

**Minutes of Meeting of Cavan County Council held in the Council Chamber, Courthouse,
Cavan on Monday 8th April 2024 at 12.00 noon**

Councillor P. Brady, Cathaoirleach, presiding

Present; Councillors M. Argue, W. Bennett, C. Brady, B. Fay, J.P. Feeley,
A. Fitzpatrick, C. Kelly, C. Lovett, P. McDonald, P. McVitty, S. O'Reilly,
S.P. O'Reilly, T.P. O'Reilly, Á. Smith, T. Smith, V. Smith, P. Walsh.

In Attendance; E. Doyle, Acting Chief Executive
P. Connaughton, Director of Service
B. Jennings, Director of Service
M. McNally, A/Head of Finance
L. McGavigan, A/Director of Service
E. McGinn, Senior Staff Officer

Councillor P. Brady welcomed all to the meeting.

1. To confirm Minutes of Monthly Meeting held on 11th March 2024.

Miontuaririsci cruinnithe 11 Márta 2024 a dhearbhu.

It was

Proposed by Councillor T.P. O'Reilly

Seconded by Councillor P. Vitty

And

Resolved;

“that minutes of monthly meeting of Cavan County Council held on 11th March 2024 be hereby approved”

2. Disclosure of Interests (Section 177 Local Government Act 2001).

Noted.

3. To note Minutes of Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 8th February 2024.

Noted.

4. To note members' reports from conferences and training events (Section 142 and Section 143 of the Local Government Act 2001; Local Government (Expenses of Local Authority Members) Regulations 2014 Part V Section 5 (1)).

Noted.

To hear presentation from Ms. Carole Beattie, Chairperson of the Cavan Branch of the Alzheimer Society of Ireland.

Ms. Carole Beattie stated that as a Carer who walked the journey of dementia with her husband for twelve years and having run an Alzheimer Support Group for fourteen years, she had witnessed firsthand the challenges and isolation faced by people living with Dementia and their families. She noted that the Alzheimer Society of Ireland hosted a dementia inclusive community event in the Town Hall Cavan on March 20th which aimed at encouraging local people, businesses and services in Cavan to become Friends of

ASI and create a dementia inclusive community. Ms. Beattie noted that people with dementia are among the most marginalized and can often face social exclusion and stigma. She stated that inclusive communities, an initiative of the ASI's Friends of ASI aims to address this by aiding towns to become nurturing spaces for people with dementia and their families. Ms. Beattie stated that in 2023 Minister Heather Humphreys T.D. opened the ASI Daycare Centre in Cavan which provides vital support to the community. Ms. Beattie noted that thirty people are diagnosed with dementia each day and 63% of people with dementia live in the community in Ireland. Ms. Beattie stated that the aim is to make Cavan a dementia inclusive County by visiting colleges and schools and getting transition year students involved as education is key. The society intend to establish a database of businesses to become friends of the ASI. The society hopes to sign up sports clubs and give them training.

Councillor Áine Smith thanked Ms. Beattie for her presentation and congratulated the branch on their new initiatives. Councillor Smith noted that the youth are key to making changes and all businesses in the County are happy to take up the course, The members in turn thanked Ms. Beattie for her informative presentation and offered their support.

16.12 That Cavan County Council support in every way the dementia inclusive communities initiative.

Councillor C. Brady proposed that Cavan County Council support in every way the dementia inclusive communities initiative. Councillor Brady complimented Deirdre Donnelly, Siobhan Morgan and Seamus Clarke of the Age Friendly Committee for the good work they do. Councillor Brady stated that the Daycare Centre in Cavan is a fantastic facility for families in Cavan.

Ms. Beattie thanked the Council for all the good work and support they have given over the years.

Councillor P. Brady thanked Ms. Beattie for her presentation.

Correspondence

5.(a) To note reply from Office of the Minister for Transport regarding the small public service vehicle sector (SPSV).

Noted.

(b) To note reply from the Office of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage regarding the working family payment and assessable income.

Noted.

(c) To note reply from Head of Service, Primary Care regarding the GP service in Swanlinbar.

Noted.

(d) To note reply from the Office of the Minister for Agriculture regarding carbon farming.

Noted.

(e) To note reply from the Office of the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media in relation to misinformation and disinformation.

Noted.

6. Member's Question – Councillor S. O'Reilly

To ask Cavan County Council –

(a) The number of tourism accommodation beds in the county including hotels, guesthouses and rental holiday homes.

(b) The number/percentage of tourism beds occupied by homeless and displaced people.

(c) The number/percentage of tourist beds contracted out for occupation by refugees, IPAS and asylum seekers.

A reply issued to Councillor S. O'Reilly prior to the meeting.

Business prescribed by Statute, Standing Orders or Resolutions of the Council.

7. To note Chief Executive's monthly report (Section 51 Local Government Reform Act 2014).

Noted.

8(a).To approve disposal of plot of land containing 0.80 hectares or 1.980 acres of land at Killygarry, Co. Cavan to Oxigen Environmental for the sum of €30,000.00, pursuant to Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 and Section 211 of the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act 2000, and notices circulated.

It was

Proposed by Councillor B. Fay

Seconded by Councillor S.P. O'Reilly

And

Resolved;

“that the disposal of plot of land containing 0.80 hectares or 1.980 acres of land at Killygarry, Co. Cavan to Oxigen Environmental for the sum of €30,000.00, pursuant to Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 and Section 211 of the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act 2000 be hereby approved”.

8(b).To approve disposal of plot of land containing .1291 hectares or 0.319 acres at Bexcourt Centre, Bailieborough, Co. Cavan to Breffni Integrated CLG for a period of 7 years for the nominal fee of €50.00 per year, pursuant to Section 183 of the

Local Government Act 2001 and Section 211 of the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act 2000, and notices circulated.

It was

Proposed by Councillor C. Brady

Seconded by Councillor S. O'Reilly

And

Resolved;

“that the disposal of plot of land containing .1291 hectares or 0.319 acres at Bexcourt Centre, Bailieborough, Co. Cavan to Breffni Integrated CLG for a period of 7 years for the nominal fee of €50.00 per year, pursuant to Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 and Section 211 of the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act 2000, be hereby approved”.

8(c).To approve disposal of 0.39 hectares of land containing house at Lisney, Loughduff in the townland of Drumersnaw, Gowna, Co. Cavan to Mr. Eamonn Gaffney for the sum of €107,000.00, pursuant to Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 and Section 211 of the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act 2000, and notices circulated.

It was

Proposed by Councillor W. Benentt

Seconded by Councillor P. Brady

And

Resolved;

“that the disposal of 0.39 hectares of land containing house at Lisney, Loughduff in the townland of Drumersnaw, Gowna, Co. Cavan to Mr. Eamonn Gaffney for the sum of €107,000.00, pursuant to Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 and Section 211 of the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act 2000 be hereby approved”

9. That Cavan County Council resolve to issue polling cards in respect of Local Elections 2024 as per article 55(3) Local Election Regulations and Section 22 Local Government Act 1994.

It was

Proposed by Councillor S.P. O'Reilly

Seconded by Councillor C. Kelly

And

Resolved;

“that Cavan County Council resolve to issue polling cards in respect of Local Elections 2024 as per article 55(3) Local Elections Regulations and Section 22 Local Government Act 1994.

10. Consideration of the Annual Financial Statement 2023 under Section 108 of Local Government Act 2001

It was

Proposed by Councillor M. Argue

Seconded by Councillor C. Kelly

And

Resolved;

“that consideration of the Annual Financial Statement 2023 under Section 108 of Local Government Act 2001 be hereby approved”

11. Approval of Additional Revenue Expenditure 2023.

It was

Proposed by Councillor M. Argue

Seconded by Councillor C. Kelly

And

Resolved;

“that Additional Revenue Expenditure 2023 be hereby approved”

12. Approval of Transfers to Capital 2023.

It was

Proposed by Councillor M. Argue

Seconded by Councillor C. Kelly

And

Resolved;

“that Transfers to Capital 2023 be hereby approved”

13. Statement of Rate Collection 2023.

It was

Proposed by Councillor M. Argue

Seconded by Councillor C. Kelly

And

Resolved;

“that Statement of Rate Collection 2023 be hereby approved”

14. To approve the borrowing of €1m, in accordance with Section 106 of the Local Government Act 2001, and subject to Ministerial sanction, for the Cavan Civil Defence Premises at Pullamore, Cavan.

It was

Proposed by Councillor J.P. Feeley

Seconded by Councillor P. Walsh

And

Resolved;

“that the borrowing of €1m, in accordance with Section 106 of the Local Government Act 2001, and subject to Ministerial sanction, for the Cavan Civil Defence Premises at Pullamore, Cavan be hereby approved”.

15. In accordance with 134(A) of the Local Government Act 2001 (as inserted by Section 50 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014), adoption of the 2024 Annual Service Delivery Plan.

It was

Proposed by Councillor C. Brady

Seconded by Councillor C. Kelly

And

Resolved;

“that in accordance with 134(A) of the Local Government Act 2001 (as inserted by Section 50 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014), adoption of the 2024 Annual Service Delivery Plan be hereby approved”.

Votes of Sympathy

- Councillor P. McVitty on the death of his brother Mr. John McVitty, Ballyconnell.
- The Clarke Family, Bailieborough on the death of Mrs. Rita Clarke.
- Councillor P. Walsh on the death of her sister-in-law Ms. Linda Walsh.
- The Rudden Family, Ballyhaise on the death of Mr. Steve Rudden
- The Family of Artist Imogen Stuart who created the “Arch of Peace” sculpture in Cavan Town.

Votes of Congratulations

- Cavan Rugby Team on winning the Gordon West Cup in Belfast.
- Raymond Galligan, Manager of Cavan Senior Football team on win over Monaghan.
- Joanne O’Neill, Bailieborough on winning the Ladies Darts All-Ireland Singles Championship.
- Smyth-Boylan School of Irish Dance on winning the World Championship in Glasgow in the Mixed Ceili 8-11 age group section.
- Padraic Faulkner on winning the Man of the Match award following Cavan’s win over Monaghan.
- Deirdre Rusk, Mullagh on winning the IPPVA Environmental Portrait Photographer of the Year.

- Councillor P. Brady, John Donohoe and staff of Community and Enterprise on organising the Cathaoirleach's Awards.

MEMBERS' ITEMS – DEFERRED FROM MARCH MEETING

16.1 The need for more information on the number of refugees and asylum seekers coming into our County.

Councillor P. McDonald stated that there is a need for more information on the number of refugees and asylum seekers coming into our County and noted that when Mr. Simon Harris was Minister for Justice €18m extra was made available to support staff processing asylum applications. He stated that the Government has not handled the immigration question well and it needs to be made more efficient. Councillor McDonald stated that the increased number of asylum seekers to Ireland had put a huge strain on Ireland's system for accommodating new arrivals as they wait to have their applications processed, leading to many vacant and private buildings such as hotels being used. Councillor McDonald noted that there is an increasing number of asylum seekers without shelter in Ireland at the minute. He stated that communities are being left powerless as big changes happen in their neighbourhoods. Councillor P. McDonald proposed that Cavan County Council write to Minister Roderic O'Gorman, TD, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth asking if the promised jobs as a result of the extra €18 allocated have been advertised and how many staff are employed solely in the area of asylum adjudication. He stated that those from safe countries and those genuinely fleeing war need equal access to a speedier process. Councillor McDonald suggested that the Government introduce a pilot work visa programme for skilled arrivals from designated safe countries.

Councillor S.P. O'Reilly noted that this topic was discussed on numerous occasions in the Chamber and stated that we need to look after the homeless in our own Country first. He felt that Ireland had done it's best in taking in genuine refugees from war-stricken countries. He stated that we have people in our own Country crying out for accommodation and are hurt at the fact that the Government are supplying reception centres to refugees.

16.2 To discuss the imbalance of public transport in the County.

Councillor T. Smith stated that there is an imbalance of public transport in County Cavan. He noted that some towns have great services while Ballyjamesduff has only one service. Councillor Smith stated that currently the National Transport Authority has opened a public consultation on plans to significantly enhance bus route 187, operated by Bus Eireann from Kells to Virginia. He stated that it is proposed to amend the route in

mid-2024 and the public consultation will close on Monday 15th April. He stated that the NTA is proposing to improve the level of service and hours of operation on the route along the corridor between Kells and Virginia to include the addition of later evening weekday hours, an introduction on Sunday services and connect Crossakiel to the Transport of Ireland network. He stated that the route will operate six times per day between Kells to Virginia and five times a day between Virginia and Kells. He stated that all services will serve Crossakiel, Oldcastle and Ballyjamesduff with some journeys operating via Mountnugent and others via Castlerahan.

Councillors S.P. O'Reilly, T.P. O'Reilly, and S. O'Reilly supported the motion.

16.3 That this Council ask the Department of Social Protection and any other relevant Department to re-visit fantastic schemes like the RSS, TUS and job initiative schemes and to look at extending time frames and age limits that people can stay on these schemes as they are vital to local communities.

Councillor B. Fay proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Social Protection, Ms. Heather Humphreys to re-visit fantastic schemes like the RSS, TUS and job initiative schemes and to look at extending time frames and age limits that people can stay on these schemes as they are vital to local communities. Councillor Fay stated that people should be allowed work on these schemes until they are 66 and this would save the Council money in the long run.

Councillor P. Walsh supported the motion and noted that the people working on these schemes do invaluable work in communities.

Councillor C. Kelly supported the motion and noted that communities will not be able to survive without these schemes.

Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion and noted that there is a burden placed on volunteers to manage all the schemes and felt that they should be simplified down to one or two schemes in total.

Councillor P. McVitty supported the motion and seconded Councillor B. Fay's proposal.

Councillors P. McDonald, P. Brady and W. Bennett supported the motion.

16.4 That we ask the Department of Rural & Community Development and any other relevant Departments to work with local Councils across Ireland to initiate a formal advertising campaign to highlight the rules in relation to restricted dog breeds in Ireland.

Councillor B. Fay proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Rural and Community Development asking that the Department works with local Councils across Ireland to initiate a formal advertising campaign to highlight the rules in relation to

restricted breeds in Ireland. Councillor Fay stated that many people do not know what the restricted breeds of dog are in the Country.

Councillors S. O'Reilly, P. Walsh and M. Argue supported the motion.

Mr. Paddy Connaughton, Director of Service complimented Councillor B. Fay on his timely motion and noted that it is currently being looked at by the Department. Mr.

Connaughton stated that dog owners must have a license and must keep their dogs under control in public places. He stated that under the Control of Dogs Act restrictive breeds must be securely muzzled.

16.5 That we write to the Garda Commissioner and the Data Controller to request further information on the roll out of much needed CCTV in our towns in County Cavan.

Councillor B. Fay proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Garda Commissioner and the Data Controller to request further information on the roll out of much needed CCTV in our towns in County Cavan. Councillor Fay noted that at least eight to ten years ago three towns in the County, Belturbet, Ballyconnell and Ballyjamesduff were highlighted for CCTV and to date they have not become operational. Councillor Fay stated that the Minister for Justice, Ms. Helen McEntee, T.D. announced extra funding during the week of €1m for CCTV. Councillor Fay stated that funding is not the problem it is GDPR. Councillor Fay stated that CCTV cameras need to be put in place to help the vulnerable and help Gardaí solve problems. He stated that we need to know who the data controller is going to be.

Councillor P. Walsh supported the motion and noted that CCTV cameras should be used if they are in place.

Councillor P. McVitty supported the motion and stated that it is down as a motion for the next Joint Policing Committee meeting.

Councillor J.P. Feeley expressed his disappointment that the scheme is still not functioning. He stated that the CCMA and Garda Authorities at national level need to resolve the matter and the Minister for Justice needs to get involved.

Councillors T. Smith, T.P. O'Reilly, C. Kelly and W. Bennett supported the motion.

Mr. E. Doyle, Acting Chief Executive stated that currently the CCTV cameras in Cavan Town feed into the Garda Station and Bridge Street Centre.

16.6 To ask Cavan County Council to discuss insurance for community halls and amenities.

Councillor A. Fitzpatrick discussed the issue of insurance for community halls and amenities and questioned the methodology of insurance in local community halls.

Councillor Fitzpatrick stated that a Parish Hall must be insured by the Parish and if

anyone wants to use the hall, they must also have insurance. He stated that the only winner out of this is the Insurance Broker. He stated that it is impossible to get insurance for walkways or spaces for teenagers to hand out. He stated that insurance levels are far too high, and something needs to be done to change this.

Councillor C. Kelly supported the motion and noted that in Kingscourt the insurance cost for the community centre is €7,000 and an extra €700 must be paid to run the trade fair plus another €700 to run the St. Patrick's Day parade.

Councillors B. Fay, P. Walsh, T.P. O'Reilly and P. Brady supported the motion.

16.7 To ask Cavan County Council to write to the relevant department and express our concerns over the shortage of carers in our County.

Councillor A. Fitzpatrick expressed his concerns over the shortage of Carers in our County and noted a case where it took four phone calls to access a Carer. He stated that currently there are 6,000 people waiting on the service. He stated that 2022 saw the highest increase in the over seventy's bracket. He stated that there are a lot of older people looking after spouses. Councillor Fitzpatrick acknowledged that while the Government had recently improved pay conditions for Carers there needed to be a recruitment drive. He stated that the HSE should allow Carers work part time and by doing this it could suit some people who are already in employment to work a few hours in the evening. Councillor Fitzpatrick stated that more Carers are required as most people now want to stay at home and be cared for in their own homes. Councillor A. Fitzpatrick proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Health expressing concerns over the shortage of Carers in our County.

Councillor C. Lovett supported the motion and noted the great work being done by Carers in our communities.

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion and noted the service Carers provide is invaluable in keeping older people in their own homes.

Councillors Á Smith, P. McDonald, J.P. Feeley, P. Walsh and B. Fay supported the motion.

16.8 To discuss the deposit return scheme.

Councillor S. O'Reilly stated that the introduction of the deposit return scheme is an absolute failure and noted that only seven million of two hundred million bottles sold in the first forty days of the scheme's introduction have been recycled at the specific return banks in supermarkets. She noted that Ireland's first ever reverse vending machine was launched by Carrickmacross Tidy Towns in September 2019 where they initially got their idea from Germany where a similar system was in place. She stated that the machine was designed to pay people in exchange for plastic bottles with no additional refund cost

to the consumer. She stated that this machine was a success because it was simple and it worked and did not punish people who were already recycling, it processed over fifty thousand bottles reaching the project's annual goal within two months of its launch. Councillor O'Reilly stated that the current deposit scheme introduced by the Government is a gigantic tax revenue stream while doing nothing to increase recycling rates. She stated that people now see the scheme as a money-making racket, one million euro a day is being collected, estimates of over twenty million euro not collected and that figure is increasing. Councillor O'Reilly stated that consumers on the ground are complaining that they are already paying for recycling plastics and recyclables in the household green bin. Councillor O'Reilly noted that as of July 2023, recycling targets set for Ireland by the EU were surpassed for the twenty fifth year in a row and Irish people are doing a great job recycling at home. Councillor O'Reilly stated that retailers are also frustrated as it is an expensive drain on shop resources, the cheapest machine costing thirteen thousand euro. Councillor S. O'Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure, Deputy Ossian Smyth, who advocated for this €40m a year fiasco to answer questions on the merits of the scheme. Councillor B. Fay seconded Councillor O'Reilly's proposal and noted that it was another tax scheme brought in by the Government.

Councillor A. Fitzpatrick agreed that there were teething problems at the start and stated that people do not like change, but we need to give the scheme a chance. Councillor Fitzpatrick felt that bottles should not have been charged for in the first six months and the logo needs to be bigger on bottles.

Councillor S.P. O'Reilly stated that we need to give the scheme a chance and noted that the National School in Mullagh raised €108 in the last week by recycling bottles.

Councillor C. Smith stated that since the introduction of the scheme the Tidy Towns Committee in Cootehill have noticed less cans and bottles on streets and noted that children are collecting the cans and bottles to get money for them.

Mr. Paddy Connaughton, Director of Service noted that there were problems with the scheme initially, but this has eased. He stated that currently 60% is being recycled. He stated that operators have requested a meeting with the Strategic Policy Committee and any questions can be addressed at the meeting.

Councillor S O'Reilly noted that her problem was with the rise in price on bottles not the refund system.

16.20 To discuss road issues and funding.

Councillor S. O'Reilly noted that recent weather conditions, incessant heavy rainfall, saturated ground conditions and underfunding has had a brutal effect on our road network. She noted that the underfunding since 2008 from central government for our regional and local road network

has finally caught up with us. This year's allocation of 18.14m, even though half a million below our 2008 allocation was welcomed by some local TDs but they should have demanded more. Councillor O'Reilly noted that 95% of County Cavan Road Infrastructure is local and regional roads and as a result County Cavan has a higher level of dependence on these networks than other counties. She stated that intensive Agri industries have to rely primarily on local and regional roads to transport their produce. She stated that this results in continuous high-volume flow of heavy goods vehicles on structurally weak local roads with poor soils and drainage. She stated that what the allocation means for the Bailieborough Cootehill area and remembering that the Council has increased its own resources allocation to the budget is that five roads have been left off the roads works plan in their entirety. She stated that the net effect is a reduction in 6km in restoration works in the Bailieborough Cootehill Municipal District area. Councillor O'Reilly noted a particular case where a person travelling to work hit a pothole and damaged two wheels on their car costing them huge money to repair even though they are paying their taxes and trying to survive. Councillor O'Reilly asked the Director of Service if he or the Chief Executive had travelled the county roads recently and what they are doing to highlight this emergency. Councillor O'Reilly also asked how much it would cost to get our roads to an acceptable standard in Cavan and was the Council's maintenance budget reduced this year by €50,000 per municipal district. Councillor O'Reilly asked if claims made against the Council were on the rise and how much it is costing the Council.

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion and stated that this is an ongoing problem in all areas. Councillor O'Reilly noted that extra funding is needed and stated that all members agreed to proposals made in their municipal districts.

Councillor A. Fitzpatrick supported the motion and felt that next year less money should be spent on national roads and more on rural and local roads.

The motion was unanimously supported.

Mr. Paddy Connaughton, Director of Service stated that €220m would be needed to bring the roads up to the level required. He stated that the Council will make a case to the Department for extra funding. Mr. Connaughton stated that the issue of claims is a matter for the finance section.

16.10 That Cavan County Council opposes the provision of late term abortion in Cavan General Hospital. That this Council expresses grief and sadness for the lives lost in 10,000 abortions in Ireland last year and that this Council calls on the Government to provide the necessary health and economic support to mothers so that they can raise their children to their full potential.

Councillor S. O'Reilly stated that the increasing numbers of late term abortions being performed across Ireland should not be allowed to be mirrored in Cavan and noted that the picture that people were promised before they voted for Repeal is shockingly different to the reality. She stated that there were one hundred and sixteen abortions in Cavan in 2022, the highest number ever recorded. She stated that this alarming trend

was replicated nationwide, with the total annual figures reaching 8,156 abortions in 2022 and 10,000 in 2023. Councillor O'Reilly noted that Tanáiste Micheál Martin told the Dáil that he is very open to giving very serious consideration to the recommendation contained in the report of the three-year review of the abortion law. Councillor O'Reilly stated that this would include legalising late-term abortion on request, suppressing freedom of conscience protections for healthcare workers and scrapping the three-day wait before an abortion. She stated that this is not what the people of Ireland voted for, and it is unconscionable for a Government to try and ram through new laws that it promised it would not. Councillor O'Reilly noted that the current three-day wait has saved so many tiny preborn babies and nearly 4,000 mothers did not attend the second abortion meeting. She stated that while there are different reasons for this, one of the main reasons is that the three days wait gave thousands of mothers time to pause and they changed their minds and had their babies. Councillor O'Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council opposes the provision of late term abortion in Cavan General Hospital and that this Council expresses grief and sadness for the lives lost in 10,000 abortions in Ireland last year and that this Council calls on the Government to provide the necessary health and economic support to mothers so that they can raise their children to their full potential.

Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion stating that it was a very sad and depressing subject. He stated that he was disappointed that Councillor S. O'Reilly targeted Deputy Micheál Martin. He stated that while he does not agree with Deputy Martin he is not the only Oireachtas member thinking the same. He stated that there is a duty on the medical profession to protect lives at all times.

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion stating that it was a very sensitive issue. He stated that everyone's view is their own view.

Councillors B. Fay, C. Kelly and P. Brady supported the motion.

Councillor P. Walsh welcomed home the peacemakers who have returned from their mission in the Golan Heights. She stated that these brave peacemakers returned to a hero's welcome, and their dedication to maintaining peace and stability deserves our utmost respect and gratitude. She stated that she had two sons serve in the Golan Heights and knows the hardship it brings for families while they are away for six months.

MEMBERS' ITEMS – APRIL MEETING

16.11 That Cavan County Council provide an update on the North South Interconnector.

Councillor C. Kelly asked the executive of Cavan County Council if there had been any recent updates on the North South Interconnector

Mr. Brendan Jennings, Director of Service stated that since the last meeting the planning authorities in Meath, Cavan and Monaghan had met on the 14th March with further meetings to be arranged to discuss planning conditions and who implements them.

16.13 Proper identity verification for social media accounts.

Councillor Á Smith stated that social media is entrenched in our lives but for all the attraction and undoubted benefits of social media, there is a dark side too. She stated that the ability to remain anonymous or to take on a false identity opens opportunities for hate crime, fraud, cyberbullying and fake news. Councillor Smith stated that the anonymity of social platforms protects criminals and stalkers and unknowingly, social platforms have given a voice to scammers, spammers, trolls, and a long list of profiles with dubious moral intentions. She stated that verification ensures that users are who they claim to be and when we encounter a verified account, we can trust that it genuinely represents the individual or organisation it claims to be. Councillor Smith stated that false information spreads like wildfire on social media and verified accounts can help curb the dissemination of misinformation by providing a liable source. She stated that platforms not only need to safeguard their information but also to assure them that other users are who they claim to be. She stated that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter/X should require real identification from prospective users including driver's licences, passports or other forms of physical ID. She stated that linking these real IDs would allow sites to keep their users accountable for what they post and when the account belongs to a person under the age of 18, verify the account with the ID of a parent/guardian to prevent anonymised harmful activity, providing traceability if an offence occurs. Councillor Smith proposed that Cavan County Council call on the Minister for Tourism, Arts, Gaeltacht and Media and the Minister for Children to bring in a new law for identity verification on social media platforms and a law prohibiting under 16's from using social media.

Councillor P. McDonald supported the motion and noted that young people have lost the skill of speech.

Councillor P. Walsh supported the motion and stated that children have devices from a very young age and are losing their social skills.

The motion was supported unanimously.

16.14 National Broadband Plan.

Councillor Á Smith stated that the vast majority of people use the internet daily, and it is essential for homes, for farmers, for schools, businesses and community and voluntary organisations. She stated that a lot of day-to-day activity depends on the use of the internet and so access to the internet is essential. Councillor Smith stated that

unfortunately there are still so many areas lacking up to date broadband infrastructure. Councillor Smith acknowledged that good progress has been made over the last two to three years but there are still areas where modern broadband infrastructure will not be provided for a considerable length of time. She stated that as a country we need to have the rollout of the National Broadband Plan speeded up as soon as possible so that all areas have access to the most modern broadband infrastructure. She stated that she has met with many people where households and small businesses are only minimal distances outside the radius where broadband is being upgraded and they cannot access this much needed facility. Councillor Smith noted that since the Covid pandemic in 2020 there is a significant growth on the number of people working from home, either on a part-time or full-time basis and they need up to date broadband. Councillor Smith proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Communications requesting him to ask all the telecom providers to literally speed up the rollout of infrastructure. Councillor Smith noted that the last three years have highlighted our dependence on the internet and the targets set a few years ago need to be revised and greater urgency given to the rollout of broadband in every community.

Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion and stated that there is a deficiency in the roll out of national broadband. He stated that there is not enough done by the Government to keep the pressure on existing providers.

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion and noted that broadband is vital in rural areas. He stated not everyone can be first and someone must be last, and we have come a long way over the last few years with more to do.

Councillors W. Bennett and P. Walsh supported the motion.

16.15 The lack of school places for autistic children in our County.

Councillor P. McDonald proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister of State with responsibility for Special Education and Inclusion, Ms. Josepha Madigan, T.D. to raise concerns about the insufficient availability of school places for children with special needs in our County. Councillor McDonald stated that families are forced to apply to numerous schools before their child is accepted. He stated that these children have the right to be educated in their local school with their siblings and neighbours. He stated that this recurring issue is a result of the government's failure to adequately plan for these students.

Councillor P. McVitty supported the motion and expressed his disappointment that no reply had been received from Minister Anne Rabbitte in over a year in relation to the matter. He stated that some children with special needs have to travel an hour to access education.

Councillor C. Kelly seconded Councillor P. McDonald's proposal.

Councillors P. Walsh, T.P. O'Reilly and B. Fay supported the motion.

16.16 To ask the Minister for Transport to consider reducing the HGV Licence age requirement for 21 years to 18 years of age.

Councillor P. McVitty proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Transport asking him to consider reducing the HGV Licence age requirement from twenty-one years to eighteen years of age. He stated that in February against the recommendations of the European Transport Safety Council politicians in Brussels voted in favour of member states introducing new rules to allow an accompanied driving scheme for seventeen-year-old lorry drivers. Councillor McVitty asked that the Government do likewise as a way of addressing the shortage of drivers across the transport industry where major problems remain with recruitment.

Councillor W. Bennett supported the motion and noted that most twenty one year olds with an interest in working would already have started a career elsewhere before meeting the required age to get a HGV licence.

Councillors P. Brady and T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion.

16.17 That Cavan County Council support the provision of new facilities to enhance cancer care in Galway University Hospital.

Councillor J.P. Feeley proposed that Cavan County Council support the provision of new facilities to enhance cancer care in Galway University Hospital. Councillor Feeley noted that cancer patients living in West Cavan avail of services in Sligo Hospital and are often referred to Galway University Hospital. He stated that the facilities in Galway, despite the opening of a new oncology unit last year, are still not what they should be. He stated that it is important for people to have access to cancer services within a reasonable distance from where they live.

The motion was supported unanimously.

16.18 That Cavan County Council call for commercial afforestation to be made subject to the requirement to obtain planning permission.

Councillor J.P. Feeley proposed that Cavan County Council call for commercial afforestation to be made subject to the requirement to obtain planning permission.

Councillor Feeley noted that Leitrim County Council had called on the Government asking them to make commercial afforestation subject to planning permission and that Cavan County Council do the same. He stated that in some parts of West Cavan there are twenty to thirty per cent of townlands covered in commercial afforestation which has a huge impact on visibility. He stated that the voices of those elected to represent their areas have been ignored.

Councillor S.P. O'Reilly seconded Councillor J.P. Feeley's proposal and noted that West Cavan is becoming a forest.

Councillors P. McVitty, T.P. O'Reilly, P. Walsh, Á. Smith and A. Fitzpatrick supported the motion.

16.19 That Cavan County Council object to the continued insistence by the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, T.D. to implement the Hate Speech Bill against the will of the people.

Councillor S. O'Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council object to the continued insistence by the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, T.D., to implement the Hate Speech Bill against the will of the people. Councillor O'Reilly noted that she had this motion already discussed at a Council meeting. Councillor O'Reilly stated that the Hate Speech Bill is another example of the chasm that exists between the Political/NGO bubble and the people of Ireland. Councillor O'Reilly stated that the recent referendums highlighted just how detached the Government is from the people and this Bill is very similar to the referendums. She stated that at the heart of the problem is definition free phrases that could one day jail you for simply speaking your mind respectfully. She stated that there is no definition of hate and there is no definition of gender. She stated that if the Government seeks to criminalise a citizen, they have a moral responsibility to clearly set out the legal parameters. Councillor O'Reilly stated that in the Hate Speech Bill, the Government is seeking to shut down free expression and debate. Councillor O'Reilly stated that she is asking the Minister once again to give up the resistance and listened to the people.

Councillors P. McDonald, P. Brady, S.P. O'Reilly and T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion.

16.9 To write to Minister Heather Humphreys and the Minister for Enterprise requesting a town centre first scheme similar to Vacant and Derelict Property Refurbishment Grant scheme in an effort to address Vacant/Derelict Retail Units/Shops.

Councillor S. O'Reilly noted that since her motion on the agenda, a meeting had taken place in the Bailie Hotel with businesses and members of the regeneration office.

Councillor O'Reilly noted that Croí Cónaithe grant is only available in respect of a premises registered in a person's own name, and not that of a company.

16.21 To discuss the issue of multinational supermarkets selling "Irish Produce" without the "Bord Bia" label.

Deferred.

16.22 To call on Cavan County Council to implement a Ready to Build Scheme.

Councillor Á Smith stated that at a time when housing is one of the biggest issues in the Country where can you buy sites from a local authority to build your own home under the

Ready to Build Scheme. She stated that these sites have all the necessary infrastructure and local authorities should make these sites available for people to build homes on by providing access and services to the sites. Councillor Smith noted that our small towns and villages decreasing in population as a result of difficulties in getting planning permission which in turn sees football clubs unable to field teams, and schools crying out for students so they can keep their teachers. She stated that vibrant towns and villages are something that all statutory organisations should be aiming to build and facilitate. She stated that the scheme aims to support the future growth of towns and villages by making available serviced sites to give people the opportunity to build their own home.

Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion and noted that many people do not want to live in an estate.

Councillors W. Bennett, T.P. O'Reilly and P. Walsh supported the motion.

Ms. Lynda McGavigan, Acting Director of Service stated that at the minute there is an existing landbank and the Committee could review land that becomes available on demand.

Item no 16.21 was deferred.

Councillor P. Brady reminded all members that a Cathaoirleach's Reception will take place at 5.30pm for the winning All Ireland Arva Junior Football team.

The meeting concluded at 4.45pm

Certified Correct: _____ Date: _____

Cathaoirleach: _____