

**Minutes of Meeting of Cavan County Council held in The Hotel Kilmore, Cavan on  
Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 2.00p.m.**

Councillor P. Brady, Cathaoirleach, presiding

Present; Councillors M. Argue, W. Bennett, C. Brady, B. Fay, J.P. Feeley,  
A. Fitzpatrick (online), 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 (online)

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

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An apology was received from Councillor C. Kelly

Councillor P. Brady welcomed all to the meeting.

**1. To confirm Minutes of Monthly Meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

**Miontuaririsci cruinnithe 13 Mi na Nollag 2023 a dhearbhu.**

It was

Proposed by Councillor C. Brady

Seconded by Councillor P. McVitty

And

Resolved;

“that minutes of monthly meeting of Cavan County Council held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023  
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 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

Noted.

**Votes of Sympathy**

- Councillor Clifford Kelly on the death of his wife Betty Kelly, former librarian Kingscourt Library and mother of Martin Kelly, Station Officer, Fire Station Kingscourt.
- The Fitzsimons Family, Ballyjamesduff on the death of Mrs. Mai Fitzsimons, wife of former Councillor Francis Fitzsimons.
- The Haynes and Rudden Families, Ballinagh on the tragic death of their son Tyler Jordan Haynes,

The meeting was adjourned for ten minutes as a mark of respect to Councillor C. Kelly.

**4. To hear presentation from Cavan Disability Network**

Ms. Lorraine McTeigue and Ms. Bridget Boyle from Cavan Disability Network gave a presentation to the members on disability and equality awareness. Ms. McTeigue informed the members that Cavan Disability Network was established in 2016 with a central purpose of providing a link between the disability community and local government, making input into the LCDC and receiving feedback from the LCDC. She stated that a steering group was established with representatives from many different organisations to oversee the work of the Network. She stated that the vision of Cavan Disability Network is to support and promote awareness of the issues that affect people with disabilities, in particular access to services, access to public buildings and spaces, mental and physical health, sports and recreation, education and training, and employment opportunities. Ms. McTeigue stated that the aims and objectives of the network was to create a coordinated voice for people with disabilities in County Cavan, strengthen and empower the disability sector, be a representative group embracing all disabilities, engage with people with disabilities, promote inclusion for people with disabilities in County Cavan and establish an accessible communication platform for people with disabilities.

Ms. Bridget Boyle, Chairperson, Cavan Disability Network stated that accessibility means people are not excluded from using something on the basis of experiencing a disability. It means that people can do what they need to do in a similar amount of time and effort as someone that does not have a disability and people are empowered, independent and not disadvantaged by something that is poorly designed or implemented. She stated that members of society benefit to some degree from inclusive environments. Ms. Boyle noted that one of the major barriers faced by people with disabilities when accessing public services is the lack of accessible information and more and more people are contacting service providers via the telephone. She stated that in order to assist people with disabilities, service providers should have a dedicated point of contact, an access policy and action plan to highlight how they are working towards making their services accessible for all. Ms. Boyle informed the members that there is now a new Just a Minute card which allows people with a hidden disability or communication barrier to tell others that they need extra time and understanding in a private and easy way. She stated that you can show your JAM card while you are shopping, ordering food, visiting a bank, using public transport and more as long as the business in question is JAM card friendly. She noted that it is a simple idea which makes a big difference. Ms. Boyle stated that people with disabilities with the lived experience, are best placed to identify barriers and recommend solutions to ensure your services are fully accessible for all.

The members in turn thanked Ms. McTeigue and Ms. Boyle for their presentations.

5. **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.

#### **Correspondence**

- 6.(a) **To note reply from the Department of Social Protection regarding Community Employment (CE) Scheme eligibility criteria and the participants rates of pay.**

Noted.

- (b) **To note reply from Uisce Eireann regarding difficulties with water pressure throughout County Cavan.**

Noted.

- (c) **To note reply from the Office of the Minister for Finance regarding the Introduction of a mortgage relief scheme.**

Noted.

- (d) **To note reply from the Office of Minister for Housing and Local Government regarding the request for grant aid and extension of an upgrade scheme.**

Noted.

- (e) **To note replies from Cavan County GAA Board regarding the proposal removal of Cavan from the Allianz Hurling League.**

Noted.

- (f) **To note reply from the Office of the Minister for Health regarding BreastCheck and BowelScreen**

Noted.

- (g) **To note reply from the Office of the Minister for Health regarding the provision of dental care in County Cavan.**

Noted.

- (h) **To note reply from the Minister for Mental Health and Older People regarding the provision of home support.**

Noted.

- (i) **To note correspondence from the Chairperson of St. Killian's Heritage Trust Regarding the homecoming of the St. Kilian Relic.**

Noted.

7. **To approve the attendance of members at the LAMA Seminar to be held in Donegal town on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January 2024.**

It was

Proposed by Councillor C. Brady

Seconded by Councillor S.P. O'Reilly

And

Resolved;

“that the attendance of Councillors J.P. Feeley, C. Kelly, P. Walsh, Á Smith, V. Smith, T. Smith, P. McVitty, C. Brady, M. Argue, W. Bennett, T.P. O’Reilly, S.P. O’Reilly, B. Fay and S. O’Reilly at the LAMA Seminar to be held in Donegal town on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January 2024 be hereby approved”.

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

**8. To note Chief Executive’s monthly report (Section 51 Local Government Reform Act 2014).**

Noted. Councillor S.P. O’Reilly expressed his anger following a raid by Gardaí investigating an arson attack at a disused Galway hotel on the homes of elected representatives. He stated that Gardaí searched the homes of both Councillors and seized their phones and electronic devices. He stated that one house was searched in front of the Councillors wife and young children. He stated that Ross Hill House near Oughterard had been earmarked to house asylum seekers. Councillor O’Reilly stated that one Councillor was held as a prisoner in his own home and these searches were carried out because the two Councillors had spoken on behalf of the communities they represent. Councillor O’Reilly stated that he was horrified at what had happened. Councillor O’Reilly stated that it was a black day for democracy. Councillor S.P. O’Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Local Authority Members’ Association and the Association of Irish Local Government and the Minister for Local Government requesting that this does not happen again.

Councillor S. O’Reilly supported Councillor S.P. O’Reilly and stated that what had happened was heavy handed.

Councillor T.P. O’Reilly noted that the members did not know enough facts to make a fully informed comment and an investigation is ongoing.

Councillor P. Brady stated that he would refrain from making a comment given that there is an investigation taking place but agreed that a letter should be sent to LAMA and the AILG seeking a meeting asking them to support Councillors going forward.

**9. To approve disposal of 0.17 hectares of land containing derelict house at Gartbrattan, Cavan to Mr. Wesley Moore, Dromard, Cavan for the sum of €108,000, 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 J.P. Feeley

Seconded by Councillor W. Bennett

And

Resolved;

“that the disposal of 0.17 hectares of land containing derelict house at Gartbrattan, Cavan to Mr. Wesley Moore, Dromard, Cavan for the sum of €108,000, pursuant to Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 and Section 211 of the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act 2000 be hereby approved”.

**10. To approve the nomination to the Housing, Social Inclusion and Corporate Strategic Policy Committee of Mr. Stiofán Ó Connachtaigh.**

It was

Proposed by Councillor P. McDonald

Seconded by Councillor P. Brady

And

Resolved;

“that the nomination to the Housing, Social Inclusion and Corporate Strategic Policy Committee of Mr. Stiofán Ó Connachtaigh be hereby approved”.

**MEMBERS' ITEMS – DEFERRED FROM DECEMBER MEETING**

**11.1 To ask that this Council write to all local waste recycling companies to clarify where the contents of recycling bins, glass bins and compost bins end up. To know the breakdown in percentages of each recycle bin type of what is brought to landfill/incineration and what percentage is actually recycled.**

Councillor S. O'Reilly noted that a member of the public stated on the Joe Duffy show that after placing a tracker in clean pieces of cardboard put out for collection on a few occasions all ended up in the Poolbeg Incinerator. Councillor O'Reilly stated that she hoped that the efforts being made by people to recycle is not being done in vain.

Councillor O'Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council write to all local waste recycling companies to clarify where the contents of recycling bins, glass bins and compost bins end up. Councillor O'Reilly also asked for a breakdown in percentages of each recycle bin type of what is brought to landfill/incineration and what percentage is recycled.

Councillor O'Reilly stated that she believed that manufacturers should be targeted by the Government for creating large volumes of packaging. Councillor O'Reilly asked if Cavan County Council monitor waste collection companies or if the Council can assure that waste at our bring centres is being closely monitored and correctly disposed of.

Councillor S.P. O'Reilly supported the motion and noted that he observed a bin lorry with no separation compartments for ordinary waste and recycling waste. Councillor S.P. O'Reilly stated that he is not convinced that recycling is happening.

Councillor B. Fay supported the motion and called for more regulation and assertion that manufacturers should be punished for production of packaging.

Mr. Paddy Connaughton, Director of Service noted that much of the information regarding what is brought to landfill/incineration and what percentage is recycled could

be deemed as commercially sensitive information and noted that a freedom of information request could be submitted and dealt with on its own merits.

**11.2 That Cavan County Council write to the Department of Agriculture to ask what efforts they have made to have grasslands, pastureland and hedgerows included as carbon credits for agriculture so farmers can benefit from carbon off-sets for their grass-fed animals.**

Councillors S. O'Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Department of Agriculture to ask what efforts they have made to have grasslands, pastureland and hedgerows included as carbon credits for agriculture so farmers can benefit from carbon off-sets for their grass-fed animals. Councillor O'Reilly stated that she wants the value of hedgerows added into the carbon sequestration mathematical mix and hedgerows should be included in a national Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry inventory. Councillor O'Reilly stated that the Government must act, after Teagasc, using projects such as the National Agricultural Soil Carbon Observatory and the Signpost farms, began measuring carbon sequestration in hedgerows and on farm woodland.

Councillor S.P. O'Reilly supported the motion and stated that farmers are being set up to take the hit for Ireland's National Policy position to reduce CO2 emissions in 2050 by 80%.

Councillor W. Bennett supported the motion.

Mr. Paddy Connaughton, Director of Service stated that grassland farming as it stands is a net emitter according to the Department and stated that the Council would write to the Department.

### **MEMBERS' ITEMS – JANUARY MEETING**

**11.5 To discuss roads and to request an update on the East West route.**

Councillor S. O'Reilly stated that the condition of roads in County Cavan are deteriorating rapidly and noted that heavy traffic, along with poor and more extreme weather events are taking their toll on our roads. She stated that specifically with regards to the Bailieborough Cootehill area she would like an update on the East West link. Councillor O'Reilly acknowledged that close to one million had been spent to date with funding allocated to both Cavan and Louth County Councils to carry out initial assessments on two possible schemes. Councillor O'Reilly stated that the members need to be updated more often on progress being made.

Councillor C. Brady supported the motion and stated that she felt the East West Link had ended up on the back burner. She stated that progress needs to be made with the wealth of industry in the east of the county, which is serviced only by local and regional roads.

Councillor A. Fitzpatrick supported the motion and stated that it is imperative that the Council keeps the East West link on the agenda as an item for discussion.

Councillor V. Smith supported the motion but noted that local roads within the municipal district needed funding first. He stated that the East West link is a long way off and priority should be given to our local roads.

Councillor T. Smith supported the motion and noted that the roads in the Ballyjamesduff electoral area were equally as bad as those in Bailieborough Cootehill electoral area.

Mr. Paddy Connaughton, Director of Service stated that the Council hoped to appoint consultants in the second quarter of 2024 and the allocation of €250,000 only focused on the Rathkenny bends. Mr. Connaughton noted that to build the East West link as envisioned may cost in the region of €600m. He stated that as a local authority, they had identified the need to fix the bends at Rathkenny as very important.

#### **11.6 To request Cavan County Council to provide public toilet facilities in the County.**

Councillor P. McDonald requested Cavan County Council to provide public toilet facilities in the County. Councillor McDonald stated that at a minimum every county town should have suitably serviced and well-maintained public toilets. Councillor McDonald noted that post covid pubs and shops had begun to close off their toilet facilities to anyone other than customers and he was concerned that this would affect tourism. Councillor McDonald also noted that in the retail parks on the Dublin Road there are no toilet facilities either.

Councillor Á. Smith supported the motion and noted that there is a lack of facilities available near Cavan town's Con Smith Park also. Councillor Smith stated that there should be a public toilet in every town in the County.

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion and noted that public toilets would add value to an area but accepted it would be costly for the Council to maintain.

Councillor S.P. O'Reilly noted that the maintenance costs associated with putting toilets in every town could reach in excess of €78,000 yearly and he would rather see that money spent on footpaths and suggested that hospitality businesses be offered a reduction in rates for opening their facilities to the wider public.

Councillor C. Brady supported the motion and noted that the town team in Cootehill is working on providing safe accessible toilets and changing facilities at St. Michael's Community Centre as part of its planned refurbishment and redevelopment.

Councillor A. Fitzpatrick supported the motion and noted that the plans for Cootehill would be the first in the region and could not understand why public buildings in towns across the country could not open their facilities to the public.

Councillor J.P. Feeley asked that Cavan County Council look to neighbouring Fermanagh where he said public toilets are available and see how they run their system of maintenance and upkeep.

Councillor B. Fay supported the motion and asked if self-cleaning toilets could be installed.

Mr. Paddy Connaughton, Director of Service stated that lack of usage and maintenance costs as well as security often make the opening of toilets prohibitive from a cost point of view and stated that self-cleaning toilets were expensive. He stated that he could look at the cost model adopted in the North but noted that they also operate from a different tax base to the one we have.

#### **11.7 The need for additional measures to be implemented at national and EU level to deal with the spread of misinformation on social media.**

Councillor Á. Smith stated that the psychology and history of misinformation cannot be fully understood without taking into account contemporary technology and asked for more action to be taken to prevent its proliferation through social media. Councillor Smith stated that additional measures need to be implemented at national and EU level to deal with the spread of misinformation on social media. Councillor Smith stated that misinformation and disinformation also known as fake news are not new, but digital and social media are allowing misleading, false and harmful content to spread at a rate that is causing harm to society. She stated that not only can belief in misinformation lead to poor judgement and decision making, it also exerts a lingering influence on people's reasoning after it has been corrected. She stated that the internet reaches billions of individuals and allows senders to create persuasive messages to the specific psychological profiles of individual users. She stated that the internet has become an ideal medium for the rapid spread of falsehoods at the expense of accurate information and its rapid spread affects everyone online and offline. She stated that misinformation and disinformation have been used to incite violence and crime targeted at ethnic minorities, which has resulted in deaths and displacement of children. She stated that due to their evolving capacities children cannot always distinguish between reliable and unreliable information and they can also spread harmful misinformation among their peers, including those without access to social media. Councillor Smith proposed that Cavan County Council call on the Government for additional measures to be implemented at a national and EU level to deal with the spread of misinformation on social media.

Councillor S.P. O'Reilly supported the motion and noted that some legislation goes too far in its attempts to stymie debate and freedom of expression. He stated that we will soon not be allowed to think for ourselves. Councillor O'Reilly accepted that the level to which disinformation on some subjects had infiltrated social consciousness was shocking.

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion and noted that currently social media is playing a big part in our society.



### **11.8 The need to improve income eligibility limits for social housing.**

Councillor Á Smith proposed that Cavan County Council write to Minister Darragh O'Brien, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to ask that his Department increase the social housing income eligibility thresholds again. Councillor Smith noted that the thresholds were already increased in January 2023 by €5,000 for all local authorities but this is not enough. She stated that the increase has helped to accommodate more applicants, but we need a further increase to these income limits particularly for the band three areas. Councillor Smith noted that presently the upper income for a single adult living in Cavan is €30,000 per annum with provision to increase that limit for additional adults or children in the household. She stated that she has come across applicants who are working hard, rearing families and unable to get on the Council housing list due to their income being slightly above the eligibility limits. She stated that many of these people are not able to draw down a house mortgage as their applications do not meet with the criteria for such loans. She stated that these people should not be penalised and have to rent housing for the rest of their lives.

Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion and noted that it was important for the Department to look at the income limits. Councillor Feeley stated that the social housing list in Cavan and elsewhere was being suppressed unfairly.

Councillor P. Walsh supported the motion and stated that the aspiration of many was to own their own home and not be paying dead money on rent.

Councillor T. Smith supported the motion and noted that the last increase was not enough.

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

### **11.9 To ask Cavan County Council to write to the Minister for Education enquiring why schools were put into a lottery to receive vital funding for a STEM Learning Grant as it is for a subject all schools are required to teach.**

Councillor B. Fay proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Education enquiring why schools were put into a lottery to receive vital funding for a STEM learning Grant as it is for a subject all schools are required to teach. Councillor Fay stated that while the funding was welcome for the seven primary and two post primary schools in Cavan, he stated that instead of assessing each application on its own merit, the department adopted a lottery type system to select successful schools. He stated that teachers went over and beyond the call of duty to get applications ready before the tight deadline for the scheme which some applications stretched to twenty pages and detailed how the STEM grant would be used to better educate their children. He stated that some schools with smaller populations ended up receiving far greater

sums that their larger counterparts. He stated that in his opinion the fairest way the department could have rolled out the scheme was by doing out grants between €5,000 and €6,000 to everyone.

Councillor Á Smith supported the motion and stated that she hoped the schools that missed out would be prioritised when further funding comes available. She stated that one school should not be treated differently to others and noted that schools should not have to compete for funding.

Councillor P. Brady supported the motion.

Items 11.3 and 11.4 were deferred.

The meeting concluded at 5.05pm