



Comhairle Contae Lú
Louth County Council

Louth County Council Monthly Meeting

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Louth County Council hosted in the Council Chamber of Co. Hall, Dundalk on Monday, 20th January 2025, at 10:00a.m.

In Attendance:

Presiding: Councillor, Kevin Callan – Cathaoirleach

Members: Councillors: Marianne Butler, James Byrne, Bernie Conlon, Emma Coffey, Eric Donovan, Anne-Marie Ford, Michelle Hall, Sean Kelly, Rachel Kerley, Sionainn McCann, Debbie McCole, Pearse McGeough, Shane McGuinness, Andrea McKeivitt, Paddy McQuillan, Fiona MhicConchoille, Kevin Meenan Dolores Minogue, Robert Nash, Ejiro O'Hare-Stratton, John Reilly, John Sheridan, Jim Tenanty, Pio Smith, Antóin Watters, Maeve Yore

Apologies: Councillors: Eric Donovan, Ciaran Fisher, Declan Power

Officials: David Conway, Chief Executive
Joe McGuinness, Director of Services
Ger Murphy, Director of Services
David Jones, Director of Services
Thomas McEvoy, Director of Services
Bernie Woods, Director of Finance
Bryan Coughlan, Meeting Administrator
Susan Deery, Administrative Officer
Sinéad Dooley, Senior Executive Officer
Finbar Gethins, Senior Executive Officer
Colette Moss, Senior Executive Officer
David Hanratty, Senior Engineer
John O'Hagan, Senior Engineer
Joanna Kelly, Senior Planner

Minute No. 1/25

The Cathaoirleach and Members welcomed Mr David Conway to his first Monthly Meeting of Louth County Council and wished him every success as he officially commences his tenure as Chief Executive. Cllr Reilly also presented Mr Conway with a picture of St Brigid's Shrine. Mr Conway expressed his appreciation for the welcome and stated that he was "honoured to have the opportunity to work with the Cathaoirleach, Councillors, Council Executive and to proactively support all stakeholders in their endeavours to deliver further impactful change for County Louth."

The Cathaoirleach also welcomed Cllr Debbie McCole to her first Monthly Meeting of Louth County Council.

Minutes of Meeting held on 16th December 2024

Proposed by: Cllr. Maeve Yore
Seconded by: Cllr. Sean Kelly
And Approved

Minute No. 2/25

Matters arising

- In respect of Minute 335/24 it was confirmed that approval has been obtained to match ORIS funding for accessibility works at Templetown and Port Oriel.

Minute No. 3/25

Minutes of District Meetings – for noting

- Municipal District of Dundalk – 12th November 2024

Minute No. 4/25

Minutes of Committee Meetings – for noting

- Corporate Policy Group – 4th December

Minute No. 5/25

Report from Chairperson of Corporate Policy Group

A report was delivered by the Chairperson of the Corporate Policy Group, Cllr. Kevin Callan, on proceedings from the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 7th January 2025.

Minute No. 6/25

Strategic Policy Committee Chairpersons Report

Cllr. Pio Smith, Chair of the Economic Development and Enterprise Supports Strategic Policy Committee provided a report to the meeting. The Committee met on the 19th December, 2024 and discussed Standing Orders, the role and remit of the Committee, a work programme and dates for its 2025 meetings. The work programme will include matters such as the Local Economic and Community Plan, business supports, the Local Enterprise Office and rate

Minute No. 7/25

Approval of Attendance at Conferences

The list as put to the meeting was:

Proposed by: Cllr. Smith

Seconded by: Cllr. Byrne
And Resolved.

Minute No. 8/25

Allocation of Members Community Grants provided for under Section 66 of the Local Government Act 2001

Approval of the grants as presented on the agenda before them was

Proposed by: Cllr. Watters
Seconded by: Cllr. Smith
And resolved

Minute No. 9/25

Vacancy on Dublin/Belfast Economic Corridor Governance and Oversight Committee – Deputy Paula Butterly

The election of Paula Butterly to Dáil Eireann, resulted in a vacancy to be filled on Dublin/Belfast Economic Corridor Governance and Oversight Committee.

Cllr. Rachel Kerley was appointed to the vacancy on the

Proposal of: Cllr. Nash
Seconded by: Cllr. Reilly
And resolved

Minute No. 10/25

Vacancies on the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

There are currently three local traveller/traveller representative body vacancies on the local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. The following persons have been nominated as the new representatives to the committee: Mr. Kieran McDonagh, Ms. Samantha Maguire, and Ms. Colette Joyce.

Proposed by: Cllr. Meenan
Seconded by: Cllr. Yore
And resolved

Minute No. 11/25

Annual Financial Statement 2023

To consider the Annual Financial Statement 2023 under Section 60 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014 and to approve, noting the Audit Committee Report on same

Director of Services Bernie Woods spoke to the report of the Audit Committee on the Annual Financial Statement 2023 and addressed queries raised including in respect of Rent Areas, Payment Contributions, Capital Programmes balance, and plans to address debt remaining from the hosting of Fleadh Cheoil. Members were advised that a proposal for dealing with the legacy debt arising from the Fleadh had been previously brought to Members and rejected. Members were

also advised on ongoing projects relating to the property register the Financial Management System.

Proposed by: Cllr. Kevin Callan
Seconded by: Cllr. Pio Smith
And resolved

Minute No. 12/25

To approve in accordance with Section 104 of the Local Government Act, 2001 the (i) revised expenditure for the financial year ended 31st December 2023 as set out in Note 16 to the Accounts and (ii) the transfer to and from Capital in 2023.

Director of Services Bernie Woods advised that these matters were approved by members when the accounts were presented in April 2024 but were not recorded in the minutes as being approved individually.

Proposed by: Cllr. Maeve Yore
Seconded by: Cllr. Jim Tenanty
And resolved

Minute No. 13/25

Section 141 Reports 2024 - Compliance with Section 141 of the Local Government Act, 2001 as amended

Director Joe McGuinness reminded Members of the statutory requirement to report annually on the activities and operations of Bodies, Boards and Committees to which they are elected, appointed or nominated to represent Louth County Council.

Cllr. Pio Smith delivered a report from a recent Association of Irish Local Government on behalf also of Cllrs. Jim Tenanty and James Byrne. The meeting primarily discussed the general election but also addressed the need to consider the number of elected representatives per head of population, to strengthen area committees and to re-establish town councils in the larger towns.

Minute No. 14/25

Consideration of Reports and Recommendations from Chief Executives Monthly Management Report

Support Services

- Uisce Éireann came under criticism for leaving residents in parts of Tullyallen with discoloured water for the last five weeks. While the local authority has no role in water services since they transferred to Uisce Éireann Director of Services Joe McGuinness suggested that the issue could be addressed under Motion.

Strategic Economic Development

The following was discussed in relation to Strategic Economic Development:

- Director of Services Thomas McEvoy indicated that a Review of the County Development Plan would take place in Q4 2025 while a report on Proposed Material Alterations to the Dundalk Local Area Plan will be submitted to Members in the coming weeks for consideration.

- Work on the new Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025 – 2030 for County Louth has commenced. Consultations will be conducted, and Members will be contacted in the coming weeks in respect of same
- 80 applications were received under the 2025 Festival Grant Initiative and the Regional Festivals and Participative Events Programme 2025 reflecting a threefold increase on previous years.
- Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications ultimately approves identification/allocation of Broadband Connection Points. Members are welcome to liaise with the Council's Broadband Officer in respect of developing submissions for BCPs.
- Director of Services Thomas McEvoy undertook to consider how the Merryweather could be securely displayed as a tourist attraction noting that the Museum has insufficient space to accommodate it.

Placemaking & Physical Development

The following was discussed in relation to Placemaking and Physical Development:

- Briefing will be provided to Members in advance of issuing a Draft Report from the Public Consultation on the proposed Dundalk Bay to Carlingford Greenway.
- It was confirmed that white road markings along the Greenway route were associated with the project and indicative of footage being gathered by drones at present.
- The allocation of €2.6m in 2025 for Active Travel was welcomed and Members were advised that construction works should commence by Q3 following completion of a tendering process.

Organisational Development

The matters discussed in relation to Organisational Development were:

- From February 1st, 2025, it will be illegal to own an XL Bully type dog without a 'Certificate of Exemption' issued by the local authority in which the dog resides. Director of Services Joe McGuinness advised that the Council was prepared for the enactment of the legislation and asked that Members issues reminders via their own social media channels to promote public awareness.
- Director of Services Joe McGuinness undertook to look at the potential of Sunday opening of Lourdes Stadium.
- The Council has a tender published currently for the installation of solar panels at County Hall.
- Director of Services Joe McGuinness to circulate a paper concerning legislation in respect of burial grounds and a list of closed graveyards.

Social Development

The following was discussed in relation to Social Development:

- Cllr. Meenan congratulated the County Council on the completion of three houses constructed using concrete printing technology and queried if there were future plans for more such developments. Director of Services Ger Murphy advised that there are a number of issues to resolve in advance of further rollout but recognised the opportunity such technology would have in informing housing delivery.
- Some 500 Units have benefited from the Energy Retrofitting Programme with 65% of the 2024 allocation of 140 Units completed to date.

- It was noted that while the Council has the power to issue Improvement Notices to Landlords the Residential Tenancy Board also has a role. Director of Services Ger Murphy undertook to seek clarity in respect of whether HAP payments continue to be made if an Improvement Notice has issued.
- Director of Services Ger Murphy confirmed that Greenhills was one of 4 developments at which early site works commenced in December and that an increase in activity would be seen over the coming weeks.

Minute No. 15/25

Update on Strategic Alliance Louth County Council and Newry Mourne Down District Council

A presentation on Narrow Water Bridge was deferred to the next County Meeting.

Director of Services Thomas McEvoy advised that a date would be established in the coming days for a Workshop on a proposed renewed Action Plan.

Minute No. 16/25

Notice of Motion: Cllr. Dolores Minogue

Seconded by: Cllr. Kerley

I am seeking support on an important issue that is affecting our children and our communities: the impact of smartphones on young people. Following the example set by Australia, I believe that we should consider implementing a similar policy here in Ireland - one that restricts access to smartphones for anyone under the age of 16.

The argument is simple but crucial: the digital world can be overwhelming for young minds. Research consistently shows that excessive smartphone use can contribute to mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression and poor sleep. The constant exposure to social media also opens children to cyberbullying, unrealistic body standards, and harmful content that they may not be mature enough to process.

Reply from Bernadette Woods, Director of Finance:

This is a matter for the Members.

Minute No. 17/25

Notice of Motion: Cllr. John Reilly

Seconded by: Cllr. Kelly

That Louth County Council writes to the Revenue Commissioners requesting that the Revenue Office in Dundalk be reopened on a part-time basis to facilitate the public.

Reply from David Hanratty, A/Director of Organisational Development

This is a matter for the Members.

Minute No. 18/25

Notice of Motion: Cllr. Ciarán Fisher

That Louth County Council write to the Minister for Finance to provide 2 million of discretionary funding from the €14 billion surplus from the Apple Tax ruling to Louth County Council and the 30 other local authorities across Ireland.

As Cllr. Fisher was not present, and there was no alternative proposed specified in writing, the motion was not moved.

Minute No. 19/25

Correspondence

Members noted the following correspondence:

- Wexford County Council 10th December 2024
- Donegal County Council 17th December 2024
- Donegal County Council 17th December 2024

Minute No. 20/25

Any other Business

David Conway, Chief Executive advised that on 9th January 2025, the Executive made a report to An Garda Síochána regarding missing IT equipment from its main office at the Millennium Centre, Dundalk. The missing equipment was identified as part of routine internal audit procedures. The equipment, which was part of the normal working inventory of Louth County Council, and in stock for replacement purposes and for new employees, was unused and did not contain any personal or organisational data. There are no GDPR issues. As the matter has been referred to An Garda Síochána, and an investigation pending, no further comment could be made at this time.

Congratulations

Congratulations were extended to Cllr McKeivitt on her recent engagement and to Cllr Fisher on the birth of a new baby at the weekend.

Congratulations were also extended to Dundalk Ravens Basketball Club under 20 National Cup Champion Winners - coached by Elijah Faapito son of Triona and Fu Faapito (founders of Dundalk Ravens Basketball Club in 2007).

Condolences

Condolences were extended to the family and friends of:

- Paddy Hogan RIP - Wife Martha, Ard na Mara Blackrock, sons Fergus, Darragh and Ken
- Suzanne Bradley RIP - Husband Paddy, 'Abbey Lodge' Mount Rath Dundalk, children Shannon & Luke and Father Pat.

There being no other business, Cllr. Kevin Callan expressed thanks to the Members, staff and press, and the meeting concluded.

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

Date: 17th February 2025

Cathaoirleach: Kevin Callan

Meeting Administrator: Sinead Doolan