

Minutes of Meeting of Leitrim County Council held in the Council Chamber, Aras an Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon on Monday, 7th September, 2015

Members Present: Councillor Armstrong–McGuire, Finola
Councillor Barry, Brendan
Councillor Bohan, Mary
Councillor Gerry Dolan
Councillor Dolan, Frank
Councillor Fallon, Pdraig
Councillor Ellis, Caillian
Councillor Guckian, Des
Councillor Guckian, Sinead
Councillor Gurn, Felim
Councillor Kenny, Martin
Councillor Logan, Seadhna
Councillor McDermott, Sean
Councillor McGowan, Sean
Councillor O'Rourke, Paddy
Councillor Stenson, Enda
Councillor Warnock, Justin

And Councillor John McCartin, Cathaoirleach presiding

Officials Present: Mr. Frank Curran, Chief Executive
Mr. Joseph Gilhooly, Director of Services, Economic Development, Planning, Environment and Transportation
Ms. Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing and Community, Corporate Services, Culture and Emergency Services
Mr. John McKeon, A/Head of Finance & Water Services
Mr. Shay O'Connor, Senior Engineer, Infrastructure
Mr Shane Tiernan, Senior Executive Officer
Mr. Philip Delamere, Arts Officer
Mr Michael Gunning, Administrative Officer
Ms. Sinead Flynn, Meetings Administrator
Ms. Kathleen McGovern Ellis, Assistant Staff Officer

15/129

07/09/2015 Votes of Sympathy

The Members extended a vote of sympathy to Mr Frank Curran, Chief Executive on the recent death of his father Mr. Tom Curran.

15/130

07/09/2015 Deimhniu Miontuairisci

Proposed by Councillor Caillian Ellis seconded by Councillor Justin Warnock and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

“That the Minutes of Meeting of Leitrim County Leitrim held in Aras An Chontae, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim on Monday, 6th July, 2015 be adopted”.

The Cathaoirleach, Councillor John McCartin invited the Chief Executive to give an overview of the provisions in relation to setting the Local Adjustment Factor for Local Property Tax Rates for 2016.

Mr. Frank Curran, Chief Executive provided an over-view of the factors that must be taken into account by the local authority in the setting of the Local Adjustment Factor for the Local Property Tax Rates for 2016. He outlined that factors that need to be considered include the local authority's overall financial position, the projected income available for 2016, the projected expenditure for 2016 to cover service provision across all local authority services and the impact that a variation of the Local Property Tax Rates will have on the local authority and on households liable for LPT Charges. Mr. Curran also informed the Members that a public consultation process had taken place from 10th July, 2015 to 10th August, 2015 and that no submissions were received during the public consultation process. A copy of the report as circulated to the Members appears as **Appendix 1** to the Minutes of this Meeting in the Minute Book.

Mr. Curran then invited Mr. John McKeon A/Head of Finance and Water Services to give his presentation on the setting of the Local Property Tax Rates for 2016. Mr. McKeon gave a detailed presentation in relation to the Local Property Tax Variation including the legislative basis, the influencing factors, the timelines for the preparation of the 2016 Budget, an over-view of the funding from the Equalisation Fund locally for Leitrim and from the national perspective, an estimation of income and expenditure for 2016, an over-view of the financial position of Leitrim County Council at 30th June 2015, an over-view of the relevant bands and charges relating to the LPT, valuation band mix in County Leitrim and the effect of a 15% rate increase or decrease and the impact of any such variation on service delivery plans for Leitrim County Council in 2016.

A copy of the presentation appears as **Appendix 2** to the Minutes of this Meeting in the Minute Book.

Mr. McKeon outlined that the value of a potential increase or decrease in the 2016 Local Property Tax Allocation if the maximum variation of 15% is implemented would be +/- €346,154 and that every 1% variation equates to approximately +/- €23,077 to Leitrim County Council. He advised that Leitrim County Council will gain or lose 100% of any variation applied.

The Chief Executive, Mr. Curran outlined that the level of discretionary spending available to Leitrim County Council is circa €1.3m and any reduction in the Local Property Tax will have a direct impact on discretionary spending by the local authority in areas such as the local Roads Programme, Festivals and Tourism related Initiatives (Pride of Place & Floral Pride), Tourism related Marketing campaigns, Tidy Towns and Community based initiatives, housing maintenance, estate management initiatives, the library book fund, Social inclusion initiatives, Environmental focused initiatives (e.g. the adopt a Road/Bring Bank, Green Schools, the operation and maintenance of leisure facilities, amenity areas and walking routes).

Mr. Curran went on to outline that in addition to maintaining and in some cases enhancing the current level of service provided by Leitrim County Council and keeping the above mentioned programmes at parity with 2015 levels, an increase in funding from the LPT which would mean that Leitrim County Council could undertake a number of critical initiatives within the County in 2016. He outlined that should the Members agree to increase the variation that the additional funding would enable the local authority to support and enhance service delivery in a number of areas including - economic development, tourism, marketing and promotion of the County, provision of Micro Enterprise Incubation Units, Greenway Feasibility Study, implementation of Local Economic and Community plans, provision of fishing stands, upgrading and maintaining walkways and cycle routes, North Leitrim Development Plan and town and village enhancement.

He stressed that a recommendation to reduce the existing Local Variation Rate would result in a reduction of €346,154 in income which would have a very negative impact on service delivery by Leitrim County Council.

The Members thanked Mr. Curran and Mr. McKeon for their detailed presentations and raised the following items:

Councillor Mary Bohan acknowledged that Leitrim County Council could not afford to seek a reduction in the Local Property Variation Rate and she also acknowledged that homeowners could not afford additional charges under the LPT liability. Councillor Bohan also acknowledged the compliance rates for the LPT in Leitrim with over 90% of householders compliant.

Councillor Sean McGowan requested clarification in relation to the provision of €1,362,694 for loan interest and principal repaid. Mr John McKeon confirmed that OPD Loans in the sum of €300,000 were redeemed in 2015 and that loans relating to the County Buildings will be redeemed in 2016.

Councillor Seadhna Logan referred to the projected increase in income from commercial rates in 2016. Mr. Curran outlined that there will be an additional focus on rate collection to increase this revenue stream.

Councillor Enda Stenson queried if the Equalisation fund for 2016 has been notified to Leitrim County Council to date. Mr. Frank Curran confirmed that Leitrim County Council has been notified of its 2016 allocation last week.

Councillor Sinead Guckian queried if the Equalisation Fund for 2016 was maintained at the same rate as 2015. Mr. Curran confirmed that the allocations for 2016 are the same as the allocation received in 2015. Councillor Sinead Guckian expressed her disappointment that additional funding is not being provided under the Equalisation Fund in 2016. Councillor Guckian also required if there was any potential impact on householders having to pay a higher LPT Liability based on an increase in the market value of their homes. Mr. McKeon responded by stating that there is no update from central government on the banding charges based on the property valuations.

Councillor Enda Stenson proposed that Leitrim County Council retain the Local Property Variation Rate at the same rates as 2015. He stated that that due to the prevailing economic conditions that the Members could not support an increase in the rate nor were they seeking a reduction in the rate.

Proposed by Councillor Enda Stenson, Seconded by Councillor Frank Dolan and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

“That the basic rate of Local Property Tax should stand varied by 0 per cent for the period 1st November, 2015 to 30th October, 2016 in respect of relevant residential properties situated in Leitrim County Council’s administrative area. The varied rate shall take effect from the liability date in the year in which notification is sent to the Revenue Commissioners”.

15/132

7/9/2015 Nomination of Local Authority Official Representative to the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

Ms. Mary Quinn, Director of Services outlined that Ms. Mary Daly, has recently been appointed as the Traveller Liaison Officer in the Housing Department. She stated that approval is now sought to

appoint Ms. Daly as a Member of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC).

Proposed by Councillor Paddy O'Rourke, seconded by Councillor Seadhna Logan AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

"That the nomination of Ms. Mary Daly, Traveller Liaison Officer to the Leitrim Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC), in accordance with the provisions of Section 22 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, be approved.

15/133

07/09/2015 Monthly Management Reports by the Chief Executive

Monthly Management Reports for the period 1st June to 30th June 2015 and 1st July to 31st July 2015 by Mr. Frank Curran, Chief Executive, dated 13th July, 2015 and 12th August, 2015 respectively, prepared in accordance with Section 136(2) of the Local Government Act, 2001 as inserted by Section 51 of the Local Government Reform, Act 2014, as circulated to the Members, appears as **Appendix 3** and **Appendix 4** to the Minutes of this meeting in the Minute Book.

The reports as circulated were noted by the Members.

15/134

07/09/2015 Section 138 (1) of the Local Government Act 2001

Ms. Sinead Flynn, Meetings Administrator outlined that there were no commitments to note under this item.

15/135

07/09/2015 Corporate Policy Group Report

Ms. Sinead Flynn, Meetings Administrator gave an overview of the items considered by the Corporate Policy Group at their meeting held prior to the Council meeting. Ms. Flynn advised that the Housing Policy, Social & Cultural Development SPC as follows:-

Strategic Policy Committee's:

Ms. Flynn outlined that the Housing Policy, Social & Cultural Development SPC had a meeting on 1st September 2015 and that no meetings of the other two SPC's had taken place since the July Council meeting. Ms. Flynn provided an over-view of the items considered by the Housing Policy, Social & Cultural Development SPC:

- **Presentation on the Leitrim Local, Economic and Community Plan.**

The Members received a presentation on the Leitrim Local, Economic and Community Plan (LECP) by Mr. Mark Conway, Consultant. Mr. Conway outlined the consultation process that has been involved to date in the preparation of the LECP Plan and he also outlined the vision and objectives of the Plan with a particular focus on the community aspect.

- **Update on the Housing Grants.**

The Members were informed that Leitrim County Council was formally notified by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government on 29th May, 2015 of an allocation of

€338,740 for the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and Persons with a Disability. Ms. Mary Quinn, Director of Services outlined that the 2015 allocation is marginally greater than the 2014 allocation of €307,540 and that the funding allocation was deemed sufficient to meet current demand. She also outlined that the expenditure and activity in relation to the housing grant schemes would be kept under ongoing review. The Members outlined that they considered that the current provisions which stipulate that an applicant for grant-aid under the Housing Aid for Older People must own the property and the application of the means-test needed for all three of the grants should be reviewed nationally by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government. The Members outlined that they considered that these provisions were too restrictive and were presenting difficulties for a certain cohort of applicants.

- **Update on the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018.**

The Members received an over-view of the progress to date achieved in relation to the targets for 2015 under the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018. The target for delivery for 2015 is 12 units and to date 50% of the target has been achieved.

- **Preparation of a Policy for Play and Recreation 2016 – 2019.**

The Members commenced the process on the preparation of a policy for Play and Recreation for the period 2016-2019. It was agreed to have a Draft Play and Recreation Policy available for review at the next meeting of the Housing Policy, Social and Cultural Development SPC which will be held on Tuesday 24th November, 2015.

Ms. Flynn concluded by stating that the CPG also considered agenda items for the Council meeting and approved the attendance of members at forthcoming conferences and training seminars.

This update was noted by the Members.

15/136

07/09/2015 Presentation from Ms. Sarah Searson, Director, Docks Arts Centre

The Cathaoirleach, Councillor John McCartin welcomed Mr. Sarah Searson, Director, The Dock Arts Centre to the meeting and invited her to make a presentation on the Dock,

Ms Searson thanked the Cathaoirleach and Elected Members for affording her the opportunity to address the meeting. She then proceeded to give a detailed presentation on the Dock Arts Centre, Carrick-on-Shannon. A copy of the presentation appears as **Appendix 4** to the Minutes of this meeting in the Minute Book.

The Cathaoirleach thanked Ms Searson for her informative presentation and invited questions and comments from the Members.

- Councillor Sinead Guckian referred to the draft Economic Development Strategy for County Leitrim, she expressed her disappointment that the Arts and the Creative Sector in the County are not accurately reflected in the Draft Strategy and welcomed any comments from Ms Searson in this regard.
- Councillor Mary Bohan commended Ms Searson on her role as the Director of the Dock and wished Ms. Searson and her team every success in the future. She requested that a fair pricing structure be levied for community groups wishing to use this facility. Councillor Bohan commended the Glens Centre in Manorhamilton and requested that appropriate funding and support be provided for this facility.

- Councillor Paddy O'Rourke referred to the Cornmill Theatre in Carrigallen and also requested that this facility be given adequate financial support from Leitrim County Council as there is a perception that facilities in Carrick-on-Shannon are prioritised for funding.
- Mr. Curran responded by stating that a significant amount of money is spent on the Arts outside of Carrick-on-Shannon.
- Councillor Felim Gurn and Councillor Martin Kenny also supported the comments made by Councillor Mary Bohan and Councillor Paddy O'Rourke in relation to supporting the Arts Facilities in Manorhamilton and Carrigallen.
- Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire complimented and paid tribute to the staff involved in the recent feature on Nationwide which promoted Carrick-on-Shannon as a destination of choice for tourists to visit.

15/137

07/09/2015

Conferences/Training

Proposed by Councillor Mary Bohan, seconded by Councillor Sean McDermott AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

"That the attendance of Councillor Frank Dolan, Councillor Mary Bohan, Councillor Caillian Ellis, Councillor Sinead Guckian, Councillor Paddy O'Rourke and Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire at the Association of Irish Local Government Autumn Conference in Inchydoney, Clonakilty, Cork from 1st October to 2nd October 2015 be approved".

"That the attendance of Councillor Frank Dolan at the Conference on the "Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015" in the Four Seasons Hotel, Carlingford, Co Louth from 18th September to 20th September 2015 be approved".

"That the attendance of Councillor Mary Bohan, Councillor Frank Dolan, Councillor Martin Kenny, Councillor Justin Warnock, Councillor Sean McDermott, Councillor Caillian Ellis, Councillor Paddy O'Rourke, Councillor Sean McGowan, Councillor Sinead Guckian and Councillor Enda Stenson at the LAMA Conference on the 9th to 10th October 2015 in Kilkenny College Road, Kilkenny be approved".

"That the attendance of Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire at the Association of Irish Local Government Training for the Border and Western Regions on "Roads, Transport and Urban Traffic Planning" in the Landmark Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon on the 27th October, 2015 be approved".

"That the attendance of Councillor Frank Dolan at the Association of Irish Local Government Training for the Border and Western Regions in Ballinasloe on the 5th November, 2015 be approved".

"That the attendance of Councillor Sean McDermott at the Association of Irish Local Government Training in the Hodson Bay Hotel in Athlone on 25th June, 2015 be retrospectively approved".

"That the attendance of Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire at the Conference on the "Council for the West" in Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon on the 17th July, 2015 be retrospectively approved".

Meeting Correspondence

The following items were considered under Meeting Correspondence:

1. Letter dated 3rd July, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council with regard to Liberty Insurance.
2. Letter dated 8th July, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council with regard to additional funding to upgrade the L6196 Local Road Scheme which leads to the former homestead of the late Sean MacDiarmada.

A detailed discussion in relation to this matter was debated by the Members and they unanimously expressed their dissatisfaction with the reply from the Minister. It was agreed that a further letter would be forwarded to the Department for consideration.

3. Letter dated 9th July, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Education and Skills acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to the state's investment in early childhood education and care.
4. Letter dated 15th July, 2015 from the Office of Public Works in regard to the homestead of Sean MacDiarmada.
5. Letter dated 22nd July, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in regard to a Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to ongoing negotiations between the EU and US on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.
6. Letter dated 29th July, 2015 from the Office of the Taoiseach acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to Agricultural Educational Officers.
7. Letter dated 29th July, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Skills, Research and Innovation acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to a review of the Primary School Transport Scheme.
8. Letter dated 30th July, 2015 from Galway City Council in relation to the proposal to select Galway as the European Capital of Culture 2020.

Mr Frank Curran, Chief Executive advised Members that Galway City and Galway County Councils are seeking the support of Leitrim County Council to support their bid for the European Capital of Culture 2020. He outlined that if the submission was successful that it would potentially benefit all of the counties located in the west including Leitrim.

The Members unanimously agreed to support this proposal.

Proposed by Councillor Martin Kenny, seconded by Councillor Enda Stenson AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

“That Leitrim County Council support Galway City and Galway County Council in their bid for the European Capital of Culture 2020 status”.

9. Letter dated 28th July, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Education and Skills acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to Primary School Transport.
10. Letter dated 29th July, 2015 from the Office of the Taoiseach acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to St Patrick's Hospital, Carrick-on-Shannon.
11. Letter dated 30th July, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to Fencing on Farms.
12. Letter dated 30th July, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in regard to Single Farm Payment cuts.
13. Letter dated 30th July, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to Agricultural Officers.
14. Email received 31st July, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to the Centralised Procurement System.

Councillor Martin voiced his concern in relation to the impact on local suppliers of goods and services being disadvantaged by the current Centralised Procurement Procedures. This was also supported by Councillor Paddy O'Rourke and Councillor Justin Warnock. Mr Frank Curran advised that Leitrim County Council had facilitated a briefing session on the centralised procurement system with a number of local suppliers and that information and advice in relation to the centralised procurement system had been given which proved to be very successful.

15. Letter dated 30th July, 2015 from the Office of the Taoiseach acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to a Centralised Procurement System.
16. Letter dated 30th July, 2015 from the Office of the Taoiseach acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to commercial rates.
17. Letter dated 4th August, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Health acknowledging receipt of Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council in regard to GP Services in Drumkeerin.

Councillor Mary Bohan expressed her disappointment with the reply from the Minister for Health and she requested that a further letter issue to the Minister for Health in this regard. Councillor Padraig Fallon supported Councillor Bohan's comments.

18. Letter dated 4th August, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Health acknowledging receipt of a Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council with regard to St Patrick's Hospital, Carrick-on-Shannon.
19. Letter dated 30th July, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Social Protection acknowledging receipt of a Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council with regard to MABS.

20. Letter dated 6th August, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Social Protection acknowledging receipt of a Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council with regard to the future of the MABS Service.
21. Letter dated 7th August, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine acknowledging receipt of a Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council with regard to Teagasc Green Cert Courses in Leitrim.
22. Letter dated 14th August, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Finance acknowledging receipt of a Resolution passed by Leitrim County Council with regard to commercial rates.
23. Email received 17th August, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform with regard to the centralised procurement process.
24. Letter dated 24th August, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Health with regard to St. Patrick's Hospital, Carrick-on-Shannon.
25. Letter dated 25th August, 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs with regard to commercial rates on childcare facilities.
26. Letter dated 26th August 2015 from the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in regard to Early Childhood Care.

Undocumented Irish Living in the US

With the consent of the Cathaoirleach, Councillor Martin Kenny was permitted to raise an item under Meetings Correspondence in relation to the undocumented Irish Living in the US. Councillor Kenny requested the support of the Members to call for the introduction of a Waiver Scheme for undocumented Irish people living in the US to enable them to travel home to Ireland if they so wished and be permitted to return to the US.

The proposal was unanimously supported by the Members.

Draft Economic Development Strategy for County Leitrim

Mr Frank Curran, Chief Executive informed the Members that a Workshop on the Leitrim Draft Economic Development Strategy will be facilitated with the Elected Members on Monday 14th September, 2015 at 9.30 a.m. in the Council Chamber.

Part I - Notices of Motion.

15/139

07/09/2015

1916 Centenary Commemoration

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Des Guckian;

"That Leitrim County Council makes the following provision in our upcoming budget: To mark the 1916 Centenary Commemoration, three scholarships of €2,000 euro each be awarded to Leitrim-based students who take history as a Leaving Cert subject and who, as part of that, do a project

on 1916 Leaders Seán Mac Diarmada and/or Tom Clarke."

Report by Director of Service, Planning, Community and Economic Development

"The Leitrim 2016 Centenary Committee has been established in the County and is managing the initiatives around the Centenary. This suggested initiative should be referred to the committee for consideration."

Councillor Des Guckian expressed his disappointment with the reply received to his Notice of Motion. He stated that he did not accept that the matter should be determined by the Centenary Committee and that it was a matter for the Elected Members to consider in the context of the 2016 Revenue Budget. He proposed that provision should be made in the upcoming budget for three scholarships of €2,000 euro each be awarded to Leitrim-based students who take history as a Leaving Cert subject and who, as part of that, do a project on 1916 Leaders Seán Mac Diarmada and/or Tom Clarke as these men were the brains behind the rising and that the winner of each of the Scholarships would be displayed on the Leitrim County Council website.

Councillor Guckian stressed the importance of young people understanding and appreciating the history of Ireland.

Mr Frank Curran advised that a Leitrim 2016 Centenary Committee has been established in the County and is managing the initiatives around the Centenary. He stated that Councillor Guckian's proposal should be forwarded to this Committee for consideration and it is anticipated that funding will be made available for 1916 Commemorative initiatives.

Councillor Mary Bohan supported the motion in principle and said that she was not sure if Leaving Certificate students would have enough time to undertake this project. Councillor Martin Kenny supported Councillor Des Guckian's Notice of Motion in principle.

Councillor Sean McDermott proposed that the matter should go before the 1916 Commemorative Committee rather than seeking funding from the Council's own revenue budget.

Councillor Sean McGowan also supported the Notice of Motion and queried if Councillor Des Guckian would agree to awarding a scholarship to each of the three Municipal Districts.

Councillor Des Guckian thanked the members for their support and advised that the completion of a History Project forms part of the Leaving Certificate History Curriculum. He agreed to the initiative being referred to the 1916 commemorative Committee to consider the awarding of three scholarships of €2,000 to Leitrim-home based students who take history as a Leaving Cert subject and that it would not be confined to one scholarship per Municipal District.

15/140

07/09/2015

Presentation from Three Ireland

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Sinead Guckian;

"I ask will ask for the support of Members in requesting a presentation from Three, regarding the reduced coverage on the O2 mobile network throughout Leitrim, since their takeover of the network earlier this year. Since their takeover, existing O2 customers are experiencing little or no coverage in areas where previously the O2 network had sufficient coverage."

Proposed by Councillor Sinead Guckian, seconded by Councillor Enda Stenson AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

"That Leitrim County Council request a presentation from Three, regarding the reduced coverage on the O2 mobile network throughout Leitrim, since their takeover of the network earlier this year. Since their takeover, existing O2 customers are experiencing little or no coverage in areas where previously the O2 network had sufficient coverage".

15/141

07/09/2015

Reduction in Inheritance Tax

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Enda Stenson;

"I am calling on the support of all Members, to ask the Minister for Finance to reduce the amount of inheritance tax now payable on transfer of lands or property at the moment. How can we encourage young people to take over the running of farms or business, having first to pay a tax greater in some cases than the holding is worth."

Proposed by Councillor Enda Stenson seconded by Councillor Martin Kenny AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

"That Leitrim County Council call on the support of all Members, to ask the Minister for Finance to reduce the amount of inheritance tax now payable on transfer of lands or property at the moment. How can we encourage young people to take over the running of farms or business, having first to pay a tax greater in some cases than the holding is worth."

15/142

07/09/2015

Capital Assets

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Paddy O'Rourke;

"I ask that this County Council unanimously support a call on the Minister for Education, Ms. Jan O'Sullivan to end speculation regarding the inclusion of capital assets such as family farms, business premises etc when assessing eligibility for third level grants. The value of such properties often bears no relation to the income derived from them and the publication of sanitized version of who get grants and who doesn't is serving no purpose other than cause division amongst society who should be directing their attention at the lack of support and list of broken promises by government."

Proposed by Councillor Paddy O'Rourke, seconded by Councillor Mary Bohan AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

"That Leitrim County Council call on the Minister for Education, Ms. Jan O'Sullivan to end speculation regarding the inclusion of capital assets such as family farms, business premises etc when assessing eligibility for third level grants. The value of such properties often bears no relation to the income derived from them and the publication of sanitized version of who get grants and who doesn't is serving no purpose other than cause division amongst society who should be directing their attention at the lack of support and list of broken promises by government."

15/143
07/09/2015

January 2016 Council Meeting

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Justin Warnock;

"I ask Leitrim County Council to hold the County Council's January, 2016 meeting in Kiltyclogher to commemorate Sean Mac Diarmada."

Report by Administrative Officer, Corporate Services

"This request will be referred to the Corporate Policy Group for consideration."

Councillor Justin Warnock did not accept the reply to his Notice of Motion. The Members reviewed the matter and it was agreed that the January Meeting of Leitrim County Council would be held in Kiltyclogher to commemorate Sean MacDiarmada.

Proposed by Councillor Justin Warnock, seconded by Councillor Sean McDermott AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

"That the January Meeting of Leitrim County Council be held in Kiltyclogher, Co. Leitrim to commemorate Sean MacDiarmada."

15/144
07/09/2015

Free Travel Pass

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Padraig Fallon;

"I propose that this Council call on the Minister for Social Protection to have epilepsy included as a condition for a Free Travel Pass."

Councillor Padraig Fallon gave the background to his motion and proposed that a letter issue to Minister Joan Burton calling on her to have epilepsy included as a condition for a Free Travel Pass and this motion be circulated to all local authorities for their support.

Proposed by Councillor Padraig Fallon, seconded by Councillor Mary Bohan AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

"That Leitrim County Council call on the Minister for Social Protection to have epilepsy included as a condition for a Free Travel Pass."

15/145
07/09/2015

SUSI Student Grant Scheme

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Martin Kenny;

"I propose that Leitrim County Council call on Government to review the SUSI Student Grant Scheme as delays and red tape continue to frustrate families with students going to college. In addition to a review of the delivery of the scheme, I also propose that the rates of maintenance grant for students who have to rent and live in Dublin be increased by at least 25% due to the high cost of accommodation in the capital."

Proposed by Councillor Martin Kenny, seconded by Councillor Padraig Fallon AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

"That Leitrim County Council call on Government to review the SUSI Student Grant Scheme as delays and red tape continue to frustrate families with students going to college. In addition to a review of the delivery of the scheme, I also propose that the rates of maintenance grant for students who have to rent and live in Dublin be increased by at least 25% due to the high cost of accommodation in the capital."

15/146

07/09/2015 Cycle/Walkway on the Old Narrow Gauge Railway line between Dromod-Mohill and Ballinamore

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Sean McGowan;

"I will ask the Chief Executive, Mr. Frank Curran, what is the up to date position in relation to the proposed cycle/walkway on the old narrow gauge railway line between Dromod-Mohill and Ballinamore. Have discussions taken place with relevant landowners/stakeholders? Are there plans in place to carry out a feasibility study? Is there any indication of the cost of this project and is there a commitment to finance the project from the relevant funding agencies."

Report by Director of Service, Planning, Community and Economic Development

"Cavan County Council who is leading this project in conjunction with Leitrim County Council have completed the tender process for the appointment of Consultants who will now carry out a feasibility report including relevant environmental screening reports on the project. These reports will identify the route of the greenway, the estimated cost and the relevant landowners affected. Discussions will take place with the local trail Groups and landowners during this period. The feasibility report will be completed before the end of the year. This process will assist in applying for all relevant funding opportunities that will arise thereafter."

Councillor Sean McGowan acknowledged the potential benefit to the local economy and tourism if this project was progressed. He requested clarification in relation to the membership from Leitrim County Council on the project team.

Mr. Frank Curran informed the Members that Cavan County Council is the lead authority and that Mr. Bernard Green, Senior Planner and Mr Shay O'Connor, Senior Engineer, Infrastructure represent Leitrim County Council on the project team.

Councillor Des Guckian queried if the old railway between Mohill and Dromod is included in the project. Mr Frank Curran confirmed that this is included in the project.

15/147

07/09/2015 Traffic Diversions

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Sean McDermott;

"I will ask what responsibility has the Council for traffic diversions when there are serious traffic accidents on our road network? I am aware that when traffic is diverted on to local roads, drivers sometimes can get lost on the maze of local roads. This can be due to lack of diversion signage."

Report by Director of Service, Planning, Community and Economic Development

"Any time this local authority introduces a traffic diversion signage is provided throughout the diversion route to direct traffic along the route. When accidents occur the diversions are put in place immediately and this may result in inadequate signage for a period until the diversion signage is fully complete."

Councillor Sean McDermott as outlined in his Notice of Motion requested that appropriate signage is provided for motorists when road diversions are in place and he sought clarification in relation to the protocol for the provision of traffic diversions in the event of a serious accident and where a road closure is necessary.

Mr Shay O'Connor, Senior Engineer confirmed that the decision to close a road in the event of serious accidents is a matter for the Emergency Services and the Gardai. He outlined that measures are also put in place to have the appropriate signage alerting motorists to the road closure and diverted route as soon as possible.

This Notice of Motion was supported by the Members.

**15/148
07/09/2015**

Water Disconnection Charge

Cathaoirleach, Councillor John McCartin proposed that Motion No. 19 submitted by Councillor Felim Gurn and Motion No. 23 submitted by Councillor Mary Bohan be considered concurrently as they relate to the same issue. This was agreed by the Members.

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Felim Gurn;

"In light of the severe financial hardships being currently experienced by the farming community, it is proving increasingly difficult for many farmers with multiple water connections servicing fragmented parcels of land to continue to pay water charges as presently determined. As it will be 12 to 18 months before decisions will be made on water charges for mixed use customers, I call on Leitrim County Council to waive the present €650 water disconnection charge in the event that a farmer is forced to discontinue with a water connection due to financial constraints."

Report by Head of Finance, Revenue

"Under the Water Services (No 2) Bill, 2013 all Water Service Charges, including Disconnection Charges, set by the Local Authority prior to the 1st January, 2014 transferred to Irish Water and continue to apply until such time as Irish Water alter them.

As Irish Water is now the Water Authority, this Council, working under the Irish Water Service Level Agreement, has no power to waive disconnection charges. This power rests with Irish Water.

The current standing charge is €15 per quarter for a single meter but is capped at €27.50 for multiple meters. A farmer with multiple connections on the same account will therefore have to pay no more than €110 per annum for standing charges. We would always advise farmers not to disconnect a water supply, as a parcel of land without water might be very difficult to lease in future as any livestock on it may not have access to a clean and reliable water source."

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Mary Bohan;

"I call on Leitrim County Council and Irish Water to put a fair system in place immediately to deal with the matter of agricultural water charges. The current system of billing followed by threatening letters is causing serious distress for farmers. This is of particular concern for the former members of the Creevelea/Killargue Group Water Scheme now taken in charge by this Council."

Report by Head of Finance, Revenue

"Agricultural connections are classed as commercial, also known as non domestic and therefore are billed according to the rates as set by this Council and which have now been adopted by Irish Water under the Water Services (No 2) Bill, 2013.

This Council is no longer the Water Authority for Leitrim and therefore cannot set Water Charge rates. The current rates will remain in place until such time as Irish Water is able to harmonise commercial water rates across the country. In the meantime, Leitrim County Council, acting under the Irish Water Service Level Agreement, is legally obliged to bill for metered usage and to collect monies for same.

Part of the process of dealing with serious defaulters with big arrears is and always has been the issuing of letters notifying customers of intention to disconnect if the arrears and/or wastage are not considerably reduced.

This Council cannot ignore the massive wastage of water and non payment of bills by some customers when the majority of commercial customers are trying their best to pay their bills and to conserve water.

Letters were recently sent to 69 customers out of a total of 1,936 (3.5%) notifying them of our intention to possibly disconnect. Less than a quarter of these related to agricultural connections.

These customers would have been previously notified of excessive consumption through their meters and would have received Bills, Statements, High Consumption Letters & other written and telephone correspondence previous to these letters.

Leitrim County Council staff are always available to meet with individual customers and offer a range of flexible payment options and plans to its Water Customers.

Where customers have engaged with us in the recent past we have come to a number of successful resolutions, and we would encourage customers in this position to contact Water Services Staff in order to arrange meetings to resolve issues and address arrears in a mutually beneficial manner."

Councillor Felim Gurn expressed his disappointment with the response to his Notice of Motion. He proposed that Leitrim County Council waive the present €650 water disconnection charge in circumstances whereby a farmer is forced to disconnect their existing water connection due to financial constraints.

Councillor Mary Bohan outlined that the matter is very complex and she paid tribute to Mr. John McKeon, A/Head of Finance and Mr. Michael Gunning, Administrative Office, Water Services in the manner in which they have been dealing with this issue on a one-to-one basis with individual householders. She highlighted that the area of Creevela/Killargue Creevelea/Killargue covers a large geographical area and that leak repair and detection remains an issue. Councillor Bohan also referred to a difficult financial year for the local farming community and she requested that the practice of issuing threatening letters from the Council be abandoned where customers have indicated that they will co-operate and enter into repayment schedules. Councillor Bohan also stated that the IFA are encouraging people not to pay these bills. She also note that a meeting with the IFA, the Executive of Leitrim County Council and the Elected Members is to be scheduled in the coming days to review the issue. Councillor Bohan called upon Irish Water to give adequate time to the farming community to attend to leak repair on their landholdings and she requested clarification in relation to the significant costs of a water re-connection as opposed to the rates charged by the ESB for their reconnection costs.

This Notice of Motion was supported by Councillor Gerry Dolan and Councillor Justin Warnock.

Councillor Des Guckian proposed that the water disconnection charge be reduced from €650 to €50.

Councillor Frank Dolan concurred with the comments and stressed that members of the farming community affected by these measures did not have the financial resources available to them to pay water bills of €4,000-€5,000. Councillor Martin Kenny concurred with Councillor Dolan and recommended that the matter be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Councillor Brendan Barry sought clarification on the breakdown of the disconnection, reconnection and new water connection fees.

Mr. John McKeon, A/Head of Finance said that the Disconnection fee of €650 was a fee that was agreed by the Elected Members of Leitrim County Council when the matter was considered by them in 2009. He also outlined that these charges stood when water services were transferred from Leitrim County Council to Irish Water on 1st January, 2015. Mr. McKeon stated that the disconnection fee incorporates the cost of a staff member going out on site to complete the disconnection to the service. He also highlighted that the customers concerned were previously made aware of their excessive water consumption and that they received bills, statements and other written and telephone correspondence previous to the issuing of the most recent letters.

Councillor Seadhna Logan queried if these charges can be changed. Mr. McKeon stated that Leitrim County Council cannot amend the charges and that it is a matter for Irish Water to consider. He concluded by stating that Leitrim County Council will meet with the IFA and customers and that the Council will continue to deal with the matter on a case by case basis.

15/149
07/09/2015

Beef Data and Genomic Programme

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Brendan Barry;

"I propose that Leitrim County Council contact the Minister for Agriculture Mr. Simon Coveney and request that the rules for the Beef Data and Genomics programme be changed to make it possible for more farmers to qualify. The recent changes to suckler beef values make it even harder to fulfil the current requirements."

Proposed by Councillor Brendan Barry, seconded by Councillor Mary Bohan AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

"That Leitrim County Council contact the Minister for Agriculture Mr. Simon Coveney and request that the rules for the Beef Data and Genomics programme be changed to make it possible for more farmers to qualify. The recent changes to suckler beef values make it even harder to fulfil the current requirements."

15/150
07/09/2015

Free Parking

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Finola Armstrong-McGuire;

"I call on this Council to introduce free 2 hour parking in all towns in the county. It is essential that this is done and policed. Congestion is caused at busy times by cars circling Carrick-on-Shannon seeking parking spaces. Shoppers and visitors must be given a sense of freedom and those who work in town must be encouraged to park in public free car spaces. The current situation cannot continue."

Report by Director of Service, Planning, Community and Economic Development

"Paid parking bye-laws are in place in Carrick on Shannon town which provides the most efficient method of ensuring the appropriate use of available on street parking within the town centre. The existing bye-laws provides the basis to ensure that the parking is prioritised for visitors to the town and not used for those who would be on longer stays such as those working in the town. The Council is currently finalising the process of replacing of a warden who recently retired. This replacement resource will allow for the level of enforcement of the bye-laws to be on a more effective basis."

Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire proposed that a 2 hour free parking initiative be introduced in all our towns in the County and proposed that this proposal be introduced on a pilot basis in Carrick-on-Shannon. She outlined that in order to support the business community a 2-hour free parking scheme should be introduced. This Notice of Motion was supported by Councillor Seadhna Logan and Councillor Gerry Dolan.

Mr Frank Curran, Chief Executive informed the Members that a new Community Warden is due to commence duties and that it would be more prudent to review the matter after the additional resource has been appointed. He also outlined that the matter would need to be considered by the three Municipal Districts.

15/151
07/09/2015

Signage

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Seadhna Logan;

"I propose that Leitrim County Council examine all the place name signage in the towns across the county and repair or replace any signage that may be absent or damaged. Also if any new signage is required that funding be found to address this immediately and if any new signage is required that any such new signs would be bilingual."

Report by Director of Service, Planning, Community and Economic Development

"Leitrim County Council replaces or repairs damaged signs as required. If there are specific locations where the signage is in need of renewal, please inform us and we will rectify as soon as possible. All signs erected by this authority are bilingual".

All Members supported this Notice of Motion.

15/152
07/09/2015

Single Farm Payments

To consider the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Gerry Dolan;

"I ask this Council to call on the Minister for Agriculture to ensure that at least 50% of the farmers Single Farm Payments are paid out in late September or early October to help farmers. Due to the bad summer, farmers didn't get all their fodder and some of it is of poor quality. Also the young farmers (new to the scheme) had to pay 100% rent up front for rented grass at the beginning of the year and are desperately awaiting payments."

Proposed by Councillor Gerry Dolan, seconded by Councillor Des Guckian AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

"That Leitrim County Council call on the Minister for Agriculture to ensure that at least 50% of the

farmers Single Farm Payments are paid out in late September or early October to help farmers. Due to the bad summer, farmers didn't get all their fodder and some of it is of poor quality. Also the young farmers (new to the scheme) had to pay 100% rent up front for rented grass at the beginning of the year and are desperately awaiting payments”.

The business of the meeting concluded at 1.45 pm

**Signed: Councillor John McCartin
Cathaoirleach**

**Sinead Flynn
Meetings Administrator**

Dated: 2nd November, 2015