

Minutes of the October Monthly Meeting of Clare County Council

Location: Held in the Council Chamber, Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare and via MS Teams

On: Monday, 10th October, 2022

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Present:

Councillors

M. Howard, C. Colleran Molloy, P. Murphy, A. Norton, P. Daly, J. Cooney, M. Begley, P.J. Ryan, P. McMahon, G. Flynn, D. McGettigan, S. Talty, J. Killeen, J. Garrihy, P.J. Kelly, B. Chambers, G. Keating, C. Murphy.

Officials

- Mr. Pat Dowling, Chief Executive.
- Ms. Ann Reynolds, Meetings Administrator.
- Ms. Margaret O'Rourke, Assistant Staff Officer.
- Ms. Anne Haugh, Director of Social Development.
- Mr. Liam Conneally, Director of Economic Development.
- Mr. Leonard Cleary, Director of Rural Development.
- Dr. Carmel Kirby, Director of Physical Development.
- Ms. Noeleen Fitzgerald, Director of Finance and Support Services.
- Mr. Jason Murphy, A/Director of Service, Ukrainian Response Team.
- Mr. Seán Lenihan, Senior Engineer, Physical Development.

Present via MS Teams:

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

Apologies:

Cathaoirleach, Cllr. T. O'Brien and Cllr. J. Crowe.

The Leas Cathaoirleach, Cllr. A. Norton presided.

Votes of sympathy.

At the outset Leas Cathaoirleach, Cllr. A. Norton extended sympathy to the people of Creeslough, Co. Donegal following the terrible tragedy which occurred there on Friday evening. The elected members present were unanimous in their support and remembered the people in the community and the people in hospital. Respects were paid to the emergency services personnel. Cllr. M. Howard proposed that a minutes silence be observed as a mark of respect. This was seconded by Leas Cathaoirleach, Cllr. A. Norton and agreed by the members present. A minutes silence was then held.

A vote of sympathy was also extended to the Flynn family, Miltown Malbay on the death of Michael Flynn R.I.P.

Suspension of Standing Orders request.

Leas Cathaoirleach, Cllr. A. Norton informed the meeting that she had received a suspension of standing orders request signed by Cllr. G. Flynn and Cllr. P.J. Ryan which read as follows:

“I am calling on the Cathaoirleach of the day to suspend standing orders and allow a debate on the very important and urgent issues concerning the taking over by Clare County Council of Shannon Heritage sites. I will be requesting the Chief Executive Officer to expedite this transfer and if required take out a loan to fund the measures required as the current situation and approach is of great concern to the public and especially the many workers in the Shannon Heritage sites. Clare County Council have been presented with a great opportunity to show confidence in the former top visitor attraction and in view of the high intake of rates and property tax from the immediate area I believe some investment from Clare County Council is well overdue.”

Leas Cathaoirleach, Cllr. A. Norton advised that this item would be raised before the notice of motions Item No. 13.

Item 1: Minutes of Council Meetings.

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

“That the Minutes of the September Meeting of Clare County Council held on 12th September, 2022 be adopted and signed.”

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

“That the Minutes of the adjourned September Meeting of Clare County Council held on 19th September, 2022 be adopted and signed.”

Item 2: Matters Arising.

Cllr. P.J. Kelly referred to Item No. 20 which was adopted at the September meeting held on 12th September whereby it was agreed that legal opinion would be provided on the proposal to limit the amount of housing development in the county. Cllr. Kelly noted that this legal opinion has not been received four weeks later. Cllr. Kelly requested that this legal opinion be obtained from the County Solicitor.

P. Dowling, Chief Executive assured Cllr. Kelly that this legal opinion would be expedited.

Cllr. C. Colleran Molloy sought clarity on the validity of the urgent motion proposed as it contains two signatures.

Ann Reynolds, Meetings Administrator informed the meeting that it was presented as a request to suspend Standing Orders to allow a debate to proceed and not as an urgent motion, and that the Cathaoirleach may allow the motion.

Cllr. S. Talty referred to Standing Order No. 69 which states that

“Standing Orders may be suspended only at a meeting of the Council whilst not less than one half of the total membership of the Council is present and then only with the consent of at least two thirds of the Members present and voting.”

A number of members agreed that the motion should not proceed without the appropriate consent and also that it was not appropriate for this discussion to proceed until such time as the negotiations with Government have concluded.

Cllr. G. Flynn stated that he felt that this debate was out of order as the request was seen and accepted by the Leas Cathaoirleach. Cllr. G. Flynn stated that he felt that this is a critical issue for consideration in the context of the ongoing preparations for budget 2023.

P. Dowling, Chief Executive addressed the meeting and stated that it is important to deal with the substantive issue of concern. Mr. Dowling assured the members that the Council executive is making every effort to achieve a positive outcome to expedite the transfer of Shannon Heritage sites to Clare County Council. Mr. Dowling urged caution regarding public debate on this issue as there are ongoing deliberations taking place and that more time is required. Mr. Dowling advised against taking a premature decision as it could prejudice further action and may not be helpful to the ongoing moral of the employees involved. Mr. Dowling re-iterated that this is a matter of great importance that is being taken seriously and undertook to report back to the elected members when an exact decision has been made. Mr. Dowling clarified that the security of the employees of Shannon Heritage is not at stake as their jobs are secure in the employment of Shannon Heritage and in future may be secure in the employment of Clare County Council.

The elected members raised queries in relation to the ongoing negotiations with the Department and if there is potential for funding to be allocated to Clare County Council for the takeover of the Shannon Heritage Sites. The members noted that there are Shannon Heritage sites in West, North and East Clare as well as in the Shannon area. The elected members agreed that Clare County Council must continue to work with government and explore every option to try to secure funding and progress the takeover when funding is available as this would be prudent in relation to the financial position of the Council. The members also agreed that every Councillor is concerned about

Shannon Heritage and felt that negotiations should not be discussed in a public forum at this time.

P. Dowling, Chief Executive informed the meeting that the Council executive have worked hard to prepare due diligence and that this is a serious issue for all concerned. Mr. Dowling undertook to continue to work on this and that it will be good for County Clare if a positive outcome is achieved.

Leas Cathaoirleach, Cllr. A. Norton stated that this is a sensitive issue and felt that the executive should continue to work on a solution and revert back with an update in due course.

Cllr. G. Flynn stated that he will continue to debate this and put pressure on the Chief Executive to get the necessary finances.

Item 3: Correspondence/Comhfhreagras.

Cllr. P. Hayes stated that he wished to support the motion circulated by Tipperary County Council calling on the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to provide significant additional funding to Local Authorities in 2023 having regard to the unprecedented levels of inflation, spiraling energy costs, rising construction costs, enhanced payroll commitment, impact of the cost of living on other revenue streams such as rents and rates.

The following correspondence was circulated with the agenda:

1. Correspondence dated 19th September, 2022 from the Department of Rural and Community Development in relation to carrying out the necessary excavation works to recover the remains at the invincibles yard at Kilmainham Gaol.
2. Correspondence dated 27th September, 2022 from the Department of Health in relation to funding for IVF treatment.
3. Correspondence from Deputy Michael McNamara in relation to Ennis Injury Unit.
4. Correspondence from Deputy Joe Carey in relation to Ennis Injury Unit.
5. Correspondence dated 3rd October, 2022 from the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage in relation to wastewater infrastructure.
6. Correspondence dated 3rd October, 2022 from the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage in relation to the multi annual rural water programme.
7. Correspondence dated 4th October, 2022 from the Minister of State Burke's Office, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in relation to An Bord Pleanala.
8. Resolution circulated by Tipperary County Council in relation to funding to local authorities in 2023.
9. Resolution circulated by Sligo County Council in relation to audit of the availability of disabled parking places.

10. Resolution circulated by Sligo County Council in relation to the introduction of a windfall tax on energy companies excessive profits.
11. Resolution circulated by Mayo County Council in relation to first time buyers derelict property grant.
12. Resolution circulated by Limerick City & County Council in relation to global grain shortage.

Item 4: Minutes of Municipal District Meetings.

a. Ar moladh Cllr. J. Cooney
Cuidithe ag Cllr. P. Hayes agus glacadh leis

“That the Minutes of the Killaloe Municipal District Meeting held on the 20th July, 2022 be noted.”

b. Ar moladh Cllr. M. Begley
Cuidithe ag Cllr. P.J. Ryan agus glacadh leis

“That the Minutes of the Shannon Municipal District Meeting held on the 26th July, 2022 be noted.”

c. Ar moladh Cllr. B. Chambers
Cuidithe ag Cllr. G. Keating agus glacadh leis

“That the Minutes of the West Clare Municipal District Meeting held on the 6th July, 2022 be noted.”

Item 5: Minutes of S.P.C. Meetings.

a. Ar moladh Cllr. G. Keating
Cuidithe ag Cllr. S. Talty agus glacadh leis

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

b. Ar moladh Cllr. G. Flynn
Cuidithe ag Cllr. J. Garrihy agus glacadh leis

“That the minutes of the Social Development S.P.C. meeting held on 8th June, 2022 be noted”.

Cllr. G. Flynn expressed disappointment that he did not receive notification in relation to the removal of Sports and Recreation from the Social Development S.P.C.

Item 6: Minutes of the Corporate Policy Group Meetings.

The members noted the minutes of the meeting held on 5th September, 2022 as presented.

Item 7: 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. D. McGettigan expressed concern in relation to the number of homeless presentations and the capacity on waiting lists.

Anne Haugh, Director of Social Development addressed the meeting and stated that homeless numbers continue to rise despite ongoing efforts to exit people from emergency accommodation. Ms. Haugh stated that Clare County Council is constantly challenged for available emergency accommodation due to the demand for accommodation generally.

Cllr. P. Hayes referred to the recent revaluation programme and suggested that more information be provided as there is confusion and disquiet among rate payers. Cllr. Hayes felt that a workshop for rate payers would be beneficial.

N. Fitzgerald, Director of Finance and Support Services addressed the meeting in order to clarify the rate evaluation in Clare. Ms. Fitzgerald stated that this is a project that rebalances commercial rate income of all commercial rate properties in the county and that it will become effective in 2024.

Ms. Fitzgerald continued that the Valuation Office have completed the exercise in Clare and have issued certificates to businesses. Ms. Fitzgerald stated that the figure being quoted to ratepayers is the valuation of the property and is not the commercial rate liability. Ms. Fitzgerald informed the meeting that that figure must be multiplied by 0.25 or divided by 4 to get an indicative figure of what the commercial rate liability could be. Ms. Fitzgerald noted that over 60% of commercial rates will drop, some remain the same and some will increase and that there is a 40 day window for ratepayers to engage in the process. Ms. Fitzgerald stated that the Valuation Office will share figures with Clare County Council in September 2023 and that workshops have been organised and staff have been engaging with rate payers.

Some elected members expressed annoyance in relation to the format used by the Valuation Office as it has caused undue concern for rate payers. It was felt that this information should have been outlined by the Valuation Office in the correspondence issued to rate payers.

Item 8: Disposal of property at Block B, Ballymaley Business Park, Gort Road, Ennis, Co. Clare pursuant to Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001 and Section 211 of the Planning & Development Act, 2000.

Report dated 29th September, 2022 from Liam Conneally, Director of Economic Development was circulated with the agenda together with map. The report states that it is proposed to dispose of a building at Block B, Ballymaley Business Park, Gort Road, Ennis, Co. Clare subject to the conditions as set out in the notice served on the members dated 29th September, 2022.

Ar moladh Cllr. A. Norton

Cuidithe ag Cllr. C. Colleran Molloy 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 Block B, Ballymaley Business Park, Gort Road, Ennis, Co. Clare subject to the conditions as set out in the notice served on the members dated 29th September, 2022.”

Item 9: Schedule date for Budget Meeting.

It was agreed that the Budget meeting will take place on Friday, 25th November, 2022 at 3:00 p.m. having been proposed by Cllr. P.J. Ryan, seconded by Cllr. C. Murphy and agreed by the members present.

Item 10: Ennis 2040 DAC nomination.

Report dated 3rd October, 2022 from Liam Conneally, Director of Economic Development was circulated with the agenda. The report states that the Ennis 2040 Designated Activity Company (DAC), was established in December 2020 to deliver a programme of targeted investment and property development in line with the objectives set out in the Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy.

At the June 2021 Clare County Council monthly meeting Cllr. Johnny Flynn was nominated to sit on the Ennis 2040 DAC Board and contributed meaningfully to the work of the Board until his resignation in September 2022.

The report states that as a result of Cllr. J. Flynn’s resignation there is now one vacancy to be filled on the Ennis 2040 DAC Board and nomination for his replacement is now requested.

It was proposed by Cllr. C. Colleran Molloy that Cllr. M. Howard be appointed to the Ennis 2040 DAC Board. This was seconded by Cllr. J. Flynn and agreed by the members present.

Item 11: Overdraft Facility in 2023.

Report dated 27th September, 2022 from Noeleen Fitzgerald, Director of Finance and Support Services was circulated with the agenda. The report states that an overdraft facility is required to be in place for the twelve-month period commencing January 2023 to December 2023 in line with Departmental guidelines. The members approved an overdraft facility up to December 2022 at the October 2021 Council meeting up to a maximum of €20 million. It is proposed to seek approval for a

reduced overdraft limit of €20 million for the calendar year January 2023 until December 2023.

The report continues that the Council incurs a cost only when the overdraft facility is utilised as no cost arises by having the facility in place and the availability of the overdraft facility is deemed necessary in the current climate with unprecedented inflationary costs.

Cash flow continues to be reviewed on a daily basis and any overdraft facility will only be utilised to the extent that it is required.

The report noted that Circular Fin 03/2009 requires Local Authorities to maintain a neutral impact on the GGB - the net bank position at the end of 2022 on the councils capital account should be similar to the net position at the end of 2023. This in effect means that this council cannot commit to incurring expenditure on projects where the funding has not been identified and secured.

Ar moladh Cllr. G. Keating
Cuidithe ag Cllr. J. Garrihy agus glacadh leis

“That pursuant to the provisions of Section 106 of the Local Government Act, 2001 Clare County Council hereby approves of borrowing up to a maximum of €20 million by way of overdraft facility from the Council’s Treasurer for the year ending 31st December, 2023.”

Item 12: Ennis 2040 update – presentation by Liam Conneally, Director of Economic Development and Kevin Corrigan, Chief Operations Officer, Ennis 2040 DAC.

Liam Conneally, Director of Economic Development addressed the meeting and stated that Ennis 2040 DAC was established over one year ago and he referred to discussion held in the Council Chamber regarding its entity and capital given to the company by Clare County Council. Mr. Conneally stated that Kevin Corrigan, Chief Operations Officer and Susan Lehane, Office Manager have been appointed and that a considerable work programme has been undertaken in that 12 months. Mr. Conneally continued that he had indicated at the time of set up of Ennis 2040 DAC that a report would be given to the members of Clare County Council on a regular basis to highlight the work that has been delivered as part of the work of the Ennis 2040 DAC.

Leas Cathaoirleach, Cllr. A. Norton introduced Kevin Corrigan, Chief Operations Officer, Ennis 2040 DAC to the meeting.

Mr. Kevin Corrigan, Chief Operations Officer, Ennis 2040 DAC addressed the meeting and provided a progress update on Ennis 2040.

Mr. Corrigan outlined the process involved in the set-up phase which included the Ennis 2040 launch, move into offices, Government systems, reporting, HR and financial systems set up and operational and the recruitment of staff. Mr. Corrigan referred to the strategic objectives for Ennis and County Clare as a location for investment; Ennis to be Ireland’s First Climate Adaptive Town, Ennis as an Accessible Place of Quality and Ireland’s First ‘10 minute town’. Mr. Corrigan stated that the overall goal is that there will be 37,000+ people living in Ennis by 2040 and create 5,000+ net additional jobs in Ennis by 2040.

Mr. Corrigan provided details of the Spatial Implementation Plan which includes nine transformational sites across Ennis and Environs together with progress on original projects, new projects and progress on assessing the sites for the next phase of development. Mr. Corrigan outlined details of the short-term goals from 2022 – 2026 which include planning application to be lodged for town centre developments in 2023, funding model to be secured for all developments, construction to commence on first project in 2024, masterplan/design of Post Office field and wetlands to commence in 2023 and construction of Post Office field in 2024 – 2025.

Mr. Corrigan informed the meeting that the following are the medium-term goals from 2026 – 2031: 4,000m² mixed use on Francis Street, 2 other town centre sites to be developed for office/mixed use development, phase 1 construction wetlands site, construction of Post Office field 2024 – 2025.

Mr. Corrigan stated that the following are the long-term goals 2031 - 2040: stimulate private sector development, additional town centre developments, phase 2 construction wetlands site, transformation of town centre to the 10 minute town model.

Mr. Corrigan stated that there is €100m+ projects to be delivered before 2027. Mr. Corrigan continued that the funding models being put in place for project development include €10m seed capital, URDF and EU funding. Mr. Corrigan stated that significant data, business cases and cost benefit analysis is being put in place to support the projects and town developments.

Mr. Corrigan acknowledged the support received to date from all Clare County Council directorates especially economic, finance and physical development together with the Ennis Municipal District Councillors and Ennis Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Conneally thanked Mr. Corrigan for the detailed presentation and expressed thanks to both Kevin and Susan for delivering a significant workload and he also thanked the Directors of Ennis 2040 DAC who have given so much time to advise and support the work being done and for their contribution to Ennis and County Clare.

The elected members thanked Mr. Corrigan for the positive presentation and felt that this project is very much immersed in the futuristic vision in Clare's county town. The members also felt that it is a very successful model that can be extrapolated out throughout the county. The members expressed appreciation of the short, medium and long-term aspirations of the Ennis 2040 DAC. The members felt that public representatives need to work to ensure public sector engagement as a positive energy and professional environment will bode well for Ennis going forward and that a strong centre will bode well for the rest of the county.

Mr. Corrigan responded and thanked the members for their comments. Mr. Corrigan stated that the high-quality public realm and street enhancement work being undertaken by Ennis 2040 DAC and Ennis Municipal District will provide a curated town centre which will be a positive experience for locals and tourists alike.

L. Conneally, Director of Economic Development informed the members that Ennis 2040 DAC is working closely with Ennis Chamber of Commerce in relation to the future marketing of Ennis Town which will focus on the different parts of the economy in conjunction with the business community of Ennis.

Leas Cathaoirleach, Cllr. A. Norton thanked Mr. Corrigan and her Council colleagues for their engagement and wished Ennis 2040 DAC every success in the years ahead

and that she looked forward to seeing investment in Ennis which will benefit the whole county.

Item 13. Garda Vetting process.

Ar moladh Cllr. L. Grant
Cuidithe ag Cllr. J. Garrihy agus glacadh leis

"Call on Clare County Council to write to the National Vetting Bureau and the Minister for Justice asking them to reform the Garda vetting process. Often individuals are having to undergo the vetting process repeatedly in order to be vetted for multiple organisations. This is adding unnecessary bureaucracy to the lives of volunteers and volunteer organisations.

There should be a more efficient process where individuals need only be vetted once, and this would be able to cover multiple organisations. The current process is cumbersome and is deterring individuals from volunteering."

The elected members complimented the willingness of Irish people to volunteer assistance to various organisations and felt that the process for Garda Vetting for volunteers needs to be streamlined and simplified. The members noted and respected the need to have a safe environment for children and vulnerable people.

Item 14: County Development Plan.

Ar moladh Cllr. P.J. Kelly
Cuidithe ag Cllr. J. Killeen

"That landowners who possess a Department of Agriculture herd number be recognised as and treated as farmers in the County Development Plan."

Liam Conneally, Director of Economic Development replied as follows:

"The making of a Development Plan is a statutory process as set out in the planning legislation. The inclusion/omission of specific planning policy objectives must be considered as part of that statutory process. The next opportunity for formal consideration by the Members of the Draft County Development Plan is the consideration of the Chief Executive's Report which was issued to the Members in July 2022. In this regard the most appropriate forum to address the above matter is within the Draft Clare County Development Plan plan-making process."

Cllr. P.J. Kelly advised that this notice of motion was submitted as a declaration of intent and that he intends to submit a formal intent in the context of the County Development Plan. Cllr. Kelly referred to legislation approved at national level which is now causing problems for Councillors and the people they represent. Cllr. Kelly stated that people are not being recognised as farmers if their holding is less than 50 acres. Cllr. Kelly felt that these people have status which needs to be recognised as this will impact on the population trend in rural Clare.

The elected members agreed that in order to get planning permission people will have to demonstrate economic need and referred to the hectare level viable to planners. It

was felt that it is difficult to prove viability of farming on economic grounds as the income from small farming units may not be extensive.

The members acknowledged the work done at workshop level and the extensive negotiation between elected members and planning staff.

Cllr. P. Burke recalled that the members had agreed at workshops that 12.5 hectares was the viable land holding and therefore this discussion was irrelevant.

L. Conneally, Director of Economic Development stated that this has been the subject of significant debate at County Development Plan workshop level and that significant work and research has been undertaken to inform debate on this. Mr. Conneally stated that after considerable discussion it has been agreed among the elected members that 12.5 hectares is the viable land holding.

P. Dowling, Chief Executive informed the members that the County Development Plan must be adopted in totality within the prescribed timeframe and that items cannot be pre-adopted in advance.

Item 15: Student card schemes.

Ar moladh Cllr. M. Howard

Cuidithe ag Cllr. C. Colleran Molloy agus glacadh leis

“Clare County Council calls on the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris, to support the inclusion of all full-time participants of Apprenticeship Programmes in all Student Card Schemes.”

The elected members outlined the value and improvement in apprenticeship programmes and felt that it is unfair that these full-time students who earn the minimum wage are dis-advantaged in terms of student card schemes. The members agreed that all students should be treated fairly and receive equal benefits.

Item 16: Transport plan for County Clare.

Ar moladh Cllr. J. Killeen

Cuidithe ag Cllr. D. McGettigan agus glacadh leis

“We call on Clare County Council to undertake/co-operate on the development of an integrated, comprehensive transport plan for the County for the benefit of tourists and locals alike to include rail, bus, cars and walking routes.”

Leonard Cleary, Director of Rural Development replied as follows:

“The challenges raised in this motion relate to various business/service areas of the Council, including Roads, Transport, Tourism, Community, Economic, Planning, Environment, Municipal District, Finance etc. The challenges also relate to services of other statutory agencies including N.T.A., N.R.A., Department of Transport, Fáilte Ireland, Gardai as well as the private industry transport sector.

Rural Directorate and West Clare MD

Under **Strategic Priority no. 8** of the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 – there is a need to:

“Continue to work with local stakeholders to identify and address key traffic management concerns within North-West Clare (primarily the UNESCO Global Geopark area) and in particular to, identify and implement appropriate transportation management initiatives that will support the implementation of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience Development Plan, including the potential development of 'park and ride' hubs to service The Cliffs”.

The above Transport/Traffic strategic priority is much wider than Tourism and the Cliffs of Moher alone. There is a need to involve all relevant departments across Clare County Council in planning for a solution to this challenge.

This was emphasised at a public consultation meeting held under the remit of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP), which is led by Fáilte Ireland and was held on the 1st March 2021.

The meeting discussed:

- Research on transport and traffic already undertaken.
- Short-term wins in terms of early solutions
- Long-term solutions requiring research, design and development.
- The need for collaboration and partnership by all state agencies, local authority and the community.

There is an expected response awaited from all public agencies from this public consultation meeting as to the next steps that are to be undertaken.

Therefore, the proposal in this Motion to develop a Transport Plan for the county for locals and tourists is very welcome but it would need to involve a cross-directorate Steering Committee with Elected Members and public consultation input.

This is a significant piece of work requiring staff capacity and external specialist expertise and research. It would need to be programmed into the work programme of various Directorates and state agencies in 2023 and budgets identified.”

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

“Clare County Council have been engaging with the National Transport Authority (NTA) to develop a Transportation Strategy for the County for some time. The NTA’s expertise in this area is vitally important for its development and implementation. The NTA have advised that Ennis Town & its Environs should be Clare’s priority because of its stature as the County Town and its importance and significance to County Clare. In this regard the current focus is the development of an **Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) for Ennis Town, and its Environs**. The ABTA for Ennis is a significant transportation study and will incorporate multimodal forms of transport including rail, bus, car and Active Travel. A significant stakeholder consultation will be a crucial part of the development of the Ennis & Environs ABTA, which will include the Elected Members, the public, many of Clare County Council’s directorates and departments and Municipal Districts.

It is anticipated thereafter that the development of **Mobility Plans** for Clare’s towns and villages will be the next focus. Their development including other transportation and strategic plans will inform an integrated Transport Strategy/Plan for the County.

The **draft Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS)** has recently been approved by the NTA Board and is at draft publication stage. The

draft LSMATS, encompasses a significant portion of County Clare, and sets out a framework for investment in transport for the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area for the next 20 years and includes proposals for the significant development of the cycle network and enhancement of bus services and infrastructure.”

The elected members outlined issues and difficulties being experienced with transport components in the county. The members welcomed visitors to the county and felt that while it is important that they enjoy their visit it is also important that farmers and locals are enabled to continue to carry out their duties. It was also felt that tourism transport should be distributed with the purpose of enhancing our towns and villages. The lack of transport links from Shannon Airport were also outlined. The elected members agreed that there is a need for the relevant stakeholders to co-ordinate an integrated plan for the whole county and expand the suite of tourist projects available so as to take advantage of visitors to the county and help locals alike.

P. Dowling, Chief Executive agreed that there are several individual projects taking place across the county and undertook to examine how to enhance the transport issues discussed with the senior team.

Item 17: Offshore gas.

Ar moladh Cllr. P. McMahon

Cuidithe ag Cllr. P.J. Ryan agus glacadh leis

“In view of the fuel crisis that Clare County Council call on the Government to take immediate steps to ensure that offshore gas is made available to Irish users.”

The elected members outlined the concerns being raised regarding potential electricity power cuts this winter as inadequate gas supplies are threatening electricity shortfalls. The members felt that the Irish Government should explore options to make offshore gas available to Irish users due to its importance for electricity and industry.

Item 18: Clare Anti Poverty Strategy.

Ar moladh Cllr. J. Garrihy

Cuidithe ag Cllrs. C. Murphy agus L. Grant agus glacadh leis

“That a workshop be provided with elected members and senior staff to discuss key points from the recently published Clare Anti Poverty Strategy with a view to identifying specific relevance to issues within the control and remit of Clare County Council and to focus on its impact and relevance to key strategies / strategic initiatives such as tourism, housing and Clare Rural and Economic Development.”

Leonard Cleary, Director of Rural Development replied as follows:

“Clare County Council received a copy of this Report recently and is considering the report recommendations. It is proposed to discuss the report in various forms. An invitation has issued to the report author to present to the Clare Rural Development Forum, which includes representatives of the Local Government statutory sector, community sector, and business sector. Elected members, including the proposers of this motion are represented on the Forum. In the context of the new LECP (Local

Economic Community Plan) this report would need to be considered by the Council's statutory LCDC (Local Community Development Committee)."

The elected members noted the extensive worthwhile statistics included in the Clare Anti Poverty Strategy and felt that a series of workshops would be a beneficial opportunity to analyse its contents and establish what can be addressed as a Council.

Item 19: Consequences of the highly pathogenic Avian Influenza.

Ar moladh Cllr. C. Murphy

Cuidithe ag Cllr. C. Colleran Molloy agus glacadh leis

"To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to allocate funding to local authorities for the additional resources required to deal with the costs of cleaning up and managing the consequences of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (H5N1) that is currently circulating".

The elected members noted that this variation of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza has impacted the level of seabirds heavily and they are now washing up on our beaches. The members agreed that as local authorities have responsibility to ensure public safety that Government funding should be made available for this clean up operation and correct disposal.

Item 20: Affordable Housing Schemes.

Ar moladh Cllr. G. Flynn

Cuidithe ag Cllr. D. McGettigan agus glacadh leis

"I am calling on the Director of Social Development to immediately put forward a proposal to the Minister for Housing, Darragh O'Brien for funding to construct Affordable Housing Schemes in Clare. This I am requesting in view of the recent comments from the Minister concerning affordable housing in Clare and the available funding."

Anne Haugh, Director of Social Development replied as follows:

"The Affordable Housing Fund (A.H.F.) is an open funding system under Housing for All allowing Local Authorities to submit proposals to deliver homes in areas with the greatest need for affordable housing intervention. It is the process by which Local Authorities can avail of funding to provide for new affordable housing schemes. Transparent selection criteria have been provided by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) to give Local Authorities a clear basis to assess potential schemes for the purposes of making funding applications under the Affordable Housing Fun. Such selection criteria include:

- 1) Affordability Challenge
- 2) Minimum number of dwellings
- 3) Location
- 4) Residential density and Layout
- 5) Unit Cost Ceilings

- 6) Affordability Gain
- 7) Inclusion

As advised by the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage, proposals located within the CSO settlement boundaries of the 5 cities (Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Waterford) are eligible for AHF funding. However, proposals located outside the 5 cities must be located within local authority areas with a minimum average 5% Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) Affordability Constraint new housing demand over the period 2021 to 2026 calculated for the entire local authority area.

The HDNA assessment of the Clare local authority area has not demonstrated this required affordability constraint and therefore does not meet the selection criteria allowing applications to be made by Clare County Council under the AHF. However, some flexibility has been introduced in those local authority areas which are not deemed to have an affordability challenge at a countywide level with respect to settlements over 10,000 population where local data supports an affordable need.

In consideration of the above Clare County Council has already initiated engagement with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage requesting a review of eligibility initially for Ennis to be followed by Shannon if successful. We are hopeful that if these urban centres were assessed individually they would demonstrate the required HNDA Affordability Constraint and so Clare County Council would be in a position to put forward applications for funding. This request has been considered by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Housing Department is currently in the process of acquiring the necessary detailed information for the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage for them to consider the proposal further.”

The elected members felt that the assessment process is discriminatory and that the Government needs to apply a fair and equitable assessment going forward. The members expressed hope that Ennis and Shannon would be included in the Affordable Housing Scheme and agreed that the rest of the county should be included also as a serious housing problem exists.

Anne Haugh, Director of Social Development addressed the meeting and stated that Clare County Council initiated engagement with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage requesting that the flexibility option be exercised in the context of a number of schemes of mixed tenure. Ms. Haugh stated that the Housing Department is currently in the process of acquiring the necessary data in relation to income, means, house prices etc. for the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage for the further consideration of the proposal.

Item 21: Levy on concrete products.

Ar moladh Cllr. J. Cooney
Cuidithe ag Cllr. M. Begley agus glacadh leis

“I call on Clare County Council to review the Government’s planned levy of 10% on concrete products. The 10% levy is insensitive to an industry which has faced unprecedented challenges over the last number of years and targets a consumer base which has had to absorb the consequences of these challenges. I propose that the

government re-establish the sourcing of the funding for the mica-redress scheme and accept that while it is a construction industry problem, it does not justify targeting future prospective homeowners who ultimately will foot the costs.”

Cllr. J. Cooney requested that the wording be amended to read as follows:

“That Clare County Council request the Government to review the planned levy of 10% on concrete products. The 10% levy is insensitive to an industry which has faced unprecedented challenges over the last number of years and targets a consumer base which has had to absorb the consequences of these challenges. I propose that the government re-establish the sourcing of the funding for the mica-redress scheme and accept that while it is a construction industry problem, it does not justify targeting future prospective homeowners who ultimately will foot the costs.”

The elected members agreed that the increased cost of building materials is having an impact on the cost of building houses. The members noted that many young people are immigrating due to the cost of living as they cannot afford to build their own homes. The members acknowledged the need for Government to support the people affected by mica and the redress scheme but felt that this levy of 10% on concrete products will be borne by the people already struggling to pay for housing and is penalizing the people trying to get on the property ladder.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____
Riarthóir Cruinnithe

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Date: _____