

**Minutes of Meeting of Cavan County Council held in The Council Chamber, Courthouse,
Cavan on Monday 11th September 2023 at 2.00p.m.**

Councillor P. Brady, Cathaoirleach, presiding

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

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

An apology was received from Councillor V. Smith

Councillor P. Brady welcomed all to the meeting.

1. To confirm Minutes of Monthly Meeting held on 10th July 2023.

Miontuaririsci cruinnithe 10 Iúil 2023 a dhearbhú.

It was

Proposed by Councillor P. McVitty

Seconded by Councillor W. Bennett

And

Resolved;

“that minutes of monthly meeting of Cavan County Council held on 10th July 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 8th June 2023

Noted.

4. To hear presentation from Irish Foster Care Association

Councillor P. Brady welcomed Ms. Róisín Clarke, CEO Irish Foster Care Association and Mr. Raymond Nolan, Chairman of the Irish Foster Care Association to the meeting. Ms. Clarke stated that she was privileged to have the opportunity to speak to the members and thanked the Council for hosting them. She stated that the members' willingness to engage in this dialogue had become one of the first Councils to welcome them on board and they plan to visit local authorities nationwide. Ms. Clarke stated that a recent national survey took place to highlight the stark reality that the Irish Foster Care system is at breaking point. She stated that foster carers across the Country are struggling, and the root of the struggle primarily lies in the sustained underfunding of the

sector and limited supports, which have resulted in a system that is ill equipped to retain or recruit the number of foster carers required to operate effectively. She stated that it appears that powerful individuals in certain government departments have forgotten that a foster care sector exists in Ireland. She stated that for over fifteen years the basic foster care allowance has remained stagnant, despite the ever-increasing cost of living, rising inflation, and the evolving demands placed on foster carers. Ms. Clarke asked the members of Cavan County Council to use their influence within their respective parties to elevate the plight of foster carers and more importantly the foster children they care for. She asked that representations be made to Minister Heather Humphreys ahead of October's budget seeking changes in areas within her remit, particularly concerning state pension eligibility. She stated that foster carers are at a distinct disadvantage, as they have to remain at home to meet the complex care needs of their foster children and these dedicated individuals are not entitled to receive social welfare credits, as they are not available for work in the conventional sense. Ms. Clarke concluded by stating that foster carers are dedicated individuals who selflessly devote themselves to the welfare of Ireland's most vulnerable children and it is our moral duty to ensure they are supported and appreciated in every way possible.

The members in turn thanked Ms. Clarke for her presentation and unanimously supported the Irish Foster Care Association.

- 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 Office of the Minister for Justice regarding the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022**

Noted. Councillor S. O'Reilly noted that since her motion in June it has become apparent that the proposed hate speech law is getting serious push backs from ordinary people and the Bill has now been paused until late Autumn.

- (b) To note reply from the Office of the Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in relation to Coillte's involvement with the Irish Strategic Forestry Fund (SFF).**

Noted.

- (c) To note reply from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment regarding funding availability for local authorities to acquire lands for construction of business parks.**

Noted.

(d) To note reply from Tailte Éireann in relation to the early learning years sector and commercial rates.

Noted.

(e) To note reply from the Office of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage regarding Vacant Homes Officer.

Noted.

(f) To note reply from the Office of the Minister for Health regarding electronic Cigarettes.

Noted.

(g) To note reply from the Office of the Minister for Education regarding DEIS Status for schools.

Noted. Councillor B. Fay expressed his disappointment with the reply and noted that the process is far from being open and transparent.

(h) To note reply from the Office of the Minister for Education regarding Irish in the school curriculum.

Noted. Councillor Á. Smith called on the Minister for Education to bring back the oral exam for the Junior Cert stating that to replace it with a class-based assessment with no value is counterproductive,

(i) To note replies from Garda Headquarters and the Ambassador of Portugal regarding the investigation into the disappearance of Ms. Jean Tighe.

Noted.

(j) To note replies from Office of the Minister of State for Sport and the Camogie Association regarding support for Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football County Teams.

Noted. Councillor A. Fitzpatrick expressed his disappointment with the reply.

(k) To note correspondence from Mr. Michael Hanley.

Noted.

(l) To note replies from Office of the Minister for Housing regarding the recent detained firefighter industrial action.

Noted.

7. To approve attendance of members at AILG training to be held in the Sligo Park Hotel on 13th and 14th September.

It was

Proposed by Councillor J.P. Feeley

Seconded by Councillor C. Brady

And

Resolved;

“that the attendance of Councillors C. Kelly, J.P. Feeley, P. McVitty, W. Bennett, T. Smith, T.P. O’Reilly, M. Argue, C. Brady, S. O’Reilly and B. Fay at the AILG training to be held in the Sligo Park Hotel on 13th and 14th September 2023 be hereby approved”.

To approve attendance of members at Patrick MacGill Summer School held in Glenties, Co. Donegal from 16-19 August 2023 (retrospective approval)

It was

Proposed by Councillor J.P. Feeley

Seconded by Councillor C. Brady

And

Resolved;

“that the attendance of Councillors C. Kelly, J.P. Feeley and S. O’Reilly at the MacGill Summer School held in Glenties, Co. Donegal from 16-19 August 2023 be hereby approved”.

8. Member’s Question – Councillor John Paul Feeley
Cavan County Council has responsibility for certain graveyards. In respect of this please confirm as follows:

- i. The name and number of graveyards for which the Council is responsible.**
- ii. The name of graveyards for which a caretaker is engaged and the duties of the said caretaker.**
- iii. The number and names of such graveyards for which we hold title documents or for which title is registered in the Property Registration Authority,**
- iv. That the Council has proper access to the graveyards to allow maintenance to be completed and allow the public access such sites.**
- v. The responsibility of the Council to take over graveyards no longer actively used by the Churches.**

A reply was issued to Councillor J.P. Feeley prior to the meeting,

9. Member’s Question – Councillor Sarah O’Reilly

To ask Cavan County Council:-

- a) The number of Derelict Notices issued each year for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022.**
- b) The number of derelict sites acquired by agreement or CPOd for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022.**
- c) The total monetary annual levy collected from derelict sites in urban areas for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022.**

A reply was issued to Councillor S. O’Reilly prior to the meeting,

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

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

Noted.

- 11(a). To approve disposal of land containing 0.151 hectares or 0.373 acres at Kilmore, Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan to St. Clare's National School, Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan for the sum of €11,800, 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 T.P. O'Reilly

Seconded by Councillor P. Brady

And

Resolved;

"that the disposal of land containing 0.151 hectares or 0.373 acres at Kilmore, Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan to St. Clare's National School, Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan for the sum of €11,800, pursuant to Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 and Section 211 of the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act 2000, be hereby approved".

- 11(b). To approve lease of the creche facility at O'Raghallaigh Park, Cavan town to the Breffni Integrated CLG (trading as Cavan County Local Development) for the nominal fee of €50.00 per annum for 7 years, pursuant to Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 and Section 211 of the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act 2000, and notices circulated.**

Deferred.

- 11(c). To approve disposal of 0.42 acres of land containing derelict house at Gartbrattan, Arva, Co. Cavan to Mr. Wesley Moore, Dromard, Cavan, Co. 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.**

Deferred.

- 12. Approval of nominee to Cavan Local Community and Development Committee under Section 128C (3)(b) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014:**

- **Mr. Séamus McGrath, Disability Interests Network replacing Ms. Marisa Goldstone, Older People's Interests.**

Mr. Brendan Jennings, Director of Service informed the members that there is a slight change as Ms. Frances O'Neill will now replace Ms. Marisa Goldstone, Older People's Interests.

It was

Proposed by Councillor A. Fitzpatrick

Seconded by Councillor T.P. O'Reilly

And

Resolved;

"that the replacement of Ms. Marisa Goldstone, Older People's Interests by Ms. Frances O'Neill, Disability Interests Network to Cavan Local Community and Development Committee under Section 128C (3)(b) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 be hereby approved".

13. To fix the date and time of the Budget 2024 Meeting (Section 103 Local Government Act 2001).

It was agreed that the Budget 2024 Meeting will be held on Friday 1st December 2023 at 11.00am.

Votes of Sympathy:

- The Doherty Family, Cavan on the death of Mr. Mel Doherty.
- Ms. Joanne Hayes, Tourism Officer, Cavan County Council on the death of her mother Ms. Mary Hayes, Killeshandra
- The O'Reilly Family, Mullahoran on the death of Ms. Rosemary O'Reilly former Principal Mullahoran National School.
- Mr. Pdraig Reilly, Drumalee, General Operative, Cavan County Council on the tragic death of his son Dayle Reilly.
- The Crowe Family, Ballinagh on the death of Ms. Móna Crowe former Principal of St. Clare's National School, Cavan.

Votes of Congratulations:

- Mr. Thomas Higgins, a talented artist from Drumalee on exhibiting his remarkable artwork at the prestigious Royal College of Surgeons Ireland in Dublin as part of the Connecting Artists 2023 programme.
- The Cavan Calling Committee on organising a most enjoyable weekend of festivities and incorporating the event in Breffni Park to celebrate Kingspan Breffni Stadium's centennial anniversary.
- Cavan under 16 ladies on winning the All-Ireland A Championship final where they beat Cork.

Councillor P. Brady informed the members that he will hold a Cathaoirleach's reception later in the year for the Cavan u16 ladies and also the Breffni Blue's group on the Special Olympic success.

Mr. Tommy Ryan, Chief Executive Officer thanked Ms. Emma Clancy and her team for the huge amount of work and time they put in to organising and delivering the Cavan Calling Festival. He thanked all volunteers for making it a success.

MEMBERS' ITEMS – DEFERRED FROM JULY MEETING

14.1 To discuss the crisis in Homecare in County Cavan.

Councillor S. O'Reilly stated that there is an urgent need to address the crisis in home care support currently with more than 6,500 people approved for funding and on a waiting list. She stated the crisis is in the recruitment and retention of staff caused by standards in employment. Councillor O'Reilly stated that according to the national community care network, the average age of its 3,000 carers is 60 years of age who are overworked, underpaid, and feel undervalued. She stated that workers must have guaranteed hours and must be provided with payment for travel and subsistence. She stated that payment arrangements/tenders between the HSE and homecare agencies have increased, however not enough is being done to ensure carers receive fair pay. Councillor Reilly stated that delivering proper home care will reduce the length of hospital stays and reduce the risk of hospitalisation which in turn will reduce pressures on emergency departments and reduce delayed discharges. Councillor O'Reilly stated that a total reform of homecare is needed, and she proposed that Cavan County Council call on the Government to take immediate action and devise and implement a comprehensive plan to address the challenges posed by the steadily increasing population and individuals aged 65 years and over in the coming years.

Councillor C. Kelly supported the motion and noted that the commitment of carers is second to none. He stated that the Council need to request the Minister for Health and the Minister for Social Welfare to do something urgently and attract more people into the job.

The motion was unanimously supported by all members.

MEMBERS' ITEMS SEPTEMBER MEETING

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

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

Mr. Brendan Jennings, Director of Service informed the members that there had been no meetings with Eirgrid or ESB Networks since the last Council Meeting.

14.3 I am calling on Cavan County Council to upgrade and provide more disabled parking spaces in our towns and villages.

Councillor P. McDonald called on Cavan County Council to upgrade and provide more disabled parking spaces in towns and villages throughout County Cavan. Councillor P. McDonald noted that seven in ten people with physical disabilities have no access to amenities. He noted that people park on pavements and footpaths outside public buildings and leave no access for wheelchair users to pass. He stated that 60% of people with disabilities found poor or no accessible parking at retail outlets.

Councillor S. O'Reilly seconded Councillor P. McDonald's proposal.

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

14.4 To ask Cavan County Council to support the reintroduction of the 9% VAT rate for food related businesses and to call on the Minister for Finance to extend the 9% vat rate to the end of 2024.

Councillor A. Fitzpatrick proposed that Cavan County Council support the reintroduction of the 9% VAT rate for food related businesses and asked that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Finance asking him to extend the 9% vat rate to the end of 2024. Councillor Fitzpatrick stated that from 1st September the 9% VAT rate was increased to 13.5% and will leave some businesses in a position where they will have to close as they are already struggling with energy costs, raw materials and labour costs all increasing.

14.7 To request support from Cavan County Council to retain the 9% VAT rate for the hospitality sector.

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Finance asking that the 9% VAT rate for the hospitality sector be retained. Councillor O'Reilly stated that the rise from 9% to 13.5% was too much and the rise should have been eased in gradually.

Councillors P. McDonald, B. Fay, S. O'Reilly and P. Walsh supported the motion.

14.5 To discuss flooding in the county generally.

Councillor P. McVitty stated that in the last while flooding has become very common in our County. He stated that a downpour in July caused the Oran river in Swanlinbar to over flow and block the road. He stated that it was extremely dangerous and the problem will only get worse as we come into the winter season and face heavy rainfall. He stated that drains and gullies along our roads need to be cleaned for the surface water to leave the road. Councillor McVitty proposed that Cavan County Council look at putting a drainage programme in place for the County.

Councillor Á. Smith supported the motion.

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion and noted that gullies in Virginia have grass growing out of them and they must be cleaned to take the water off our roads. Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion and noted that the village of Dowra in the past was nearly turned into an Island after heavy rainfall. He stated that the Council need to look at all the practical solutions that are needed to keep our roads passible. Councillors W. Bennett, C. Lovett, A. Fitzpatrick and P. Walsh supported the motion. Mr. Paddy Connaughton, Director of Service stated that flash flooding is a problem for the entire Country. Mr. Connaughton stated that existing systems are not designed to deal with the intensity of flooding. He stated that the Council will devote more additional resources to the municipal districts as they hope to employ an extra technician. He stated that the Council receive a grant for road drainage and they make applications to the Department for specific schemes. He noted that the Office of Public Works provide a minor implementation work grant, but it is very difficult to secure funding unless properties are flooded.

14.6 Outside seating at Cavan General Hospital.

Councillor P. McVitty stated that the issue of no seating outside Cavan General Hospital has been brought to his attention by concerned patients on several occasions. Councillor McVitty proposed that Cavan County Council write to the management team of Cavan General Hospital and the HSE asking that seating be provided. Councillor McVitty stated that it is important a seating area be made available outside the hospital for the well-being of patients and their loved ones when visiting the hospital.

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion.

Councillor S. O'Reilly supported the motion and asked the Council members sitting on the HSE forum to raise the matter at the next meeting.

14.8 To call on the Minister for Transport to amend the current and ongoing difficulties in obtaining bus tickets for students.

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Transport asking him to amend the current and ongoing difficulties in obtaining bus tickets for students. Councillor T.P. O'Reilly stated that in some cases you have children with bus tickets and no buses and others with buses and no bus tickets. He stated that the problem needs to be addressed urgently. He proposed that the Council get a representative from the Department of Transport or Bus Eireann to address the meeting and noted that cars are blocking roads outside schools due to taking buses off the road.

14.17 To ask that Minister Foley urgently reform Bus Eireann's antiquated Bus Transport Route System and undertake common sense solutions regarding School Bus Transport.

Councillor S. O'Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Education, Ms. Norma Foley, T.D., asking her to urgently reform Bus Eireann's antiquated Bus Transport System and undertake common sense solutions regarding the School Bus Transport. Councillor S. O'Reilly stated that she has numerous queries from families who have attended a national school for 11 years on concessionary tickets, and suddenly with very little warning the families are not getting a ticket. She stated that she had received representations in relation to another issue where a large 55-seater coach has serviced both Tunnyduff National School Bus Route and Canningstown/Mountainlodge Secondary school bus route to Bailieborough Community School and the bus company is now gone into liquidation. Councillor Smith stated that Bus Eireann invited tenders for this route a total of three times and on each occasion the tender process received no tender for the route. She stated that this is causing chaos for families all over the district. She stated that if there is no 55-seater coach available then the logical thing to do is split the route in two and get two small buses to do the runs.

14.18 Difficulties with school bus transport.

Councillor C. Kelly stated that this issue arises year after year with school transport and something needs to be done urgently. He stated that Bus Eireann and the Department of Transport need to appoint a consultant to deal with the situation. He stated that there are families who received concession tickets down through the years now left with no bus tickets and parents now must take time off work to get them to school. He proposed that the Council invite a member from Bus Eireann to a meeting of Cavan County Council to address the issue.

Councillor B. Fay supported the motions and stated that parents are up in arms over the whole situation. He stated that he knows of a school bus with twelve empty seats and it won't take any extra children.

Councillor J. P. Feeley supported the motion and stated that this problem arises every year. He stated that we do not need another report. He stated that we need Bus Eireann and the Department of Transport to allow Management around the Country to use their common sense. He stated that we need to ask the Minister for Education, Ms. Norma Foley, T.D. to get involved.

Councillors A. Fitzpatrick, C. Brady, T. Smith, Á. Smith and P. Brady supported the motion.

14.9 That we write to Minister Roderic O’Gorman, T.D., asking that he address difficulties encountered by Early Learning and Childcare and School age Childcare providers.

Councillor T.P. O’Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council write to Minister Roderic O’Gorman, T.D., asking that he address difficulties encountered by Early Learning and Childcare and School age Childcare providers.

14.20 That Cavan County Council call on Roderic O’Gorman, T.D. Minister for Children and the Government to put in place a Capital Funding Programme for Childcare Services.

Councillor J.P. Feeley proposed that Cavan County Council write to Minister Roderic O’Gorman T.D., Minister for Children to call on the Government to put in place a Capital Funding Programme for Childcare Services. Councillor J.P. Feeley stated that the childcare sector has grown over the years and there is increased expenditure in this area. He stated that several years ago a grant was given to open a purpose-built facility in Blacklion to care for forty children and was one hundred percent funded. He stated that now there is the problem where they have a waiting list of sixty children and no space to cater for the demand. He stated that currently there is no real capital funding available to the childcare sector.

Councillor P. Walsh supported the motion and while she welcomed the increase in funding for childcare, she stated it was not enough. She stated that we need to listen to the people in the childcare sector.

Councillor Á. Smith supported the motions. Councillor Smith stated that people depend on childcare facilities and we need to care for the people caring for our children.

Councillors M. Argue, B. Fay, S. O’Reilly, T. Smith and W. Bennett supported the motion.

14.10 Extending criteria for access to publicly funded IVF.

Councillor Á. Smith proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Health urging him to extend the criteria for access to publicly funded IVF as the chances of having a child should not depend on how much you can afford. Councillor Smith stated that when undergoing fertility treatment, your life is put on hold while you wait. She noted that in July the Government provided public funding for IVF but unfortunately, like all thing’s fertility related, it has turned out that it is not what a lot of people had hoped for. She stated that state funded IVF was first tabled in 2007 by the then Minister Mary Harney and those experiencing subfertility before and over the two decades since, have had to pay for their own treatment as successive governments failed to act. She stated that the cost of IVF in Irish clinics can range from €4,000 to €6,500 which is out of reach

for so many couples who do not have the means to access treatment. She stated that the criteria announced by the Minister for Health is also devastating for people who have already started their IVF journey. She stated that to qualify for free treatment couples can only have undertaken one round or cycle of privately funded IVF and used all the embryos created as a result of that cycle which is very unfair. She stated that in Britain the National Health Service provide funding for up to three cycles. She stated that current legislation is driving couples abroad for cheaper alternatives, the expense in these private clinics is a constant haemorrhage and with no regulatory authority these prices are likely to increase. Councillor Smith stated that a public awareness campaign to normalise the discussion of infertility should be rolled out as knowledge is key as is time when it comes to fertility.

Councillors C. Brady, T.P. O'Reilly, P. Walsh, M. Argue, J.P. Feeley, B. Fay and P. Brady supported the motion.

14.11 Need to improve eligibility criteria for Primary Medical Certificate.

Councillor Á. Smith proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Health and the Minister for Finance asking that they amend and improve eligibility criteria for Primary Medical Certificates and put in place a proper appeals process at an early date. Councillor Smith stated that the Primary Medical Certificate assists people whose mobility has been restricted due to illness or who have a disability to purchase a car or make adaptations to a vehicle. She stated that this is particularly important for many people who may have been in an accident or suffered a stroke. She noted that the criteria for availing of this scheme is very restrictive and denies many worthy applicants of this necessary financial assistance and taxation relief. She stated that along with the present difficulties caused by the restrictive criteria is an appeals process that is literally not working currently. She stated that the Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeal needs to be re-established by the Department of Finance as presently no appeals are being held and the backlog of appeals is increasing constantly.

Councillor C. Kelly seconded Councillor Á. Smith's proposal.

Councillors P. McVitty and P. Walsh supported the motion.

14.12 Extending the free schoolbooks scheme to secondary students.

Councillor Á. Smith proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Education asking that the free schoolbooks scheme be extended to secondary school students. Councillor Smith stated that with the rampant rise in the cost of living, back-to-school time can often be a particularly expensive time for families. She stated that while the back-to-allowance is a very welcome measure, it is limited. She stated that children

should not be deprived of books and therefore free schoolbooks would benefit every home.

Councillor C. Kelly supported the motion stating that the free schoolbook scheme would be a great help to parents.

Councillors P. Walsh, T.P. O'Reilly, C. Lovett and P. Brady supported the motion.

14.13 Charging points for electric squad cars.

Councillor T. Smith asked for more charging points for local garda electric squad cars. Councillor Smith stated that while it was most welcome to see an electric car assigned to gardai policing the Ballyjamesduff area, there was no specified charging point provided. Councillor Smith proposed that the Council write to the Minister for Justice and the Minister for State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform asking for the installation of extra charging points.

Councillors C. Kelly and T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion.

Mr. Paddy Connaughton, Director of Service informed the members that it is up to the Gardai to install their own charging points. He stated that the Council are currently working with EasyGo, Ireland's largest home EV charger installer to locate charging points in the County.

14.14 That we request the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly, T.D., to change the fee in emergency departments, especially for the most vulnerable and older generation and the situation regarding lack of help for GPs and emergency room staff.

Councillor B. Fay proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly, T.D. asking him to change the fee in emergency departments, especially for the most vulnerable and older generation in light of the ongoing situation regarding lack of GPs and emergency room staff. Councillor Fay stated that in principle the fee was brought in to stop people with small ailments going to accident and emergency departments and not doctors. He stated that unfortunately this system is not working due to the lack of GPs and the length of time it takes to get an appointment with a GP. He stated that €100 is a lot of money for people amid the cost-of-living crisis facing the Country. He stated that the fee should be done away with or put on hold until the GP situation is sorted.

Councillor P. Brady seconded Councillor B. Fay's motion.

14.15 That we get an update on library services including opening hours.

Councillor B. Fay asked for an update on library services including opening hours within the County. He stated that more opening hours are needed in the smaller libraries.

Councillor S. O'Reilly asked if the recently retired staff in Bailieborough library were going to be replaced.

Councillor J.P. Feeley asked if the Council had looked any further into a mobile library and stated that the library in Loughan House should be used by the wider community at designated times.

Mr. Eoin Doyle, Director of Service informed the members that the Council are currently recruiting new staff and extra staff will allow Belturbet and Ballyconnell libraries stay open three days in the week. Mr. Doyle stated that the Council hoped to replace retired people as soon as possible. Mr. Doyle stated that the County Librarian is currently looking at the use of Loughan House and the provision for a mobile library.

14.16 That we request the Minister for Finance, Michael McGrath T.D., to include in legislation that it be made compulsory for everyone to take cash (legal tender) as well as card payments.

Councillor B. Fay proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Finance, Michael McGrath, T.D., asking him to include in legislation that it be made compulsory for everyone to take cash (legal tender) as well as card payments. Councillor Fay noted that EU law states that essential services cannot refuse cash payments without a reason. He stated that vulnerable groups are at a loss as they rely on cash payments. Councillor Fay stated that thirty cash transactions later €50 is still €50 but after thirty transactions online €50 is only worth €5.

Councillor S. O'Reilly supported the motion and stated that this issue keeps cropping up all the time. She noted that in relation to NCT payments, Minister Jack Chambers stepped in and stated that as they are a statutory body they must accept cash payments.

Councillor P. Walsh stated that the youth are vulnerable and don't know what they are spending on their cards.

Councillor T. Smith supported the motion and complimented Cavan GAA for issuing old age pensioners with a card for €60 to allow them entry to games.

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

14.19 To ask Irish Water to investigate difficulties with water pressure throughout the County.

Councillor C. Kelly stated that there are two housing estates in Kingscourt currently experiencing serious leaks and it is time to sort the problem. He stated that a large tankard came in and removed huge amounts of water at the higher end of the two estates and now houses are left with no water for toilets or showers. He stated that this is very bad form on Irish Water's behalf and every time they are contacted, they will not give a straight answer.

Mr. Paddy Connaughton, Director of Service noted that Irish Water is now Uisce Eireann and the matter has been handed over to them for direction and control. He stated that as far as he is aware the leak is a group water scheme issue.

14.21 That Cavan County Council call on the Minister for Transport to review the All-Ireland Strategic Rail Review in light of the proposals contained therein to better serve County Cavan and the central border region and seek a meeting to discuss the matter with the Minister. Furthermore, that we seek to engage with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council failure of the Review to include County Fermanagh.

Councillor J.P. Feeley proposed that Cavan County Council call on the Minister for Transport to review the All-Ireland Strategic Rail Review in light of the proposals contained therein to better serve County Cavan and the central border region and seek a meeting to discuss the matter with the Minister. Councillor Feeley proposed that we seek to engage with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's failure of the review to include County Fermanagh. Councillor Feeley stated that the report has very aspirational thinking in the extreme. He stated that as a Cavan person reading the report you would be disappointed for the County. He stated that initially they were not going to look at railways from the past but they did and unfortunately these will not benefit communities as they have no stops along the route. He stated that the Meath railway was extended into Navan but they are doing nothing to facilitate the railway going to Kells, Virginia and Cavan. He stated that all of Fermanagh and South Donegal are left out of the proposal. He stated that there is still time to have an input and feedback to the Minister. He asked that the Council liaise with Fermanagh and look at how we can work together for a sensible proposal to this part of the County.

Councillor P. Walsh seconded Councillor J.P. Feeley's proposal.

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion and stated that if we do not get into the public domain and discuss the matter it will never happen. He asked that when the Council are buying land that they purchase extra to accommodate railways.

Councillor M. Argue supported the motion.

Mr. Paddy Connaughton, Director of Service stated that when buying land there are gradients in this County as to what is allowed for road traffic and trains. He stated that there is no guarantee that they follow the same route.

14.22 That Cavan County Council call on Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board to reverse their decision to close St. Mogue's College, Bawnboy and St. Bricin's College, Belturbet.

Councillor J.P. Feeley proposed that Cavan County Council call on Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board to reverse their decision to close St. Mogue's College,

Bawnboy and St. Bricin's College, Belturbet. Councillor J.P. Feeley stated that it is time the official policy reflects the substantial investment in both the wishes of students, teachers, parents and the wider community. He stated that since the decision was made in 2018 not to close the schools, thanks to the good work of Deputy Brendan Smith and Minister Norma Foley, significant investment has been secure in both colleges to improve facilities for students. He stated that the decision needs to be reversed as the next Minister for Education might take a different view on the matter. He stated that it is vitally important that CMETB recognise the motion passed by Cavan County Council. Councillor Á Smith supported the motion and noted that a new extension had been built at St. Bricin's College while planning permission has been granted for ten additional classrooms for St. Mogue's College fully funded by the Department. She stated that in the past Minister Foley met with a deputation to discuss the future of the two schools and noted that enrolment has increased in both schools over the years. She stated that she will continue the work of her late father to improve facilities for both communities. Councillor B. Fay noted that in 2018 it was decided to close both schools and build a new state of the art school in Ballyconnell. He stated that at the time a hardworking committee was established, and they fought hard to keep both schools open. Councillor P. Walsh supported the motion and stated that the decision to close both schools needs to be reversed. She stated that it is time to take the motion off the table and invest in both schools that the community fought hard to keep open. Councillor S. O'Reilly stated that the policy still stands with CMETB and not the Department and therefore needs to be reversed. Councillor P. McVitty congratulated all who had worked to keep both schools open. He stated at the time he thought it was great news that investment was being put into West Cavan to hear that €15m was coming for a new school. Councillors P. McDonald and C. Kelly supported the motion. Councillor J.P. Feeley thanked the members for their support.

The meeting concluded at 5.10p.m.