

Minutes of the March Monthly Meeting of Clare County Council held in the Council Chamber, Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare and via MS Teams on Monday, 7th March, 2022 at 3:45 p.m.

Present:

Councillors M. Howard, M. Nestor, C. Colleran Molloy, P. Murphy, A. Norton, P. Daly, J. Cooney, T. O'Brien, J. Crowe, M. Begley, P.J. Ryan, P. McMahon, G. Flynn, D. McGettigan, P. O'Gorman, S. Talty, J. Killeen, P.J. Kelly, B. Chambers, G. Keating, C. Murphy.

- Mr. Pat Dowling, Chief Executive.
- Ms. Ann Reynolds, Meetings Administrator.
- Ms. Margaret O'Rourke, Assistant Staff Officer.
- Mr. Leonard Cleary, Director of Rural Development.
- Ms. Siobhán McNulty, Senior Executive Officer, Social Development.
- Mr. Brian McCarthy, Senior Planner, Economic Development.
- Mr. John Leahy, Senior Engineer, Physical Development.
- Mr. Seán Lenihan, Senior Engineer, Physical Development.

Present via MS Teams:

Cllrs. J. Flynn, P. Hayes, P. Burke, A. O'Callaghan, J. Garrihy, L. Grant, I. Lynch.

Apologies:

- Ms. Anne Haugh, Director of Social Development.
- Mr. Liam Conneally, Director of Economic Development.
- Dr. Carmel Kirby, Director of Physical Development.
- Ms. Noeleen Fitzgerald, Director of Finance and Support Services.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. P.J. Ryan presided.

Statement of support for the people of Ukraine.

At the outset, the Cathaoirleach, Cllr. P.J. Ryan read out the following statement of support for the people of Ukraine.

“Clare County Council condemns Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which is a gross violation of international law and human rights.

This Council stands in full solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

The thoughts of the elected members and staff of Clare County Council are with the people of Ukraine, and with the Ukrainian community in Clare and Ireland.

As a demonstration of solidarity, Áras Contae an Chláir is lit up nightly in the Ukrainian colours, and the Ukrainian and Clare flags are being flown outside the building.

Clare County Council supports Ireland's efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to people in Ukraine in their time of need.

This Council joins with all those in Ireland and around the world in declaring its opposition to Russia's aggression and calling for an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of all forces from Ukraine."

P. Dowling, Chief Executive echoed the sentiments expressed by Cathaoirleach, Cllr. P.J. Ryan. Mr. Dowling stated that 1.5 million people have fled across the borders in search of shelter and that this is the worst refugee crisis since World War II. Mr. Dowling informed the members that correspondence had been received from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in relation to information note regarding the arrival of refugees in Ireland fleeing the conflict in Ukraine. The correspondence stated that on 3rd March, 2022 the Council of the European Union enacted the Temporary Protection Directive (Council Directive 2001/55/EC) in response to refugees arriving in the EU from Ukraine. The enactment of the Directive means persons fleeing the conflict in Ukraine will have access to "temporary protection status" in EU Members States.

The correspondence states that the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) is currently preparing arrangements to receive those fleeing the conflict into IPAS accommodation either directly from airports to IPAS or to family and from there to IPAS.

Mr. Dowling informed the members that the Irish Red Cross is the centre point for offers of assistance. Mr. Dowling undertook to keep the elected members up to date in relation to local authority developments concerning this crisis.

Cllrs. J. Cooney, T. O'Brien and G. Flynn spoke on behalf of their political groupings and acknowledged the devastation being experienced by the people in Ukraine and the consequences for the rest of the world. The members voiced their solidarity with the people of Ukraine and pledged to support them. It was proposed that a minutes silence be observed for the people who have lost their lives in this war and this was agreed by the members present.

International Women's Day.

Cathaoirleach, Cllr. P.J. Ryan acknowledged International Women's Day which takes place on Tuesday 8th April. The theme for International Women's Day 2022 is, "**Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow**", recognizing the contribution of women and girls around the world, who are leading the charge on climate change adaptation, mitigation, and response, to build a more sustainable future for all.

Votes of sympathy

A vote of sympathy was extended to the following:

- The Hogan family, Tulla on the death of Thomas Hogan, Tulla, RIP.

- The Foley family, Kildysart on the death of Michael Foley, RIP
- The O'Halloran family, Ennis on the death of John O'Halloran, RIP
- The Reddan family, Sixmilebridge on the death of Joan Reddan, RIP.
- The Neylon family, Kilkee on the death of Seán Neylon, RIP
- The Fitzpatrick family, Lisdoonvarna on the death of Stephanie Fitzpatrick, RIP.

Item 1: Minutes of Council Meetings.

a. Ar moladh Cllr. J. Crowe
Cuidithe ag Cllr. M. Howard agus glacadh leis

“That the Minutes of the February Meeting of Clare County Council held on 14th February, 2022 be adopted and signed.”

Item 2: Matters Arising.

There were no matters arising.

Item 3: Minutes of Municipal District Meetings.

a. Ar moladh Cllr. P. Daly
Cuidithe ag Cllr. C. Colleran Molloy agus glacadh leis

“That the Minutes of the Ennis Municipal District Meeting held on the 1st February, 2022 be noted.”

Item 4: Minutes of S.P.C. Meetings.

a. Ar moladh Cllr. S. Talty
Cuidithe ag Cllr. P. Hayes agus glacadh leis

“That the minutes of the Physical Development S.P.C. meeting held on 16th November, 2021 be noted”.

b. Ar moladh Cllr. M. Howard
Cuidithe ag Cllr. C. Murphy agus glacadh leis

“That the minutes of the Rural Development S.P.C. meeting held on 16th November, 2021 be noted”.

c. Ar moladh Cllr. P. Burke
Cuidithe ag Cllr. C. Murphy agus glacadh leis

“That the minutes of the Rural Development S.P.C. meeting held on 26th January, 2022 be noted”.

Item 5: Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group Meetings.

The members noted the minutes of the meeting held on 7th February, 2022 as presented.

Item 6: Monthly Management Report.

The monthly management report attached to the agenda included key activities in the principal service areas and was noted by the members.

Cllr. C. Murphy referred to the Kilrush Maritime Training Centre and outlined details of a conference on Maritime Opportunities he attended in N.M.C.I Ringaskiddy recently. Cllr. C. Murphy stated that based on all the information presented that day and also the significant maritime and renewable energy opportunities coming, the real opportunity is in the provision of education and training in the Maritime industry and it is important Clare is at the forefront to harness this opportunity for the benefit of the County and west coast. It would be important to harness the knowledge of key stakeholders. Cllr. C. Murphy requested an update on Piers and Harbours potential projects for the Local Authority Maritime Infrastructure Scheme.

Cllr. P. Murphy complimented the works on the Ennis flood Relief Scheme and welcomed the completion of the riverside walkway which is now open to the public and proving very popular with walkers and cyclists.

P. Dowling, Chief Executive expressed hope that the riverside walkway will be enjoyed as an additional recreation and amenity in the area.

Referring to the proposed Kilrush Maritime Training Centre project, Mr. Dowling stated that there was significant work completed on the project proposed and engagement with key stakeholders in relation to developing a Maritime Training Centre in Kilrush and felt that it could be a significant project going forward.

S. Lenihan, Senior Engineer, Physical Development Directorate referred to the Brexit Adjustment: Local Authority Marine Infrastructure Scheme and stated that the Project Management Office are working with the Municipal District Offices to identify potential projects and will submit funding applications in the coming months.

Mr. Lenihan noted that there is controlled access to the riverside walkway along the Ennis Flood Relief Scheme and stated that this amenity will be enhanced further.

Item 7: Disposal of property at Garrynacallaha, Kells, Corofin, Co. Clare pursuant to Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001 and Section 211 of the Planning & Development Act, 2000.

Report dated 16th February, 2022 from Anne Haugh, Director of Social Development Directorate was circulated with the agenda together with map. The report states that it is proposed to dispose of property at Garrynacallaha, Kells, Corofin, Co. Clare subject to the conditions as set out in the notice served on the members dated 16th February, 2022.

Ar moladh Cllr. J. Killeen
Cuidithe ag Cllr. S. Talty agus glacadh leis

“Notice having been served pursuant to Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001, Clare County Council approves pursuant to the powers vested on it at Section 211 of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 as amended, of disposal of property at Garrynacallaha, Kells, Corofin, Co. Clare subject to the conditions as set out in the notice served on the members dated 16th February, 2022.”

Item 8: Changing Places Facilities Presentation by Brothers of Charity at 3.00 p.m.

In December 2021 the following notice of motion was proposed by Cllr. A. Norton, seconded by Cllr. C. Murphy and agreed by the members present.

“Changing Places facilities is a highly important part of the life of someone with a disability, Members of the Brothers of Charity have been working on a project during covid to make people aware of the difficulties around toileting and making life easier for themselves and their carers or family members. They would like the opportunity to address the councillors and staff of Clare County Council to showcase their documentary and the opportunity to speak about the need for these facilities.”

Cathaoirleach, Cllr. P.J. Ryan welcomed Claire Nagle, Brothers of Charity who was supported by Róisín Glynn and Deborah McInerney.

Claire Nagle, Chairperson of the Clare Advocacy Platform gave a presentation to outline their role and the work they do. Clare self-Advocates are a group of individuals associated with the Brothers of Charity that come together to support local cause, create change & enhance our community to ensure the voices of the most vulnerable are heard. A short film was shown which identifies why it is important to highlight the lack of these facilities in the community. The members welcomed the presentation and acknowledged that it is important to raise awareness and to continue to support the provision of changing places.

Item 9. School Transport Scheme.

Ar moladh Cllr. S. Talty
Cuidithe ag Cllrs. J. Killeen agus L. Grant agus glacadh leis

"The School Transport Scheme is a county wide issue affecting every parish in Clare. There is currently a national review being conducted and we urge all stakeholders to have their say at <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/81e6e-school-transport-reviews/>

In particular Clare County Council calls on Bus Eireann to revert the timetable on Route 333 (Doonbeg to Ennistymon) back to the previous timetable, which ensured students travelling from West Clare would arrive in Ennistymon before 9am for school. Furthermore we call on the Department of Education, Department of Transport and Bus Eireann to amend the School Transport System to ensure that students in the Corofin area have access to school transport to secondary school in Ennistymon as well as to schools in Ennis."

The elected members encouraged people to participate in the public consultation process on the School Transport Scheme. Failures in the system due to timetable changes which is resulting in students being later for school were outlined. It was noted that the school transport scheme currently provides free transport to the nearest school which means some students cannot attend secondary school with their peers from primary school as well as schools traditionally attended by family members. The members agreed that interagency coherence is required and that school transport should not be an economic based decision as the current situation is proving very stressful for parents and students.

Item 10. Impact of short term lets.

Ar moladh Cllr. C. Murphy

Cuidithe ag Cllr. C. Collieran Molloy agus glacadh leis

"That Clare County Council would commission a report into the impacts of short term lets on communities across Clare."

Liam Conneally, Director of Economic Development replied as follows:

"It is recognised that an over-concentration of holiday homes and short term lets in an area can create a high level of vacancy outside of the main tourism season which can have a negative effect on the sustainable development of rural settlements and areas and their communities.

It is therefore essential to achieve a balance between the tourism needs of the County and the need to support the permanent population of settlements and rural areas. The provision and distribution of holiday homes in settlements and rural areas throughout the County, particularly along the Atlantic Coast is monitored through the development management process to ensure that the overall vision of sustainable communities is achieved. The housing policies of the Clare County Development Plan have and continue to be informed by current trends both nationally and locally. In the assessment of planning applications regard is had to policies of the Development Plan and in particular the policy relating to Holiday Homes. The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023, as varied, Objective CDP 4.13 part b) includes a provision that "*in settlements where an oversupply of holiday homes has been identified, namely Kilkee, Liscannor and Querrin, to permit new residential developments for permanent occupancy only*". This is based on 2011 census data whereby these settlements had vacancy rates greater than 50%.

The draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 has developed this policy further and includes Objective CDP5.14, part b) "*In settlements where an overconcentration of holiday homes has been identified, namely Ballyvaughan, Bellharbour, Bunratty,*

Carrigaholt, Doolin, Doonbeg, Fanore, Kilkee, Lahinch, Liscannor, Mountshannon, Querrin and Spanish Point to permit new residential development for permanent occupancy only."

The identification of settlements where new residential developments are permitted for permanent occupancy only is based on analysis of 2016 CSO census data (most recent data until a new census is taken on 3rd April 2022) and local knowledge. In addition, in the countryside throughout the county all permitted new dwellings are required to be for permanent residence only, as a condition of their planning permission. Further analysis on the impact of short term lets on communities around the County should be based on the new data from the forthcoming 2022 Census once it becomes available. This analysis work will be carried out by the forward planning unit as soon as the new census data for Clare becomes available and a report will be prepared for Council."

The elected members felt that clarity is needed in the property letting sector as there is a need to understand the impact on communities, the local economic and social impact as well as the impact on permanent householders. It was noted that short term lets are useful to sustain our tourism product but permanent communities are necessary to provide our tourism product. The members agreed that the data needs to be assessed and it was suggested that this should be carried out by national government.

Item 11. Housing waiting list and application procedure.

Ar moladh Cllr. P. McMahon
Cuidithe ag Cllr. G. Flynn agus glacadh leis

"I ask Clare County Council to examine ways to make the housing waiting list and application procedure more user friendly for people who are not familiar with the system."

Siobhán McNulty, Senior Executive Officer, Social Development Directorate replied as follows:

"Application forms for housing support are widely available with the form itself available on the website and in the offices of Clare County Council. Explanation material is also available in plain english to assist those with literacy issues in the completion of the form. The form is a national template and can only be locally amended to include areas of choice relevant to County Clare.

Staff of the Council are available to support applicants in the completion of the housing application form. In addition, Citizens Information and MABS provide support to many who are seeking access to housing in Clare.

It remains the intention to roll out local workshops for approved housing applicants on Choice Based Letting. This was the intend pre COVID however restrictions prevented such workshops. In the interim staff are available to support users who request support in the use or access to CBL."

The elected members expressed concern in relation to the Choice Based Letting Service as some people do not have access to the technology required and may be

unable to use the system. The members suggested that a housing options workshop be held to assist and inform people about the services available.

Siobhán McNulty, Senior Executive Officer, Social Development informed the members that when Choice Based Letting was introduced it was the intention to invite people to the Municipal District offices and demonstrate the system. Feedback received reveals that some people are struggling to use the system. Ms. McNulty stated that library staff are trained on the system and are available to assist people. Ms. McNulty informed the members that workshops will be held in the libraries and Municipal District Offices to assist people on the use of the Choice Based Letting facility. Ms. McNulty noted that people have to be approved for housing support in order to get access to Choice Based Letting.

Item 12. Repair street lights.

Ar moladh Cllr. S. Talty
Cuidithe ag Cllr. C. Murphy agus glacadh leis

“Across the County, faulty street lights have been taking an unacceptable length of time to be repaired over the past number of months. These lights are critical public infrastructure and when out of service cause a lot of stress and anxiety to the public. Can measures be put in place to reverse this trend and return to more acceptable repair turnaround times?”

John Leahy, Senior Engineer, Physical Development Directorate replied as follows:

“In recent months turnaround times for public lighting repairs have taken longer than normal. We have raised this issue with our public lighting maintenance contractor. Recently there have been supply issues in relation to public lighting component parts and also Covid related issues. The contractor has assured us that the supply issue has been resolved and that they will increase staff numbers with a view to closing out the backlog in the next few weeks.”

The elected members felt that the time taken to repair public lighting recently is unacceptable and acknowledged that the contractors providing this service have not been adequately resourced this winter. The members agreed that public lighting is very important as it provides a sense of security for people during darkness.

John Leahy, Senior Engineer, Physical Development Directorate addressed the meeting and acknowledged that there have been issues with repair times recently and that this has been widespread in the system. Mr. Leahy stated that the issue with supplies on component parts has been resolved as well as staff issues and that the return time will now improve as the allocation in Clare has increased.

Item 13. Staff updates for elected members.

Ar moladh Cllr. P. Murphy
Cuidithe ag Cllr. D. McGettigan agus glacadh leis

“That the elected members of Clare County Council receive regular updates (monthly bulletin or inclusion in the Monthly Management Report) from H.R. on recruitment and interdepartmental transferring of staff”.

Noeleen Fitzgerald, Director of Finance and Support Services replied as follows:

“The monthly Management Report provides details of all recruitment competitions managed by Clare County Council without referring to any individual staff member’s detail. General information is provided on advertised posts and the stages of the recruitment process i.e. eligibility, shortlisting and final interviews and whether the competitions are open or confirmed or both.

Within the Council on an ongoing basis arising from the outcome of recruitment competitions, retirements, promotions, leavers etc., there can be staff movement within directorates and across sections. This also arises in accordance with the Council’s mobility policy which affords staff the opportunity to progress in their careers gaining experience across the services provided by this council.

It is acknowledged that it is good practice to ensure that there is an awareness of significant movement of staff to elected members and management across sections and in this regard, Human Resources will ensure that any significant movements of staff continue to be communicated to all the members in a timely manner as we have done in the past i.e. re-structuring at Municipal District level, restructuring of Directorates etc. Details of staff by section can be available on the councillor extranet site.”

The members welcomed the commitment to keep them informed of personnel changes.

P. Dowling, Chief Executive stated that there is constant staff turnover at the moment and that there will be continuous change in the next few months due to the delivery of recent Government policies. Mr. Dowling proposed that a specific workshop be held after summer to update the elected members on these areas.

Item 14. SVP food appeal.

Ar moladh Cllr. A. Norton
Cuidithe ag Cllr. D. McGettigan agus glacadh leis

“Can I ask Clare County Council to get involved in a SVP Food Appeal before the break-up of the summer holidays and again coming up to the Christmas period. I think for councillors and staff it would be a great initiative to work together on, due to the difficulties some families are facing at the moment.”

The members felt that this is an opportune initiative to enable Councillors and staff to unite in supporting people who need help due to difficulties being experienced.

Item 15. Grant for people who build their own houses.

Ar moladh Cllr. P.J. Kelly
Cuidithe ag Cllr. J. Garrihy agus glacadh leis

“That Clare County Council calls on the Government to introduce a €30k grant for people who build their own houses.”

The elected members observed that people building their own homes are incurring excessive additional costs due to VAT on materials, income tax on labour, excise duty and profit. The members stated that these are the people offering a lifeline for rural Ireland and felt that it is unfair to expect them to pay these additional costs. The members agreed that incentives should be put in place for people building in rural areas in order to sustain rural communities.

Item 16. Proposed legislation to criminalise “Stalking” in Ireland.

Ar moladh Cllr. C. Colleran Molloy
Cuidithe ag Cllr. D. McGettigan agus glacadh leis

“That Clare County Council communicate with the Minister for Justice to express its support for the proposed legislation to criminalise "Stalking" in Ireland.”

The members agreed that the efforts led by Senator Lisa Chambers should be supported and that legislation should be enacted to criminalise stalking in Ireland.

Item 17. Invite National Broadband Ireland to Council Meeting.

Ar moladh Cllr. P. Hayes
Cuidithe ag Cllr. P. Burke agus glacadh leis

“I propose that Clare County Council invite National Broadband Ireland (NBI) to a Council meeting to update us on the current rollout of Broadband across the County.”

The elected members felt that it is imperative that National Broadband Ireland be invited to attend a Council meeting to provide an update on the broadband programme as this is a key element for rural communities.

Item 18. Thank covid helpline personnel.

Ar moladh Cllr. D. McGettigan
Cuidithe ag Cllr. G. Flynn agus glacadh leis

“Now that we seem to be coming out of restrictions and a sense of normality seems to be returning.

I am calling on Clare County Council to officially thank those volunteers, staff, community groups, garda etc. who very quickly came on board with the covid helpline.

The helpline was set up very effectively and efficiently through Clare County Council, through this we learned of people who were not only vulnerable but did not have access to a support system in ordinary times.

Now in some cases a long-lasting friendship or buddy system has been built where those in need can call someone in their area for help or just a chat.

It was amazing to see the community spirit alive and well in Clare from the council, community groups, the Gardai and individual volunteers who signed up quickly to keep people safe and relaxed in their homes by doing their shopping or picking up prescriptions.

Now is the time to acknowledge this great coming together.”

The members acknowledged that during the Covid-19 pandemic the helpline was set up very quickly and worked very effectively. It was noted that the “buddy system” is still providing ongoing support to people as a result of this.

P. Dowling, Chief Executive addressed the meeting and stated that a national commemoration for lives lost during Covid-19 and to honour personnel who played a role in assisting during the pandemic will take place during the weekend of 18-20 March. Mr. Dowling stated that each local authority will co-ordinate a local event. Mr. Dowling informed the members that a tree planting ceremony will take place on Sunday, 20th March and that this event will be promoted and invitations will issue. Mr. Dowling stated that the Municipal Districts will be encouraged to host future events locally and that details will issue when finalised.

Item 19. Driver Licence Service.

Ar moladh Cllr. G. Flynn

Cuidithe ag Cllrs. P. O’Gorman, M. Begley, J. Crowe, P. McMahon, P.J. Ryan agus D. McGettigan agus glacadh leis

“We are calling on the Minister for Transport and the Government to urgently address the many issues and problems experienced by members of the public in Clare when accessing the delivery of Driver Licences. The location of the Road Safety Authority branch office in the shopping centre in Ennis is proving very difficult to gain access and members of the public find the service delivery very poor from a customer engagement and manner of service. A substantial amount of Clare Residents living in Towns and Villages bordering Limerick find that their new address has them in Limerick. The statement issued by the RSA in 2013 claimed that the New Licence would be the ‘Best in Class’ I would suggest a geography lesson would be in order for this body.

The local authority in Clare delivered a very professional and courteous service up to 2013 but unfortunately the new arrangements with the Road Safety Authority is not satisfactory and requires a root and branch reform or else the returning of the service to local authorities that are best placed and have the capability to deliver this very important service.”

The elected members noted that the driving licence service was provided by Clare County Council staff in a courteous and professional manner for many years and that in January 2013 the service was moved to the National Driving Licence Service. The members provided details of constituents experiences when using this essential service and felt that the standard of service being provided in the NDLS office is not user friendly and does not accommodate elderly applicants. The members felt that

this is a service that should be provided by local authorities as many people are unable to renew their drivers licence online.

The members requested that this notice of motion be circulated to all local authorities.

P. Dowling, Chief Executive suggested that the commentary narrative of the notice motion be amended to reflect the experiences of older people using the service.

Cllr. G. Flynn stated that the concerns raised impacts all people and did not focus on older people.

Item 20. National Ambulance Service.

Ar moladh Cllr. L. Grant

Cuidithe ag Cllr. C. Murphy agus glacadh leis

“I am asking Clare County Council to write to the Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly and ask him to take urgent action in order to address the turnaround times and response times of the National Ambulance service. Average ambulance turnaround times at hospitals are almost twice the national target and response times to critical incidents are no way near good enough.

The National Ambulance Service needs to run a media campaign to educate the public so that if a call is not serious or life threatening that they consider other options such as a GP, Minor Injury Clinic, pharmacist or self-care.

There is also a massive problem with recruitment in the National Ambulance service. This January the national ambulance service attempted to recruit a class of 96 paramedics but only 6 people accepted a place on the course. With so few paramedics being recruited it’s likely that things are going to get worse before they get better.”

The elected members expressed concern in relation to the waiting times being experienced by people when an ambulance is required. It was noted that ambulances are being forced to wait twice the average time outside hospitals due to backlogs within the hospital system. Concerns were also raised in relation to ambulances being outside the county when required and the recent unsuccessful attempt to recruit ambulance paramedics was discussed. The members suggested that a media campaign be launched to educate the public on when to request an ambulance. It was noted that this issue has been raised by the Councillors on the Regional Health Forum.

Item 21. Proposed transfer of Shannon Heritage sites.

Ar moladh Cllr. P.J. Ryan

Cuidithe ag Cllr. G. Flynn agus glacadh leis

“That this Council requests an urgent meeting of an Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, and Chief Executive Pat Dowling, to discuss the financial implications of the proposed transfer of Shannon Heritage sites to Clare County Council and to ensure the Taoiseach has all the relevant information and facts surrounding the proposed transfer”.

The elected members agreed that it is imperative that a meeting between Clare County Council executive and members and An Taoiseach take place to discuss the takeover of Shannon Heritage sites in County Clare. The members agreed that financial aid is essential as the financial burden of this takeover cannot be placed on the people of County Clare and its rate payers. The concerns being raised by Shannon Heritage staff were outlined by the members. The members voiced their support for the workers and agreed that clarity is needed in relation to their employment and the future workings of Shannon Heritage as there are countywide implications involved in this proposed takeover.

P. Dowling, Chief Executive addressed the meeting and thanked the elected members for their support on this matter. Mr. Dowling stated that a team has been assigned and that an extensive tranche of due diligence has been undertaken to date and that the services of Human Resources, legal and others have been employed in this regard. Mr. Dowling stated that he has met the staff on two occasions and would like to believe their future will be maintained if they choose to stay. Mr. Dowling informed the meeting that a request for financial assistance has issued to Government in writing and explained that the management of the sites would cost 20% of the Councils total annual budget and that Clare County Council cannot and will not absorb this financial burden. Mr. Dowling informed the members that a once off support on current and capital expenditure is vital before legal documents can be signed.

Mr. Dowling stated that he is personally committed to the takeover of the product and that Clare County Council has the ability to deliver and expand the product into the future.

Mr. Dowling acknowledged that there is a large suite of tourism products across the county and that government assistance is required in order to undertake this product in the first instance.

It was proposed by Cllr. T. O'Brien, seconded by Cllr. J. Cooney and agreed by the members present that the time be extended to 7.00 p.m. in order to complete the business of the meeting.

Item 22. Extra Garda resources in villages and small towns.

Ar moladh Cllr. J. Crowe

Cuidithe ag Cllr. D. McGettigan agus glacadh leis

“I am requesting that the Minister for Justice, Helen Mc Entee in conjunction with the Garda Commissioner, Drew Harris look into providing extra Gardai for villages and small towns especially community guards that can work on the ground with local organisations, businesses and people. These community guards could liaise with Chief Superintendent Sean Colleran in the Clare Division”.

The members expressed disappointment in relation to the overall number of Gardai based in the county which has resulted in the closure of garda stations.

The elected members mentioned the benefits of the work carried out by Community Guards in supporting and engaging with community groups and felt that their presence will play a key role in protecting communities going forward.

Item 23. Irish Water.

Ar moladh Cllr. J. Killeen
Cuidithe ag Cllr. P.J. Ryan agus glacadh leis

“We call on Irish Water to attend a face to face public meeting with Clare County Councillors and Oireachtas Members on the issues of water extraction and waste water system provision in County Clare.”

The members noted that Irish Water has extended the statutory consultation period on the draft Regional Water Resources Plan, Eastern and Midlands (RWRP-EM) and associated SEA Environmental Report and Natura Impact Statement (NIS). Irish Water is now inviting feedback on the Plan and associated environmental documents, published for statutory consultation on Tuesday the 14 December, until Friday 25 March 2022. The members felt that an in-person meeting with Irish Water is necessary in order to gain knowledge of what is being proposed so that decisions can be made based on knowledge and interest.

The members welcomed the fact that an in-person Irish Water briefing on the Draft Regional Water Resource Plan, East and Midlands will be held on 10th March, 2022.

The members appealed to all Councillors to attend and meet and engage in order to achieve the optimum outcome from the briefing.

Item 24. Comhfhreagras/Correspondence.

Cllr. G. Flynn referred to correspondence dated 25th February, 2022 from the Minister for Finance in relation to Local Property Tax and expressed disappointment with the negative response received.

Correspondence.

The following correspondence was circulated with the agenda:

1. Correspondence dated 21st February, 2022 from An Post in relation to the Customs issue.
2. Correspondence dated 25th February, 2022 from the Minister for Finance in relation to Local Property Tax.
3. Correspondence dated 18th February, 2022 from the Department of Transport in relation to European Hubs to promote the West of Ireland Tourism product.
4. Correspondence dated 17th February, 2022 from the Department of Health concerning therapy services.
5. Correspondence dated 21st February, 2022 from the Office of the Minister for Social Protection regarding consideration on bringing back the Summer Jobs Scheme.

6. Correspondence dated 21st February, 2022 from Irish Water in relation to the Regional National Water Resources Plan.
7. Resolution circulated by Sligo County Council in relation to housing adaptation grant and older persons grant scheme.
8. Resolution circulated by Kerry County Council in relation to granting of planning permission for LNG infrastructure in Ireland.
9. Details of LAMA Spring Training Seminar taking place in Hotel Kilkenny, College Road, Kilkenny on 5th – 7th April, 2022.
10. AILG Elected members training webinar 2 entitled “An overview of the housing for all” taking place on Friday, 4th March, 2022.

Conferences.

Reports on Seminars/Conferences attended.

With regard to seminars/conferences attended, reports completed in accordance with Section 142 of the Local Government Act 2001 were made available at the meeting.

AILG Elected Members February 2022 Module 1 Training entitled “Elected Members Personal Safety and Risk Assessment” being held in the Clayton Silver Springs Hotel, Co. Cork on 19th February, 2022.

The Meetings Administrator informed the Members that the estimated average cost per Councillor attending this Conference was €256.12 including conference fee of €65.

It was agreed that Cllrs. P. McMahon, C. Colleran Molloy, P.J. Kelly and J. Cooney attend this Conference.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____
Riarthóir Cruinnithe

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Date: _____