**Minutes of Meeting of Cavan County Council held in The Council Chamber, Courthouse, Cavan on Monday 9th January, 2023 at 2.00p.m.**

Councillor J.P. Feeley, Cathaoirleach presiding

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

C. Kelly, C. Lovett, P. McDonald, P. McVitty, S. O’Reilly, S.P. O’Reilly,

T.P. O’Reilly, S. Smith (online), T. Smith, V. Smith, P. Walsh.

In Attendance; T. Ryan, Chief Executive

B. Jennings, Director of Service

P. Connaughton, Director of Service

E. Doyle, Director of Service

L. McGavigan, Senior Executive Officer

E. McGinn, Senior Staff Officer

E. Smith, Senior Staff Officer

Councillor J.P. Feeley welcomed all to the meeting and wished everyone a Happy New Year. Councillor J.P. Feeley welcomed Councillor S. Smith online and staff members Donna Macklin, Trevor Harte and Grace Crawford to the meeting.

Councillor J.P Feeley proposed a vote of sympathy with the following families who were bereaved since the last Council meeting in December.

Votes of Sympathy:

* The Rooney Family, Donegal on the death of Private Sean Rooney who was killed in the Lebannon.
* Bishop Martin Hayes and the Clergy on the death of Pope Benedict XVI.
* The Smith Family, Larigan, Carrickaboy on the death of Kevin Smith former staff member of Cavan County Council and Irish Water.
* The Gaffney Family on the death of Brian Gaffney, Cavan former staff member of Cavan County Council.
* Ms. Bridie McBrearty, Housing Section on the death of her father Mr. William Doherty, Donegal.
* Ms. Ann Marie Ward, Heritage Officer on the death of her mother Mrs. Teresa Curley, Galway
* Ms. Patricia Smith, Roads Section on the death of her father Mr. Eugene McDermott, Cavan.
* Mr. John Flynn, Planning Section on the death of his mother Mrs. Eileen Flynn, Cavan.
* Former Councillor Anthony Vesey on the tragic death of his nephew Liam Vesey, Belturbet.
* The Matthews Family, Virginia on the death of Mr. Edmond Matthews.
* Mr. Noel Burke, former Chief Fire Officer on the death of his mother Mrs. Marie Burke, Mayo.

It was proposed by Councillor S.P. O’Reilly and seconded by Councillor B. Fay that a special meeting of Cavan County Council be held before the end of April and invite members of SOSAD, Pieta House, Clinical and Psychiatric Specialists from within the HSE and Cavan General Hospital to the meeting to discuss the issue of mental health and suicide issues in County Cavan.

Councillor A. Fitzpatrick noted that the first anniversary of the heart breaking and untimely passing of another young man in his community will take place at the end of the month and there have been so many suicides since his death and yet nothing has changed. Councillor Fitzpatrick welcomed the launch of the Cavan Monaghan Suicide Crisis Assessment Nurse’s service late last year and the appointment of two clinical nurse specialists to cover the Cavan Monaghan area.

A minutes silence was held in memory of the deceased and the meeting was adjourned for five minutes.

1. **To confirm Minutes of Monthly Meeting held on 12th December 2022.**

**Miontuaririsci cruinnithe 12 Mí na Nollaig a dhearbhu.**

It was

Proposed by Councillor P. McVitty

Seconded by Councillor C. Brady

And

Resolved;

“that minutes of meeting of Cavan County Council held on 12 December 2022 be hereby approved”

Councillor J.P. Feeley thanked the Council Staff for organising the December meeting in Glangevlin and also Ms. Patricia McGovern and her Committee for their help on the day. Councillor J.P. Feeley stated that Neven Maguire expressed his appreciation for the presentation made to him. Councillor Feeley stated in a break from the norm he as Cathaoirleach would be paying for the Christmas Dinner.

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

Noted**.**

1. **To note Minutes of Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 10 November 2022**

Noted.

**Note Members’ Reports from Conferences/Training Events.**

1. **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**

1. **(a) To note reply from Irish Water regarding plan for connection for clusters of homes and especially those with severe mineral issues in rural areas of Co. Cavan**

Noted.

**(b) To note reply from the Department of Health regarding the closure of Accident and Emergency Department in Navan General Hospital.**

Noted.

**(c) To note reply from the Health Service Executive regarding the closure of Accident and Emergency Department in Navan General Hospital.**

Noted. Councillor S.P. O’Reilly expressed his disappointment with the replies and noted that the HSE have notified ambulance personnel not to bring patients to the accident and emergency in Navan Hospital.

**(d) To note reply from the Department of Justice regarding the Justice for Noah Campaign.**

Noted.

**(e) To note reply from Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) regarding charges for telephone directory enquiries.**

Noted.

Councillor C. Kelly noted that he had received a direct reply from Irish Water in relation

to issues with lime in the Kingscourt supply. He stated that the reply recommended that locals could purchase softeners to ease the lime and there is no health issue with the lime. Councillor C. Kelly stated that it was never a health issue. Councillor C. Kelly proposed that Cavan County Council write again to Irish Water seeking a meeting with them as the issue is with appliances breaking down due to the large amount of lime in the water. Councillor S. O’Reilly seconded Councillor C. Kelly’s proposal.

Councillors J.P. Feeley and P. Walsh complimented the staff of Cavan County Council, Water Section for their help over Christmas with water issues in Cavan Town.

Councillor J.P. Feeley noted that since the December meeting the French Ambassador to Ireland Mr. Vincent Guerend visited Cavan County Council. A civic reception was held for Ballyconnell native golfing superstar, Leona Maguire in recognition of her tremendous achievements on the global stage and as Cathaoirleach he attended the Ceremony to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Belturbet Bombing on December 28th 2022.

1. **To approve attendance of members at the following Training and Conference:**
2. **Celtic Conferences “Local Authority Procurement Process” to be held in Clonakilty, Co. Cork from 20-22 January**.

It was

Proposed by Councillor S.P. O’Reilly

Seconded by Councillor C. Brady

And

Resolved;

“that the attendance of Councillors V. Smith and T. Smith be hereby approved.”

1. **Association of Irish Regions (AIR) regional seminar and training event to be held in the Four Seasons Hotel, Monaghan from 7-9 February 2023.**

It was

Proposed by Councillor S.P. O’Reilly

Seconded by Councillor C. Brady

And

Resolved;

“that the attendance of Councillors S.P. O’Reilly, S. O’Reilly, A. Fitzpatrick, C. Kelly, P. McVitty, C. Brady, W. Bennett, M. Argue, T.P. O’Reilly, V. Smith and T. Smith at the Association of Irish Regions (AIR) regional seminar and training event to be held in the Four Seasons Hotel, Monaghan from 7-9 February 2023 be hereby approved”.

1. **Celtic Conferences “Modular Housing in Ireland” to be held in the Four Seasons Hotel, Carlingford, Co. Louth from 3-5 February 2023.**

It was

Proposed by Councillor S.P. O’Reilly

Seconded by Councillor C. Brady

And

Resolved;

“that the attendance of Councillors S. O’Reilly, A. Fitzpatrick, P. McVitty, C. Brady, W. Bennett, T.P. O’Reilly, V. Smith and T. Smith at Celtic Conferences “Modular Housing in Ireland” to be held in the Four Seasons Hotel, Carlingford, Co. Louth from 3-5 February 2023 be hereby approved”.

**Member’s Questions**

1. **Councillor John Paul Feeley**

**To ask the Chief Executive to provide a report on the “Cavan Calling” event scheduled for 2023.**

A reply to the question posed by Councillor J.P. Feeley was circulated prior to the meeting.

1. **Councillor Sarah O’Reilly**

**To ask Cavan County Council for an update on plans to include sites identified (if any) in County Cavan for inclusion in the Serviced Sites option included in Croí Cónaithe.**

A reply to the question posed by Councillor S. O’Reilly was circulated prior to the meeting.

1. **Councillor Sarah O’Reilly**

**To request an up-to-date report on Cavan Digital Hub, to include rate of occupancy long and short term, job creation, financial statements to include client revenue and costs measured against financial projections given on 1st February 2018.**

A reply to the question posed by Councillor S. O’Reilly was circulated prior to the meeting.

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

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

Noted.

Councillor B. Fay asked the executive what the current situation is in relation to the housing project at Widow’s Row, Belturbet.

Mr. Eoin Doyle, Director of Service informed Councillor Fay that the Part 8 plans would be brought before the Cavan Belturbet Municipal District shortly.

Councillor P. Walsh stated that after the last Housing SPC meeting she was shocked at the percentage (36%) of refusals for Council houses in the County.

Mr. Eoin Doyle, Director of Service stated that an applicant has the right to refuse a Council dwelling twice before removed of the Council’s Housing List.

Councillor C. Kelly asked if outside bodies can influence the Council’s decision when letting houses.

Mr. Eoin Doyle, Director of Service informed the members that Council houses are let under the Scheme of Letting Priorities which is a statutory requirement. Allocations are made in accordance with these letting priorities and based on relevant information made available to the Council at that time. The final decision on all allocations of Council Housing rests with the Council’s Executive.

**Votes of Congratulations:**

* Crosserlough GFC on winning the U20 Division 2 football final.
* Lacken Camogie Club on winning the Junior B All-Ireland Camogie Final.
* Geopark Staff on having Cavan Geopark listed as one of the top places to visit in Ireland.
* Ms. Marcella Rudden, former Head of Enterprise on her new position with the Institute of Public Administration (IPA).

**Lambing Season**

Councillor P. McVitty stated that as lambing season approaches people need to prevent their dogs from attacking sheep where possible. Councillor P. McVitty stated that too many dog owners let their animals roam freely without any consideration for either the countryside or animals in fields. Councillor P. McVitty appealed to the public to ensure they know where their dogs are at all times and to comply with the rules when out walking their pets.

Councillor T.P. O’Reilly supported the motion and stated that prosecution is needed where necessary.

**MEMBERS’ ITEMS – JANUARY**

**11.2 That Cavan County Council 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.

**11.3 To ask for a review by Met Eireann of weather warnings and their announcements in media.**

Councillor S.P. O’Reilly stated that Met Eireann are constantly issuing mirage weather warnings worrying people unnecessarily. Councillor S.P. O’Reilly noted that in the months of November and December there were 18 yellow weather warnings issued. Councillor S.P. O’Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council call on Met Eireann to review weather warnings and their announcements in media as it is causing needless anxiety to members of the public.

Councillor S. O’Reilly supported Councillor S.P. O’Reilly’s motion stating that the language used in weather warnings is very inflammatory and causes people to panic unnecessary.

Councillor P. McVitty supported the motion and queried if insurance companies will cover a company if on the road and a red warning is issued.

Councillor T.P. O’Reilly stated that these weather warnings originated as a result of warnings in England over ten years ago. He stated that people should be able to make up their own minds as whether or not to travel on roads.

**11.5 That TV licence charges be more evenly distributed throughout the regions and local media outlets.**

Councillor S.P. O’Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Communications, asking that TV licence charges be more evenly distributed throughout the regions and local media outlets. Councillor S.P. O’Reilly noted that over the Christmas period twelve different programmes were repeats of programmes already shown. He stated that people pay €160 annually for a TV licence to see repeats and then good family programmes like “Ireland’s Fittest Family” may be removed from our screens going forward. Councillor S.P. O’Reilly thanked regional newspapers and local radio stations for the role they play in covering various events of local interest. Councillor S.P. O’Reilly stated that TV licences are wasted on wages and poor programming.

Councillor S. O’Reilly seconded Councillor S.P. O’Reilly’s proposal. Councillor S. O’Reilly stated that local media need our support and acknowledged that during Covid everyone relied on local media for updates.

Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion and welcomed the development last year which saw the government introduce in Budget 2023 a measure to change the VAT rate on newspapers. He stated that newspapers and news periodicals, including digital editions are now zero rated. He stated that these measures are needed as less and less newspapers were being bought nationally as new readers instead switched their focus on online resources.

Councillor T. Smith supported the motion.

**11.6 To request the Minister for Health and Minister for Children to provide financial support for parents seeking private OTs and educational psychologists to alleviate the backlog in the system.**

Councillor T.P. O’Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Health and the Minister for Children asking them to provide financial support for parents seeking private Occupational Therapists and educational psychologists to alleviate the backlog in the system. Councillor T.P. O’Reilly stated that there is a shortage in occupational therapist provision in Cavan Monaghan and families are forced to pay for these services to ensure their children get the best standard of care.

Councillor W. Bennett seconded Councillor T.P. O’Reilly’s motion. Councillor Bennett stated that he was aware of a situation where a position was not made permanent forcing the professional to seek employment elsewhere.

Councillor S.P. O’Reilly noted that qualifications earned in the United Kingdom did not transfer south of the border and stated that these services should be brought under the cross border treatment scheme.

Councillor A. Fitzpatrick supported the motion and noted that the system is only operating at a fraction of what it should be.

Councillors P. McVitty. P. Walsh, B. Fay and J.P. Feeley supported the motion.

**11.7 To call on the Government (Minister for Finance) to introduce measures to protect vulnerable mortgage holders against further rises in interest rates.**

Councillor S. O’Reilly proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Finance asking that measures be introduced to protect vulnerable mortgage holders against further rises in interest rates. Councillor O’Reilly stated that the European Central Bank had raised interest rates four times last year, the first raise since 2011 which means that interest rates have jumped from zero to 2.5% in just six months. Councillor O’Reilly noted that almost twenty thousand tracker mortgage holders in Ireland seen an immediate increase in their mortgage repayments. Councillor O’Reilly stated that behind every mortgage there are families, families who are struggling in a cost-of-living crisis along with an energy crisis and a housing crisis. Councillor O’Reilly stated that currently forty seven thousand homes mortgages are in arrears and that figure is sure to increase going forward. Councillor O’Reilly stated that as a solution banks could decide to absorb the increase in interest rates and take a hit on their profits. Councillor O’Reilly stated that elected members need to lobby the government and ask them to intervene and protect the most vulnerable home mortgage holders before a bad situation is made worse.

Councillor S.P. O’Reilly seconded Councillor S. O’Reilly’s proposal and encouraged anyone facing financial stress to speak with the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS). Councillor S.P. O’Reilly also suggested that it would be of great assistance if Minister Heather Humphreys reintroduced the Mortgage Interest Supplement which provided short-term support to help house owners pay their mortgage interest repayments.

Councillor C. Brady supported the motion and suggested that lower rates on night BER rated houses was a sign of Green Party policy.

Councillor T.P O’Reilly supported the motion but noted that a rise in interest rates was bring down the cost of inflation.

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

**11.8 To discuss the impact of the closure of key businesses in town and village cores and to discuss possible measures that can be taken to keep services in place.**

Councillor S. O’Reilly stated that many of our town centres in County Cavan are struggling due to service providers leaving our main streets. Councillor O’Reilly stated that banks and post offices have closed in many towns and also businesses and retailers are going online to sell products. Councillor O’Reilly noted that the development of retail parks or large superstores on sites outside of town centres have also added to the decline along with the sale and closure of many hotels in the town centres. Councillor O’Reilly stated that currently there is a huge demand for accommodation thus incentivising owners to cash in and sell up. She stated that unfortunately government policy has led to this, and people are happy to see businesses filling vacant rooms and earning a few extra euro to subsidise their income be it for emergency accommodation for the homeless, refugees or Ukrainians. She stated the problem is that hotels are closing their doors to the public, and this in turn is affecting communities. Councillor S. O’Reilly welcomed the funding from Minister Heather Humphreys T.D. for our Town Centres and the Town and Village Scheme but stated that the Government need to do more as government policy has turned the accommodation crisis into a highly lucrative money-making business that has greatly affected our tourism industry and our town centres. Councillor S. O’Reilly stated that the cost of rent and rates are killing our small businesses in our towns.

Councillor P. McDonald supported the motion and noted that our town centres are dying, and we need to look at rates in our County.

Councillor C. Kelly supported the motion and noted that the closure of hotels in our towns has a huge effect on tourism. Councillor Kelly also welcomed the funding from Minister Humphreys’ Department in supporting local projects.

Councillor A. Fitzpatrick supported the motion and noted that it is very sad to see so many buildings closing in our towns. Councillor Fitzpatrick also noted that opportunities arise for others to fill gaps in the market, as was the case with the Errigal Hotel in Cootehill. Councillor Fitzpatrick noted that banks closed in Cootehill and now the former Ulster Bank is being used as a community hub and the Council has purchased the Bank of Ireland to be used as a remote working and community service centre.

Councillor B. Fay stated that the cost of utilities such as electricity is forcing businesses to close.

Councillor T.P. O’Reilly supported the motion and noted that times have changed, and the days of a dozen pubs open in some towns are gone and we have to move with time.

Councillor P. McVitty supported the motion and noted that online shopping is a critical factor in causing small shops to close as it can be bought cheaper online. He stated that rates never closed a small shop.

Councillor J.P. Feeley stated that we now live in a different era where we have more cars and people travelling to Dublin to shop. He stated that towns and villages need to reflect the times people live in.

Councillor S.P. O’Reilly supported the motion.

Mr. Brendan Jennings, Director of Service stated that the ultimate goal of the local authority is to upgrade local towns and villages to make them better places in which to live, work and do business. He stated that there were many other factors that directly impact on town development. He stated that during Covid the Council supported local businesses through the Trading Online Voucher Scheme, designed to assist small businesses with up to 10 employees to trade more online, boost sales and reach new markets. He stated that a person has now been appointed as a Town Centre Regeneration Officer with the Council.

Mr. Tommy Ryan, Chief Executive Officer noted that the perception of a town centre has moved on and they serve a different purpose than was the case twenty years ago. Mr. Ryan stated that the Council is working hard through various capital investment schemes to breathe new life into town and village centres.

**11.9 I call on Cavan Council to write to the Minister for the Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport, Mr. Eamon Ryan, T.D., asking him to outline what alternatives are available to people in the future to mitigate against power outages which may affect everyday society e.g. heating in houses.**

Councillor B. Fay proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for the Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport, Mr. Eamon Ryan T.D., asking him to outline what alternatives are available to people in the future to mitigate against power outages which may affect everyday society e.g. heating in houses. Councillor B. Fay stated that living along the border people had seen the price of a large bag of coal rise from €15-17 to nearly €50 amid the continuing cost of living and cost of fuel crisis. Councillor Fay noted that the cost of electricity rose significantly over the last twelve months and anyone building new homes are being built with no chimneys.

Councillor T.P. O’Reilly seconded the proposal noting that he had the same motion on the agenda last October to which no reply was received.

**11.10 To ask Cavan County Council, having regard to the thousands of people who are suffering with adverse effects from Covid-19 for long periods of time (long Covid)-**

* **To write to the Minister for Health Mr. Stephen Donnelly, T.D., the Oireachtas Health Committee and the HSE Chief Executive Officer requesting that the provision of Long Covid Clinics be retained and expanded.**
* **To raise it with our Regional Health Board and/or local hospital and**
* **To circulate this motion to the rest of the Councils around the Country asking them to consider doing the same.**

Councillor B. Fay proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Health Mr. Stephen Donnelly, the Oireachtas Health Committee and the HSE Chief Executive Officer asking for the retention and expansion of long covid clinics, to include Cavan in order to treat the thousands suffering from adverse effects from Covid 19. Councillor Fay stated that there are approximately two hundred conditions associated with long Covid. He stated that it is estimated that there will be approximately three million adults in Ireland suffering or have suffered from medical conditions association with long covid. Councillor Fay suggested that a centre be developed at Cavan General Hospital.

Councillor S.P. O’Reilly seconded Councillor B. Fay’s motion.

**11.11 That consideration be given to the hosting once again of the “Taste of Cavan” working with “Created in Cavan” and “Cavan Day” to highlight what and who we are in County Cavan.**

Councillor B. Fay proposed that consideration be given to the hosting once again of the “Taste of Cavan” working with “Created in Cavan” and “Cavan Day” to highlight what and who we are in County Cavan. Councillor B. Fay stated that he is aware of the volume of work behind hosting the Taste of Cavan in the past but felt it had been worth it. He stated that Chef Neven Maguire suggested to him that the festival should return in some format.

Councillor J.P. Feeley stated that he had raised the issue at the Corporate Policy Group meeting and asked Director of Service, Mr. Brendan Jennings to meet with Chef Neven Maguire to hear his take on the situation. He stated that the “Taste of Cavan” drew large numbers of visitors and traders to our County but felt it had probably grown to a scale that was unsuitable for what it was originally intended for.

Councillor T.P. O’Reilly supported the motion and stated that the Taste of Cavan had a marvellous effect on promoting the image of our County.

Councillor S. O’Reilly supported the motion and noted that Council staff devoted a lot of voluntary time at weekends to make the event happen. Councillor O’Reilly stated that a smaller event would be more manageable.

Councillor S.P. O’Reilly supported the motion and complimented Council staff on organising the event over the years. Councillor S.P. O’Reilly stated that he felt the Taste of Cavan had become a victim of its own success and it should stand as a separate event to Cavan Calling.

Councillors P. Walsh and A. Fitzpatrick supported the motion. Councillor Fitzpatrick stated that he had a stall when it was once held in the Hotel Kilmore and it was immensely beneficial to his business.

Mr. Brendan Jennings, Director of Service stated that the Taste of Cavan did a lot of good for the County but grew too big to run. Mr. Jennings noted that while thousands visited the festival, by the eighth year of the Taste of Cavan there were seventy eight stalls with only twenty six of these from Cavan. Mr. Jennings acknowledged that Created in Cavan is bringing local producers together and acknowledged the work of the Cottage Market in organising Cavan Christmas Market in Cavan town and other towns. He stated that he could see events like the smaller Taste of Cavan happening again. Mr. Jennings stated that in the meantime the Council would continue to link with the schools across the County on subjects such as food sustainability.

**Item Nos. 11.1 and 11.4 were deferred.**

The meeting concluded at 16.55p.m.

Certified Correct: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Cathaoirleach: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_