Local residents on class 3 roads can apply for inclusion on the CIS when the application window is open for public expressions of interest. A list of suitable schemes will then be assessed and considered for funding by Louth County Council. A contribution by the public is required towards the total cost of the works, usually 10-15% but is subject to change. This contribution by local residents is matched with an 85% contribution from Louth County Council/The Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport.

Application forms are available on our website www.louthcoco.ie

You can also log the fault on fix my street. <https://fixmystreet.ie>

Note

- Housing estate roads are generally classified as Class 3/Local tertiary roads, therefore Class 3 roads **in urban and suburban areas (non-rural)** would be included on our Roads Programme on occasion, as these housing estate roads are resurfaced when the need arises.
- Any ordinary very basic maintenance works (excluding resurfacing/surface dressing/blacktopping), such as pothole repairs & patching, verge trimming at its junction with higher designated roads if necessary and, occasional drainage repairs or improvement works where it is justified on the grounds of flooding mitigation or preventing further damage to the existing surface, on Class 3 roads, is at the sole discretion of the Area GSS and Area Engineer and subject to available funding & resources.

A lively discussion took place around this motion.

Minute No. 52/22

Notice of Motion

Proposed by: Cllr. John Sheridan

Seconded by: Cllr. Marianne Butler

“Louth County Council calls on the Department of Agriculture to explore a statutorily restricted period for mowing of grass to support biodiversity.

Research from TCD suggests ‘no mow’ periods are just as effective to support pollinators, most notably our native Irish honey bee (*Apis mellifera mellifera*), as planned wildflower plantations. A statutory restricted period for mowing of grass in April and May, similar to hedge cutting season, could ensure we have a vital resource for biodiversity.”

Reply from Ms. Catherine Duff, Director of Services, Operations:

This is a matter for the members.

However, Louth County Council favours measures such as “no mow” periods and wildflower plantations which support pollinators and biodiversity. To this purpose, LCC has in recent years reduced its mowing policies to verges while allowing full growth of grasses and wild plants where possible. We also currently have an education and awareness campaign, “Don’t Mow for now”, which asks people and commercial landowners to delay mowing, the visibility of which we will be promoting over the coming months.

Minute No. 53/22

Notice of Question

Cllr. Joanna Byrne

Can Louth County Council provide the following data;

The overall number of social housing allocations made for the year of 2021 and also split by

- (i) each Municipal District,
- (ii) the area of choice within each MD
- (iii) bedroom size within (i) and (ii)
- (iv) Avg waiting time of (iii)
- (v) How many of the overall number are local authority managed or VHB's.
- (v) How many of the overall number are long term leases.

Reply from Mr. Paddy Donnelly, Director of Services, Housing and Quality of Life :

(i), (ii) and (iii)

Ardee Municipal District	1bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	Total
Ardee	9	14	24	4	0	

Tullyallen	1	0	0	0	0	
Louth Village	0	7	10	0	0	
Castlebellingham	0	2	2	0	0	
Collon	0	0	1	0	0	
Tallanstown	0	0	4	0	0	
Dunleer	0	0	2	0	0	
Total	10	23	43	4	0	80
Drogheda Borough District	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	Total
Drogheda North	7	39	44	18	0	
Drogheda South	5	14	18	2	0	
Termonfeckin	0	1	3	2	0	
Dunleer	0	1	1	0	0	
Clogherhead	0		1	0	0	
Total	12	55	67	22	0	156
Dundalk Municipal District	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	Total
Dundalk	19	90	97	22	1	
Blackrock/Haggardstown	0	3	27	9	0	
Dromiskin	0	1	3	0	0	
Carlingford	0	1	1	0	0	
Omeath	0	0	3	0	0	
Knockbridge	0	0	0	0	1	
Total	19	95	131	31	2	278

(iv)

The average waiting time varies from 1.5 years to 14.5 years in all three Municipal Districts CBL allocations are based on length of time on the list and vary depending on the interest in a particular unit, therefore an applicant could be on the list e.g. for 12 years and not express an interest and an applicant could be 2 years and be successful.

(v)

A total of 514 allocations were made - 315 Louth County Council and 199 Approved Housing Bodies.

(vi)

30 LTLs were allocated.

Members noted the reply.

Minute No. 54/22

Notices of Motion from other Councils

Correspondence on resolutions of other Councils as follows was noted by Members:

- Tipperary County Council 17th February 2022
- Clare County Council 22nd February 2022
- Clare County Council 22nd February 2022

There being no other business, the meeting concluded.

The Minutes were confirmed at a meeting of the Council held on:

Date: 25th April 2022

Cathaoirleach: 

Meeting Administrator: 