**Minutes of Virtual Meeting of Cavan County Council held on Microsoft Teams on Monday 8th March 2021 at 2.00p.m.**

Councillor S. O’Reilly, Cathaoirleach presiding

Present; Councillors M. Argue, W. Bennett, C. Brady, P. Brady, B. Fay,

A. Fitzpatrick, J.P. Feeley, C. Kelly, C. Lovett, P. McDonald, P. McVitty,

S.P. O’Reilly, T.P. O’Reilly, S. Smith, T. Smith, V. Smith, P. Walsh.

In Attendance; T. Ryan, Chief Executive

 E. Doyle, Director of Service

 P. Connaughton, Director of Service

 B. Jennings, Director of Service

 M. McNally, A/Head of Finance

 L. McGavigan, Senior Executive Officer

 E. McGinn, Senior Staff Officer

Cathaoirleach S. O’Reilly welcomed all to the meeting.

1. **To confirm Minutes of Monthly Meeting held on 8 February 2021.**

**Miontuaririsci cruinnithe 8 Feabhra a dhearbhu.**

It was

Proposed by Councillor J.P. Feeley

Seconded by Councillor M. Argue

And

Resolved;

“that minutes of meeting of Cavan County Council held on 8 February 2021 be hereby approved”

1. **Disclosures of Interests (Section 177 Local Government Act 2001)**

Noted.

**Note Minutes of Committee Meetings**

1. **To note Minutes of Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 7 January 2021.**

Noted.

**Note Members’ Reports from Conferences / Training events**

**4. To note members’ reports from conferences and training events *(Section 142 and***

 ***Section 143 of the Local Government Act 2001; Local Government (Expenses of Local***

 ***Authority Members) Regulations 2014 Part V Section 5 (1)).***

 Noted.

**Correspondence**

**5(i) To note reply from the Office of the Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage regarding percolation tests and the granting of planning permission.**

Noted. Councillor J.P. Feeley expressed his disappointment with the reply which showed no regard for the solutions available. He stated that hopefully the EPA review will bring more positive news.

 **(ii) To note reply from the Office of the Minister for Justice regarding the proceeds of crime being recovered and reinvested back into keeping communities safe.**

Noted. Councillor S.P. O’Reilly noted that following further action by Independent TDs, a memo is to be brought to cabinet on the subject. He stated that this shows how local authorities can work together to bring change for the betterment of communities.

 **(iii) To note reply from Office of the Minister of State at the Department of Transport regarding the post office network.**

Noted.

 **(iv) To note reply from the British Embassy, Dublin regarding invitation to meet with members of Cavan County Council to discuss the Belturbet bombing.**

Noted. Councillor J.P. Feeley expressed his disappointment with the reply. He stated that the matter requires investigation and the Government need to push hard to find justice for the Belturbet bombing.

 **(v) To note reply from Health Service Executive regarding proposals to charge clients using transport services for people with a disability.**

Noted. Councillor J.P. Feeley expressed his disappointment with the reply and proposed that a further letter be sent to the Minister for Health and the Minister for Disability.

**6. Member’s Question – Councillor P. McDonald**

To ask Cavan County Council how much it costs the Council to hire in Tar Patchers from other sources.

An answer to the question posed by Councillor P. McDonald was circulated to him prior to the meeting.

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

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

Noted.

**8. To approve the Local Community Development Committee 2020 Annual Report under Section 128(b)(i) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014.**

It was:

Proposed by Councillor C. Kelly

Seconded by Councillor B. Fay

and

Resolved

“that the Local Community Development Committee 2020 Annual Report under Section 128(b)(i) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, be hereby approved”

**9. Approval of nominee to Cavan Local Community and Development Committee**

 **under Section 128C (3)(b) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014:**

**Ms. Connie Whelan, Cootehill Chamber, replacing Mr. Tom Brady, Cavan Chamber.**

It was

Proposed by Councillor A. Fitzpatrick

Seconded by Councillor C. Brady

and

Resolved

“that the nomination of Ms. Connie Whelan, Cootehill Chamber to Cavan Local Community and Development Committee under Section 128C (3)(b) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 be hereby approved”

**10. In accordance with 134(A) of the Local Government Act 2001 (as inserted by**

 **Section 50 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014), adoption of 2021 Annual**

 **Service Delivery Plan.**

It was

Proposed by Councillor C. Brady

Seconded by Councillor S.P. O’Reilly

and

Resolved

“that in accordance with 134(A) of the Local Government Act 2001 (as inserted by Section 50 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014), adoption of 2021 Annual Service Delivery Plan be hereby approved”

**Votes of Sympathy**

* The Smith Family, Virginia on the death of Betty Smith.
* The Hetherton Family, Eighter, Virginia on the death of Thomas Hetherton
* Paddy Sheanon, employee of Cavan County Council, on the death of his father-in-law

Terry Coyne.

* The O’Brien Family, Mullagh on the death of Nicholas O’Brien
* Brenton Sweeney, employee of Cavan County Council on the death of his uncle in law John Fay, Cootehill.
* Olive Hannigan, employee of Cavan County Council on the death of her uncle Mr. Peter Hannigan formerly Cootehill.
* The Desmond Family, Ballyjamesduff and Cork on the death of Thomas Desmond, former County Engineer with Cavan County Council
* The Brady Family, Mountnugent on the death of Mrs. Margaret Brady.

**Votes of Congratulations:**

* Raymond Galligan, Thomas Galligan and Padraig Faulkner on winning an All-Star award and securing a spot on the 2021 All Star football team.
* Roisin O’Keeffe, Lacken Camogie Club on winning a Soaring Stars midfield award on the Soaring Stars Team 2020
* Cavan County Council on receiving €14.5m for major Abbeylands project and €12.5m for social housing schemes. The members in turn welcomed Minister Darragh O’Brien’s visit to Cavan and unanimously welcomed the funding allocated. Mr. Tommy Ryan, Chief Executive stated that the project has the potential to breathe new life into the centre of Cavan Town and reverse a trend in recent years of declining footfall in the town centre.
* The recent approval for a new €1.5m state of the art fire station in Ballyjamesduff.
* Funding allocated under the Outdoor Recreation Scheme to upgrade the Cavan Way, the 16 mile marked walk from Blacklion to Dowra taking in the Shannon Pot and Cavan Burren Park.
* Funding for Dromore Greenway phase 1 in Cootehill for a cycle and walkway. This project is spearheaded by Cootehill Area Development. This amenity will be a fantastic tourist attraction to the town.

**MEMBERS’ ITEMS – MARCH MEETING**

1. **North South Interconnector**

Councillor C. Kelly asked the Director of Service, Mr. Brendan Jennings if there had been any communication or discussions between Cavan County Council and Eirgrid or ESB in relation to the North South Interconnector.

 Mr. Brendan Jennings, Director of Service informed the members that since the last Council meeting there had been no correspondence from anyone in relation to the North South Interconnector.

1. **Pay differential between HSE employees and that of Agency staff and Section 39 workers.**

Councillor P. McDonald called for an end to the pay gap between HSE employees and those employed by outside bodies. He stated that Section 39 organisations do the same work as HSE organisations who are referred to as Section 38 bodies. He stated that the only difference is those who work for Section 38 bodies are considered public servants while those who work for Section 39 organisations are not. He stated that the current regime is very unfair. Councillor P. McDonald stated that there are cases where there are two people working side by side in the same workplace doing the same tasks yet their rates of pay, travel allowance, working conditions and pension entitlements are completely different. He stated that Section 39 employees have not benefited from pay restoration schemes since 2017. He stated that while a resolution was found for the 50 biggest Section 39 bodies last year, the issue remains unsolved for over 250 smaller agencies. He stated that there are many carers being paid minimum wage rates, while the HSE pays the private recruitment providers between €25 and €30 an hour per worker.

Councillor S.P. O’Reilly supported the motion and concurred with what Councillor P. McDonald had said. Councillor S.P. O’Reilly stated that he had representations from distressed nurses who are going above and beyond what is expected of them and yet they are not on pay parity with colleagues. Councillor S.P. O’Reilly stated that Dublin North East Region have not lived up to their promise over the last two years in relation to pay restoration for district nurses.

Councillor T.P. O’Reilly supported the motion noting that agency nurses and care nurses should get the same pay as everyone else.

Councillor C. Brady supported the motion noting that the disparity in pay is a very real source of distress and it is time the issue was resolved.

Councillors P. Walsh, J.P. Feeley and S. Smith supported the motion.

1. **Banking services in County Cavan.**

Councillor S. Smith stated that the recent announcement by Ulster bank to close its branches in Ballyconnell, Ballyjamesduff and Cavan over the next three years and Bank of Ireland to shut its branches in Arva, Cootehill and Kingscourt will have a severe mpact on staff, customers and communities. He stated that there has been a dramatic change in banking services over the last three years and it is deplorable to think that Bank of Ireland can use the excuse of lower numbers to make this decision at a time when the Country is in lockdown during a pandemic. He stated that many towns will now be left with no bank and this is unacceptable. Councillor Smith stated that this is a service taken from the older generation as most of these people will not do online banking. Councillor S. Smith proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Finance, the Taoiseach, the Tanaiste and the Minister for Public Expenditure asking the Government to get involved and think seriously about making banking facilities available to people through Credit Unions and local post offices.

Councillor S. O’Reilly seconded Councillor S. Smith’s proposal.

1. **Proposed closure of Ulster Bank branches.**

Councillor P. McVitty stated that the closure of these banks is once again a blow to rural areas. He stated that over the last number of years banking facilities and services have been slipping away from the public. He stated that presently you cannot meet with a Bank Manager in the branch. Councillor P. McVitty stated that credit unions and post offices in towns will have to play a major role in keeping our towns alive in the coming years. Councillor McVitty noted that there are post offices located in supermarkets in towns where there is inadequate space to do your business in private. Councillor McVitty stated that when bank buildings are vacated they should be given back to the local community and not to big developers.

1. **Closure of Bank of Ireland, Kingscourt.**

Councillor C. Kelly supported the previous motions and stated that the announcement to close Bank of Ireland in Kingscourt came as a great shock to the local people. Councillor C. Kelly stated that the closure of the banks will have repercussions on business in towns and tourism. He stated that he hoped the Credit Unions could put facilities in place for the public to access. He stated that if there are no ATM machines in towns then people will leave the area and do their business elsewhere. Councillor C. Kelly called on the Government to intervene.

Councillor M. Argue supported the motion and stated that many people felt betrayed by the bank’s decision and noted that Bank of Ireland was bailed out by the people of Ireland previously. Councillor M. Argue suggested that the Government should buy the bank premises and develop them into remote working hubs.

Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion noting that we are now left with only two banks in the Country and they have no competition. He noted that Ireland has the highest mortgage rates in Europe. Councillor J.P. Feeley stated that Ulster Bank assets must not go to AIB and Bank of Ireland. He stated that the Minister needs to intervene to ensure competition and services are provided on a regional basis.

Councillor C. Brady supported the motion stating the closure of the banks will have a huge impact on rural communities. Councillor C. Brady stated that Cootehill lost their Bank of Ireland because the bank depleted the services they offer. Councillor C. Brady noted that Cootehill have lost three banks in eight years and people do not realise the importance of cash in rural communities. She stated that cash is still needed in communities for services such as paying for a taxi.

Councillor P. Walsh supported the motion stating that over the last number of years customers were not encouraged to go to public counters but instead use the machines. Councillor Walsh stated that elderly people will not use machines as they prefer face to face contact.

Councillor S.P. O’Reilly supported the motion and stated that the banks knew it was the right time to make such an announcement because they knew communities could not revolt due to the covid 19 pandemic. He stated that while services might be moved from Bank of Ireland to the post offices, it will be limited. Councillor S. P. O’Reilly stated that it is essential that the Government get involved in the situation.

Councillor T.P. O’Reilly supported the motion and expressed his disappointment at Bank of Ireland’s decision noting that they were bailed out by the taxpayers in the past. Councillor T.P. O’Reilly stated that he hoped the post offices would take up the new services.

Councillor B. Fay supported the motion and noted that banks were cutting services in a bid to move towards a cashless society. He stated that there is currently no bank in West Cavan which is very frustrating for the area.

Councillors A. Fitzpatrick, W. Bennett, C. Lovett, P. McDonald and S. O’Reilly supported the motion.

1. **That this Council supports the Beef Plan Movement and rural Irish farmers in calling for an independent meat regulator specifically for the beef sector.**

Councillor S. O’Reilly stated that the Irish Beef Industry is worth €2 billion annually and it is the backbone of the rural economy and employs more than 100,000 farmers. Councillor S. O’Reilly stated that as this crisis has escalated and deepened the Government has failed to take any kind of decisive or corrective action to address price transparency in the food chain and market distortion in the beef industry. She stated that the lack of state control and regulatory authority conveys little fear to meat factories and processors and only serves to nurture an air of invincibility among them. She stated that while the setting up of an ombudsman is welcome it is not the answer, an ombudsman will only investigate complaints and attempt to resolve conflicts, either by mediation or by making recommendations, decisions that are usually not legally binding. She stated that in her opinion the term ombudsman is too broad and will not have the teeth needed to tackle irregularities within the beef industry. Councillor S. O’Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Mr. Charlie McConalogue, T.D., to appoint an independent meat regulator specifically for the beef sector.

1. **To ask Cavan County Council to call on the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue T.D., to appoint an independent beef regulator to investigate how to protect the livelihood of the beef farmer and liaise with the meat processing and retail sector so as to gain a fair price for their produce.**

Councillor A. Fitzpatrick stated that beef farmers should be getting a fair price for their produce. He noted that since he placed his motion on the agenda, a national food ombudsman will be appointed by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in May. He stated that we should give the ombudsman a chance and if this does not work then look for an independent beef regulator going forward. He stated that the ombudsman should protect the livelihood of the beef farmer and liaise with the meat processing and retail sector so as to gain a fair price for their produce. Councillor Fitzpatrick noted that the market distortion was not exclusive to the beef industry as the poultry sector is also at the mercy of processors.

Councillor S. Smith supported the motion and stated that we must arrive at a situation where there is a permanent check on all factories to make sure the producer gets a fair payment for his hard work and investment.

Councillor S.P. O’Reilly supported the motion and noted that some national organisations are not supporting those paying subscriptions to them. He supported the call for an independent beef regulator as the beef industry needs to be dealt with on its own.

Councillor W. Bennett supported the motion stating something needs to be done fast for the beef industry.

Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion and noted that the producer whether beef or sheep are not getting the treatment they deserve from those higher up the food chain. Councillor J.P. Feeley stated that we need vibrant strong farming organisations.

Councillor T.P. O’Reilly supported the motion and stated whether it is an ombudsman or independent regulator, either is needed urgently to give a fair price for quality produce.

Councillors B. Fay, P. McDonald, C. Lovett, C. Kelly and P. McVitty supported the motion.

1. **Repair and Renewal Scheme.**

Councillor T.P. O’Reilly stated that this scheme had already been discussed at the Ballyjamesduff Municipal District meeting and the members felt it should be brought to a full Council meeting. Councillor T.P. O’Reilly asked the executive for more information on the scheme and if it could be made use of in town centres.

Councillor M. Argue supported the motion and thanked Ms. Sinead Smith for the information packs she sent out to all members during the week.

Councillor P. McVitty supported the motion and asked if the €60,000 could be put towards repairing a rural household.

Mr. Eoin Doyle, Director of Service stated that the Council are trying to get property owners with property not in productive use to lease it to Cavan County Council for renting. He stated that the repair and leasing scheme has been developed under Rebuilding Ireland to assist property owners in bringing vacant properties back to use. He noted that the maximum funding available is €60,000. He stated that under the scheme, the cost of the repairs will be repaid by the owner by offsetting it against the rent due to the owner for the property over the period of the lease agreement. Mr. Doyle stated that as an alternative to complement the repair and leasing scheme is the buy and renew scheme. This scheme aims to support local authorities and approved housing bodies to purchase and renew housing units that require remediation and make them available for social housing and rural renewal and the vacant homes strategy. He stated that they are looking for houses and suitable premises in towns and villages where there is a need for social and/or special needs housing. He stated that the focus under the scheme, while not exclusive to, is on older stock and in particular derelict properties which when complete will improve streetscapes and provide much needed accommodation. Mr. Doyle stated that anyone with an interest in the scheme can contact the local authority once the property has been vacant for twelve months.

Councillor S.P. O’Reilly noted that small parishes such as Cross, Maghera, Crosskeys and Tullyvin are not designated towns but there is a need for housing in them and these areas need support. He stated that the system should be expanded to facilitate these parishes.

Councillor P. Walsh welcomed the scheme and thanked Sinead Smith for the information packs made available to the members.

1. **That as part of the review process of the new County Development Plan, Cavan County Council should critically review list of protected and listed structures. This should be done with a view to facilitating town centre development to the maximum extent possible.**

Councillor W. Bennett called on Cavan County Council as part of the review process of the new County Development Plan, to critically review the list of protected and listed structures. He stated that this should be done with a view to facilitating town centre development to the maximum extent possible. Councillor Bennett stated that many listed buildings in town centres have fallen into disrepair and the opportunity to bring them back to life is being lost in some cases because developers feel the cost of working on a listed building is prohibited.

Councillor S.P. O’Reilly supported the motion. He stated that a review took place ten years ago and the biggest problem was the number of absentee landlords of the properties. He stated that we need to look at de-listing some of these properties to let the local authority move in. Councillor S.P. O’Reilly seconded Councillor W. Bennett’s proposal.

Councillor C. Kelly supported the motion and stated that these buildings are damaging towns and villages.

Councillor T.P. O’Reilly supported the motion and noted that old buildings situated in towns hamper progess and development.

Councillors P. McVitty, M. Argue and C. Brady supported the motion.

Mr. Brendan Jennings, Director of Services stated that the Council are currently updating their derelict sites policy. He stated that with regard to protected structures, there are generally a number of factors as to why they are vacant and the fact that they are protected is only a small part of that. He stated that the list of protected structures is overseen by the Minister for Heritage who determines which structures need to be protected. Mr. Jennings acknowledged that there is a balance between protecting structures and ensuring a vibrant town centre.

1. **That Cavan County Council liaise with Leitrim and Longford County Councils to promote “Where the three Counties and Provinces meet” as a tourist attraction.**

Councillor W. Bennett proposed that Cavan County Council liaise with Leitrim and Longford County Councils to promote “Where the three Counties and Provinces meet” as a tourist attraction. Councillor W. Bennett stated that Corhanagh townland in the Arva area is unique in being the only place three counties meet on land as well as being the meeting point of three provinces. He stated that this area is already popular with anglers and there should be more investment put into the area to make it an attractive tourist destination. He stated that Counties Leitrim, Longford and Cavan working together would bring many benefits to the Counties.

Councillor P. McVitty seconded Councillor W. Bennett’s proposal.

Councillor S.P. O’Reilly supported the motion stating that the idea could become a big tourism project.

Councillor P. Walsh supported the motion noting that a lot of people will be holidaying at home over the next few years.

Councillor A. Fitzpatrick supported the motion noting that people are realising that you do not have to run to the seaside to enjoy a staycation.

Councillors J.P. Feeley, M. Argue, B. Fay, T.P. O’Reilly and S. O’Reilly supported the motion.

Mr. Brendan Jennings, Director of Service agreed that most people will be holidaying at home over the next number of years. He stated that Cavan County Council have worked with both Leitrim and Longford County Councils in the past and this is a plan well worth looking into. He stated that any new tourism development is welcome in the County.

1. **Problems with dog fouling on footpaths.**

Councillor C. Kelly stated that dog fouling on our main streets and footpaths has become a terrible problem particularly since Covid 19 as there are more people now out walking their dogs. He stated that he was horrified by the reaction of one dog owner towards him after he challenged them about not picking up their dog’s waste. He stated that dog fouling is a health and safety issue and can be very dangerous if children come in contact with it. He stated that he has nothing against people walking their dogs but if they foul the owner should lift it. Councillor Kelly called on Cavan County Council to do something about the issue.

Councillor P. McDonald supported the motion and noted that it is a problem particularly for wheelchair users and those with buggies. Councillor McDonald stated that more bins need to be provided in amenity areas for people to place their litter.

Councillor S.P. O’Reilly supported the motion and noted that some people are leaving their dog poop bags on top of the bins in playgrounds. Councillor S. P. O’Reilly noted that feral cats are also an issue in communities. Councillor S.P. O’Reilly paid tribute to the litter wardens and noted that Cavan County Council are particularly pro-active on the issue of dog fouling. He stated that dog owners are responsible for their pets. He stated that until litter wardens can issue on the spot fines it will be a difficult issue to deal with.

Councillor C. Brady supported the motion. She stated that dog owners pay huge money on grooming their dogs and yet they cannot pick up after them. She stated an awareness campaign needs to be carried out like the Council did previously in relation to wheelchair parking.

Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion and noted that great efforts are being done by Cavan County Council. He stated that people know they are responsible for their dogs and therefore need to clean up after them.

Councillor A. Fitzpatrick supported the motion and noted that people should have to carry pooper scoopers with them and then there will be no need for bags. He stated that if they are not carrying one then they should be fined on the spot.

Councillors P. McVitty, M. Argue, B. Fay, P. Walsh, B. Fay, T.P. O’Reilly and S. O’Reilly supported the motion.

Mr. Paddy Connaughton, Director of Service acknowledged the trojan work being done by Tidy Town groups throughout the County in keeping their towns, villages and communities clean. He stated that since the start of the Covid pandemic there has been a 54% increase in complaints in relation to dog fouling. Mr. Connaughton stated that there are on the spot fines of €150 for litter pollution, if caught and these can go up to €4,000 if it goes to court. Mr. Connaughton stated that Cavan County Council would request the regional waste body (WERLA) to develop and run a regional awareness campaign in relation to dog fouling.

**The meeting concluded at 5.45p.m.**

**Certified Correct: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Cathaoirleach: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**