

Louth County Council Monthly Meeting 19th September 2022

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Louth County Council hosted in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Dundalk on Monday 19th September at 10.00 a.m..

In attendance:

Presiding: Councillor, Conor Keelan Cathaoirleach

Members: Councillors: Marianne Butler, Paula Butterly, James Byrne, Joanna Byrne, Kevin Callan, Emma Coffey, Bernie Conlon, Edel Corrigan, Tom Cunningham, Maria Doyle, Michelle Hall, Conor Keelan, Fiachra Mac Raghnaill, Pearse McGeough, Andrea McKevitt, Paddy McQuillan, Kevin Meenan, Dolores Minogue, Declan Power, John Reilly, Liam Reilly, Tomás Sharkey, John Sheridan, Pío Smith, Jim Tenanty, Eileen Tully, Antoin Watters, Maeve Yore

Apologies: Councillors: Seán Kelly

Officials: Joan Martin, Chief Executive
Joe McGuinness, Director of Services
Gráinne Tuomey, Meeting Administrator
Paddy Donnelly, Director of Services
Bernie Woods, Director of Services
Catherine Duff, Director of Services
Thomas McEvoy, Director of Services
John O'Hagan, Senior Engineer
Joanna Kelly, Senior Planner
Colette Moss, Senior Executive Officer
John Lawrence, Senior Executive Officer
Bryan Coughlan, Senior Executive Officer
Aveen Moore, Communications Officer

Minute No. 126/22

Address by Chief Executive Joan Martin

The Cathaoirleach Cllr. Keelan told those present that the Chief Executive would like to address the room.

The Chief Executive addressing Members advised that she wanted to take the opportunity to make some brief remarks,

“Thank you Cathaoirleach - before the start of the meeting of Louth County Council today, I want to take this opportunity make the following brief remarks. This will not take long, and the Council will be able to get on with the important work of a busy agenda.

The duties and responsibilities associated with my position as Chief Executive of Louth County Council are set out for all to see. They are subject to scrutiny and if necessary, can be used to hold me to task, should I or indeed any members of staff whom I am responsible for, fail to meet the standards expected of me or of them.

These responsibilities have evolved over the many years of this Council’s existence and have also been placed on a statutory basis to ensure the €150 million Revenue Budget of public funding which the Council is responsible for is managed in an appropriate and accountable manner.

On a personal basis, while my task is legally defined, I live by a personal moral code of always giving 100% effort on behalf of the citizens of County Louth. I ensure that any decision taken under my stewardship is underpinned by professional integrity and stands up to all levels of scrutiny, be that public, political or legal.

I operate in an open, transparent, and collaborative manner and in my 45 years of public service, I have never attempted to mislead anyone on any matter. In fact, I would take an extremely dim view of any assertion to the contrary.

I wanted to take this opportunity to place these facts on the record of the Council and to reiterate that I have no intention other than to remain fully compliant with the governance responsibilities and the Code of Conduct that governs the public role that I am immensely proud to hold. Equally, I expect all others to be as conversant with the relevant Codes of Conduct that underpin their own areas of responsibility and to abide by them.

I also wish to reiterate that I am keen to work on a positive and collaborative basis on behalf of the people of County Louth and to note that my door is always open to discuss important matters impacting the community or regarding important Council matters.

Thank you for listening and thank you Cathaoirleach, for affording me the time to make these comments”.

Minute No. 127/22

Confirmation of Minutes

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting on Monday **18th July 2022** were

Proposed by: Cllr. Maeve Yore

Seconded by: Cllr. Liam Reilly
and adopted.

Minutes of the Special Meeting on Monday **8th August 2022** were

Proposed by: Cllr. John Sheridan

Seconded by: Cllr. Bernie Conlon
and adopted.

Minute No. 128/22

Minutes of Municipal District Meetings – Noted

The following Minutes were Noted by Members:

- Municipal District of Dundalk 5th July 2022
- Municipal District of Ardee 7th July 2022

Minute No. 129/22

Minutes of Committee Meetings – Noted

The following Minutes were Noted by Members:

- Corporate Policy Group Meeting 6th July 2022
- Audit Committee Meeting 28th April 2022
- Economic Development and Enterprise Support Committee 1st March 2022
- Planning and Support Infrastructure 9th March 2022
- Community, Quality of Life & Creativity 16th February 2022

Minute No. 130/22

Report from Chairperson of Corporate Policy Group

Cathaoirleach Cllr. Conor Keelan advised Members that the July CPG meeting was held in person at 9.00 am on Wednesday 7th September 2022 in the Setanta Room, County Hall.

Members were given a briefing on all items in the Council Agenda by Bryan Coughlan including:

- Local property tax – the Chief Executive will update on the workshop presentation given
- Chief Executive report on the Draft Development Contribution Scheme for North Drogheda for adoption
- Three S.183 proposals being brought before Members
- Nominations for various boards which need to be resolved by council
- Approval of an additional €3.5m home loan application is before the council for approval following exhaustion of previous €5m loan approved
- Members were advised the Scheme of Priority for Affordable Dwelling Purchase Arrangements 2022 had been presented to SPC, was with CPG for noting, and was agreed to go before Members for approval as a reserved function

Members were advised the Draft Development Contribution Scheme for North Drogheda was on Public Display.

The Members Communication Plan was noted. Members were reminded that Sugar was the way to make reps as this is monitored for responses.

Minute No. 131/22

Report from Cathaoirleach on attendances since last meeting

An Cathaoirleach advised Members of the following attendances, events in his role of Cathaoirleach since last meeting:

- Attendance at a Parliamentary Symposium on Enhancing Participation in Public Life and Politics at Dublin Castle
- Opening of an online Book of Condolences for Queen Elizabeth II
- Attendance at An Garda Síochána Centenary Celebration Event in Dundalk, Inspection of Guard of Honour and Acceptance of Salute

Minute No. 132/22

Report from Chairperson of Strategic Policy Committee – Housing

Cllr. Joanna Byrne reported that the Housing SPC had met on 6th September 2022 in person. The minutes of 15th June 2022 were approved.

Among the items discussed were

- A draft scheme of Priority for Affordable Dwelling Purchase Arrangements which will seek expressions of interest, followed by engagement with developers to determine interest
- The Housing Delivery Action Plan. Items discussed included land banks, housing delivery for the Traveller community and a five years target of 1357 units
- Members were reminded that individual submissions regarding the Referendum on Housing were open. Staff in the Housing section were available should any member require any background information on housing in Louth.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 15th November 2022.

Minute No. 133/22

Report from Chairperson of Strategic Policy Committee - Community, Quality of Life and Creativity

The new Chairperson, Cllr. John Sheridan reported that the Community, Quality of Life & Creativity SPC met on Wednesday 7th September 2022 in the Council Chamber, County Hall and the minutes of the meeting held on 15th June 2022 were approved.

Items discussed/presentations given were as follows

- A presentation was given on “My Open Library” by Linda Larrigan, Senior Executive Librarian Drogheda My Open Library has opened from 8am to 10pm every day. A formal launch is due to take place in the coming weeks – Library members can opt in and complete a short induction programme to allow them access the library. Amanda Brannigan, Acting County Librarian responded to all members queries raised and on the mobile Library service.
- Members discussed the SPC work programme and agreed to discuss Play and activities programme at the next meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 16th November 2022. Members agreed to hold the meeting in Drogheda Library to witness My Open Library in operation.

Minute No. 134/22

To agree the rate of Property Tax for Louth for 2023

The Chief Executive Joan Martin presented Members with an overview of the financial challenges faced by Louth County Council in meeting statutory responsibilities and funding services and how an increase of 15% in Local Property Tax (LPT) could assist. Members were advised that while Louth had seen an increase of 2,700 more houses registered for Property Tax, due to the new valuation band width increase the actual income from LPT had reduced by €460k. Concern was raised re future access to the equalisation fund which sees 20% of all LPT income nationally diverted to lower income counties. Louth currently receives a top up to bring funding to €9.8million, this would drop if the equalisation fund ceases.

Members were given a breakdown of the households in each band category and shown how an increase of 15% would cost the band with the highest number of households (47.9%) a maximum of 26c a week and which overall would net Louth County Council an extra €1.39m to spend on services. A variety of projects, schemes and works that this would assist was presented to Members.

Following the presentation and some discussion a zero % increase was

Proposed by Cllr. Kevin Callan
Seconded by Cllr. Declan Power

To which an Amendment of a 10% increase was

Proposed by Cllr. Paula Butterly
Seconded by Cllr. Pio Smith

A **Roll Call Vote** was then held to determine the amendment in line with Standing Order no. 16 as follows:

Name	For	Against	Abstain	Absent
Marianne Butler	1			
Paula Butterly	1			
James Byrne		1		
Joanna Byrne		1		

Kevin Callan		1		
Emma Coffey	1			
Bernie Conlon		1		
Edel Corrigan		1		
Tom Cunningham		1		
Maria Doyle	1			
Michelle Hall	1			
Conor Keelan	1			
Sean Kelly				1
Fiachra MacRaghnaill	1			
Pearse McGeough		1		
Andrea McKeivitt		1		
Paddy McQuillan		1		
Kevin Meenan		1		
Dolores Minogue		1		
Declan Power		1		
John Reilly	1			
Liam Reilly	1			
Tomás Sharkey		1		
John Sheridan	1			
Pio Smith	1			
Jim Tenanty	1			
Eileen Tully	1			
Antóin Watters		1		
Maeve Yore		1		
	13	15	0	1

And the motion to increase LPT by 10% was defeated.

The original motion proposed by Cllr. Callan and seconded by Cllr. Power to increase the LPT by zero % was then put to a Roll Call Vote as follows:

Name	For	Against	Abstain	Absent
Marianne Butler	1			
Paula Butterly		1		
James Byrne	1			
Joanna Byrne	1			
Kevin Callan	1			
Emma Coffey	1			

Bernie Conlon	1			
Edel Corrigan	1			
Tom Cunningham	1			
Maria Doyle	1			
Michelle Hall	1			
Conor Keelan	1			
Sean Kelly				1
Fiachra MacRaghnaill		1		
Pearse McGeough	1			
Andrea McKeivitt	1			
Paddy McQuillan	1			
Kevin Meenan	1			
Dolores Minogue	1			
Declan Power	1			
John Reilly		1		
Liam Reilly		1		
Tomás Sharkey	1			
John Sheridan	1			
Pio Smith	1			
Jim Tenanty	1			
Eileen Tully		1		
Antóin Watters	1			
Maeve Yore	1			
	23	5	0	1

And Members approved a zero increase in Local Property Tax.

Minute No. 135/22

Budget Dates 2022

Head of Finance, Bernie Woods called for agreement on dates for the Council Budget by proposer and seconder for each. The following date and times were agreed

October Draft Budget Meeting on 17th October 2022

Dundalk MD at 9a.m. in County Hall

Proposed by: Cllr. Kevin Meenan
Seconded by: Cllr. Maeve Yore

Ardee MD at 9.30a.m. in County Hall

Proposed by: Cllr. Paula Butterly
Seconded by: Cllr. Jim Tenanty

Drogheda MD following Plenary Meeting of Council in County Hall

Proposed by: Cllr. Kevin Callan
Seconded by: Cllr. Joanna Byrne

Minute No. 136/22

Chief Executive Report on the Draft Development Contribution Scheme for North Drogheda

The Chief Executive advised of a small number of submissions made including one for an extra train station which was not covered within the proposed route of the scheme. Members welcomed the report as presented, acknowledged the work of the Chief Executive and staff and congratulated the Chief Executive on getting the scheme drafted.

Approval of the scheme was

Proposed by: Cllr. Michelle Hall
Seconded by: Cllr. Kevin Callan
And resolved.

Minute No. 137/22

A short break was taken

Minute No. 138/22

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, the following verbal report is outstanding on the activities of the following committee in the past year, by

This item was deferred to the October meeting by agreement of Members and Cathaoirleach

Minute No. 139/22

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

Monthly Management Report

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

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

Finance & Water Services

- Correspondence received from Irish Water was discussed with Members expressing dissatisfaction with the response received. The term “Highly disgusted” was used. Previous unanswered concerns raised around Staleen Water Plant capacity were highlighted and reiterated with development now commencing on the Port Access Northern Cross Route. Members considered that Irish Water needed to facilitate a meeting with Elected Members and did not consider that the current workshop method was sufficient. Insufficient notice periods of outages were raised along with concerns about cited lack of communication with Members and public. Public Health concerns around the quality of water following flushing was also stated. A suggestion was made to again write to Irish Water, EPA and/or HSE and advise them of all issues raised and again request Irish Water to attend a Council Meeting. The Chief Executive suggested that clarification on the content and recipient of correspondence should be sent to the Meetings Administrator in order that a letter could be issued.
- Cllr. Yore cited concerns about the outstanding Fleadh debt and stated she wanted to see the full accounts for the Fleadh including a breakdown of all spend, sponsorship and the debt incurred. Paddy Donnelly Director of Services advised of a spend in excess of €3m on the Fleadh of which €1.3m remained unfunded. The Chief Executive advised that this item had been raised previously and a

proposal was brought to council to clear the debt which was not passed by Members, the Auditor had also reviewed the matter in the course of his Audits, and the Chief Executive had no doubt that everything was spent correctly and no doubt about the veracity of the spend.

Economic Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure – Operations and Waste Management

- Cost breakdowns for Destination Towns Drogheda, Fair St Upgrade were requested and given
- A report on Active Travel schemes similar to format of the Housing schemes report was requested for future meetings
- Following requests for various presentation on Capital projects at meetings Members were advised that due to the painstakingly long process involved it was not possible or productive to give frequent presentations at meetings on progress. The Chief Executive pointed out that progress on all projects was given to members monthly in her report and that the report ran to over 90 pages. Members suggested that local presentations might help negate negative publicity.
- A suggestion to better utilise the flow of the water at Annagassan Harbour to remove silt was made, but the Director of Services Catherine Duff advised of funding restraints
- Proposals for a memorial stone in collaboration with the Miscarriage Society will be discussed at Management Team
- Members welcomed the refurbishment of Bicycles item in the Report
- Pedestrian access to footpath on the Armagh Road should be provided by the Hotel through private lands to the point where the footpath begins at edge of the Hotel
- Council Executives will continue to engage with Drogheda Port on the issue of the Hebble Sand Dredger and any removal thereof

Corporate & Emergency Services

- No items raised

Housing & Quality of Life

- The housing estate management team are active on the ground and implement preventative antisocial behaviour measures but An Garda Síochána are the body tasked with dealing with criminal behaviour
- Retrofitting of Social houses and heating systems continues but where units only have one form of heating maintenance efforts will be expended rather than replacement units

- Disabled Persons Grant funding is never sufficient to meet demand, cases are prioritised

Minute No. 140/22

Replacement Nomination to the Louth Local Community Development Committee

Following consideration and recommendation of the CPG the nomination of Riona McCoy, Acting Head of Enterprise, Local Enterprise Office (LEO) to the Local Community Development Committee was approved to be put to full Council for resolution under Section 36 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

Approval of the nomination was

Proposed by: Cllr. Marianne Butler

Seconded by: Cllr. Maeve Yore

And resolved.

Minute No. 141/22

Replacement Nomination to the Regional Health Forum Dublin North East - For Approval

As no nominees were put forward for this item the matter was deferred to the October Plenary Meeting.

Minute No. 142/22

Approval to draw down a Loan from the Housing Finance Agency

Paddy Donnelly, Director of Services sought approval to draw down a Loan from the Housing Finance Agency for the provision of additional funding for Housing Loan Applications in the amount of €3,500,000 as provided by Section 106 of the Local Government Act 2001

Approval of this was

Proposed by Cllr. Joanna Byrne

Seconded by Cllr. Marianne Butler

And resolved.

Minute No. 143/22

Replacement Nominations to the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

Paddy Donnelly, Director of Services sought approval of two nominees to the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC). The LTACC offer advice to Louth County Council on the provision and management of accommodation for members of the Travelling Community and provide a liaison between members of the Travelling Community, Council Official and Elected Members.

Approval of Mary McDonagh and Margaret McDonagh to the committee was

Proposed by: Cllr. Marianne Butler

Seconded by: Cllr. Fiachra Mac Raghnaill

And Agreed.

Minute No. 144/22

Scheme of Priority for Affordable Dwelling Purchase Arrangements

Adoption of a Scheme of Priority for Affordable Dwelling Purchase Arrangements as made under Section 11 of the Affordable Housing Act 2021 was

Proposed by: Cllr. Joanna Byrne

Seconded by: Cllr. Conor Keelan

And Adopted.

Minute No. 145/22

Disposal of Land at Clontygora Drive, Muirhevnamore, Dundalk

In accordance with S183(1)(b) of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended, it was agreed the **disposal of Lands adjacent at Clontygora Drive, Muirhevnamore, Dundalk** shall be carried out in accordance with terms specified in the resolution; This was:

Proposed by: Cllr. Maeve Yore

Seconded by: Cllr. Fiachra Mac Raghnaill

And Resolved.

Minute No. 146/22

Disposal of Land at St. Alphonsus Road, Dundalk to Commissioner of Public Works in Ireland

In accordance with S183(1)(b) of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended, it was agreed the **disposal of lands at St. Alphonsus Road, Dundalk to Commissioner of Public Works in Ireland** shall be carried out in accordance with terms specified in the resolution; This was:

Proposed by: Cllr. Marianne Butler
Seconded by: Cllr. Fiachra Mac Raghnaill
And Resolved.

Cllr. Yore objected to the disposal at amount stated but did not receive support

Minute No. 147/22

Disposal of Fee Simple of property at Fair Green, Drogheda

In accordance with S183(1)(b) of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended, it was agreed **the disposal of Fee Simple of property at Fair Green, Drogheda** shall be carried out in accordance with terms specified in the resolution; This was:

Proposed by: Cllr. Michelle Hall
Seconded by: Cllr. Eileen Tully
And Resolved.

Minute No. 148/22

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. Antóin Watters
Seconded by: Cllr. Marianne Butler
And Resolved.

Minute No. 149/22

Freastal ar Chomhdhálacha a Cheadú / Approval of Attendance at Conferences

Approval of attendances at Conferences as notified to the Elected Members was

Proposed by: Cllr. Eileen Tully
Seconded by: Cllr. Michelle Hall
And Resolved.

Minute No. 150/22

Formation of the PEACEPLUS Partnership Committee

The reported as presented was noted by Members.

Minute No. 151/22

Notice of Motion

Proposed by: Cllr. John Reilly
Seconded by: Cllr. Conor Keelan

“For Louth County Council to write to the OPW asking for Faughart, Graveyard to be taken over by the OPW as a national Heritage site.”

Reply: This is a matter for the Members.

Speaking on the Motion, Cllr. Reilly welcomed the support from other Members and hoped that the OPW would be in favour of the request. He understood ownership of the site had changed over the years and neither of the assumed owners was currently interested in taking the site in charge. He hoped taking in charge of the site which he described as the battle site of Richard the Bruce combine with tourist efforts around the promotion of the birthplace of St. Brigid would promote tourism in Co. Louth.

Minute No. 152/22

Notice of Motion

Proposed by: Cllr. Tom Cunningham

That Louth County Council call on the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine and also the Minister for Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport to ensure that

all fishing representative organisations and local fishermen are fully included in the planning process for all offshore wind projects to minimise the impact of these projects on their fishing grounds and their livelihoods.

Reply from J. McGuinness, Director of Organisational Development

This is a matter for the Members.

Speaking on the motion Cllr. Cunningham underlined the necessity of the letter issuing to both Ministers to ensure close involvement of the fishing community. Referring to a recent presentation given to Members by Braymore Windfarm reps, he described their proposed communications as lip service and box ticking. He considered that windfarms look for the cheapest option which in this case involves building on and disturbing the lucrative prawn grounds in the bay, on which 80 vessels currently fish. He advised members that prawns do not migrate so disturbance of the grounds would be detrimental to the fishing industry and recommended that the grounds be designated a food security area and an alternative location sought for the windfarm.

This motion was widely supported by Members who recognised the need for alternative power to fossil

Notice of Question

Proposed by: Cllr. James Byrne

“Can Louth County Council provide details of revenue earned from car parking charges for Drogheda, Ardee and Dundalk separately for each year since 2018 to include the year to date?”

Reply from B. Woods, Head of Finance

YEAR	DUNDALK	DROGHEDA	Total
2018	€920,000	730,000**	€1,650,000
2019	€950,000	€1,200,000	€2,150,000
2020	€600,000	€740,000	€1,340,000
2021	€590,000	€850,000	€1,440,000

2022 (JAN - JULY)	€520,000	€600,000	€1,120,000
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**** Pay Parking suspended in Drogheda for 3 months during 2018 ****

Notice of Question

Proposed by: Cllr. Tomás Sharkey

“For each of the financial years, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, what was the Municipal District Allocation for each of the 3 Municipal Districts and what was the expenditure of each allocation for each district in each year?”

Reply from B. Woods, Head of Finance

	2021		2020		2019		2018	
	Committed Expenditure	Budget Expenditure	Committed Expenditure	Budget Expenditure	Committed Expenditure	Budget Expenditure	Committed Expenditure	Budget Expenditure
MD Allocations Ardee	75,000	75,000	65,000	65,000	55,000	55,000	60,000	60,000
MD Allocations Dundalk	74,997	75,000	65,000	65,000	54,570	55,000	59,995	60,000
MD Allocations Drogheda	75,000	75,000	64,950	65,000	54,600	55,000	60,000	60,000
	224,997	225,000	194,950	195,000	164,170	165,000	179,995	180,000

Minute No. 153/22

Correspondence – Noted

Members noted the following Correspondence which issued

- From Irish Water dated 18th August 2022
- From Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence dated 23rd August 2022

Minute No. 154/22

Motions from other Councils– Noted

Members noted the following Resolutions as received

- Donegal County Council 22nd July 2022
- Wexford County Council 26th July 2022

As there was no other business the meeting concluded.

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

Date:

17 Oct 2022

Cathaoirleach:

Cathaoirleach

Meeting Administrator:

Meeting Administrator